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Research Article

การปลูกฝังความหลากหลาย การมีส่วนร่วม และความเสมอภาคในห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ:
ระดับความสามารถด้านวัฒนธรรมระหว่างประเทศและความอ่อนไหวทางวัฒนธรรมของครู
ไทยที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

Cultivating Diversity, Inclusion, And Equity in English Classrooms: Thai EFL
Teachers' Intercultural Competence and Sensitivity Levels

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บทคัดย่อ

ในโลกที่มีความเป็นสากล ครูที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศถือมีบทบาทสำคัญในการส่งเสริมการใช้ภาษาและการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรม เนื่องจากห้องเรียนมีความหลากหลายมากขึ้น ความสามารถในการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรม (Intercultural Communicative Competence: ICC) และความอ่อนไหวทางวัฒนธรรม (Intercultural Sensitivity: IS) จึงเป็นสิ่งสำคัญในการสร้างสภาพแวดล้อมการเรียนรู้ที่มีส่วนร่วมและเตรียมความพร้อมให้กับนักเรียนสำหรับการสื่อสารในระดับโลก งานวิจัยแบบผสมผสานนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อพัฒนา ICC และ IS ของครูไทยที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศจำนวน 15 คน ผ่านการฝึกอบรมที่จัดขึ้นเป็นเวลา 1 เดือน ซึ่งประกอบด้วย 4 หัวข้อ: 1) ความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรม 2) การสำรวจความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม 3) การพัฒนาความอ่อนไหวทางวัฒนธรรม และ 4) การประยุกต์ใช้ในทางปฏิบัติและการสรุปผล แนวทางการจัดฝึกอบรมนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อส่งเสริมความเสมอภาคและการมีส่วนร่วมในห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ ผ่านการพัฒนากลยุทธ์ให้กับครูเพื่อสร้างสภาพแวดล้อมการเรียนรู้ที่ตอบสนองต่อความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม ตลอดจนสนับสนุนให้นักเรียนที่มีภูมิหลังที่หลากหลาย การศึกษานี้ใช้การออกแบบการวิจัยแบบก่อนและหลังการทดสอบ (Pretest-Posttest design) เพื่อตรวจสอบการเปลี่ยนแปลงของ ICC และ IS โดยใช้เครื่องมือเชิงปริมาณที่ผ่านการตรวจสอบความน่าเชื่อถือแล้ว ได้แก่ Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (มาตรวัดความสามารถในการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรม) และ Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (มาตรวัดความอ่อนไหวต่อ

วัฒนธรรมระหว่างกัน) นอกจากนี้ ยังมีการเก็บข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพผ่านการสัมภาษณ์ติดตามผล เพื่อสำรวจมุมมองของครูเกี่ยวกับผลกระทบของการฝึกอบรมที่มีต่อการสอน ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ครูทุกคนมีพัฒนาการที่ดีขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทั้งด้าน ICC และ IS ซึ่งสะท้อนถึงประสิทธิภาพของการฝึกอบรม นอกจากนี้ จากข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ ครูส่วนใหญ่รู้สึกพึงพอใจกับการฝึกอบรมและมองว่าเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการสอนของตนเอง อีกทั้งยังสามารถช่วยพัฒนา ICC และ IS ของนักเรียนได้ต่อไป ผลลัพธ์ของการวิจัยนี้เน้นย้ำถึงความสำคัญของการฝึกอบรมด้าน ICC และ IS สำหรับครูที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ อีกทั้งยังสนับสนุนการพัฒนาสื่อการเรียนรู้ที่ผสมผสานความสามารถทางภาษากับความเข้าใจทางวัฒนธรรม เพื่อส่งเสริมความหลากหลายและการมีส่วนร่วมในห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ

คำสำคัญ: การวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการ; ความสามารถในการสื่อสารระหว่างวัฒนธรรม; ความอ่อนไหวทางวัฒนธรรม; ครูไทยที่สอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ; การฝึกอบรมครู

Abstract

In the globalized world, EFL teachers play a key role in fostering language and intercultural communication. As classrooms become more diverse, ICC and IS are essential for creating inclusive environments and preparing students for global interactions. This mixed-methods research objectives are to enhance the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and intercultural sensitivity (IS) of 15 Thai EFL teachers through a one-month workshop comprising four sessions: (1) Understanding Cultural Diversity, (2) Exploring Cultural Differences, (3) Developing Intercultural Sensitivity, and (4) Practical Application and Wrap-up. The workshop was designed to promote inclusion and equity in English classrooms by equipping teachers with strategies to create culturally responsive learning environments, address biases, and support students from diverse background. The study employed a pretest-posttest design to measure changes in ICC and IS, using validated quantitative instruments, including the Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale and the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. Additionally, qualitative data were collected through follow-up interviews to explore teachers' perceptions of the workshop's impact on their pedagogical practices. Findings revealed significant improvements in both ICC and IS among all participants, which highlights the effectiveness of the workshop. Qualitatively, most teachers reported satisfaction with the workshop and found it practical for their teaching practices which could further help enhance students' ICC and IS. These outcomes emphasize the value of ICC and IS training for EFL teachers and support the development of educational materials that integrate linguistic proficiency with cultural understanding, promoting diversity and inclusivity in English language classrooms.

Keywords: Action Research; Intercultural Communicative Competence; Intercultural Sensitivity; Thai EFL Teachers; Teacher Training

Introduction

The increasing globalization of contemporary society has rendered the development of intercultural competence (ICC) and intercultural sensitivity (IS) essential components in language education, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who facilitate cross-cultural and intercultural dialogue among EFL learners. As English has emerged as a global lingua franca facilitating communication across diverse cultural contexts, EFL teachers must transcend traditional language instruction to prepare learners for meaningful cross-cultural and intercultural engagement (Imsa-ard, 2024) [1] (Deardorff, 2026) [2]. While many teacher education programs worldwide emphasize the integration of intercultural dimensions in language teaching, the extent to which EFL teachers receive structured training in ICC and IS varies significantly across contexts. Within Thailand's expanding participation in global economic and educational spheres, the necessity for EFL teachers who can simultaneously cultivate linguistic proficiency and cultural competence has become paramount. Unlike educators in multicultural societies where intercultural engagement is naturally embedded in daily life, Thai teachers operate in a predominantly monocultural educational environment where students have limited exposure to cultural diversity. As a result, many Thai learners lack opportunities to develop intercultural awareness through direct interaction with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This lack of experiential learning makes it difficult for students to apply theoretical knowledge of intercultural communication to real-world situations. The effective facilitation of intercultural engagement necessitates that educators possess well-developed ICC and IS capabilities, which are fundamental to comprehending, respecting, and navigating cultural distinctions. Research by Eden et al. (2024) [3], Elias and Mansouri (2023) [4], Fantini (2009) [5], and Sercu (2005) [6] indicates that intercultural competence enables teachers to foster more inclusive and efficacious learning environments, thereby supporting learners in developing the cultural awareness and adaptability required in an increasingly heterogeneous global context. Notwithstanding the global emphasis on ICC and IS in language education, there remains a paucity of research examining EFL instructors in non-Western contexts, particularly Thailand (Imsa-ard, 2023) [7]. While Western scholarly literature by Herzog-Punzenberger et al. (2023) [8] and Sjøen (2023) [9] extensively addresses intercultural competence and cultural sensitivity training, these frameworks frequently fail to account for the distinctive socio-cultural dynamics that characterize Thai classroom interactions. Moreover, Thai EFL teachers encounter specific challenges, including students' limited exposure to cultural diversity and the predominantly homogeneous cultural environment in which they operate (Phuong-Mai et al., 2005) [10]. Empirical evidence suggests that Thai EFL classrooms typically maintain a teacher-centered approach, offering limited opportunities for students to engage critically with cultural differences. Within these contexts, Thai EFL teachers often lack adequate training and resources necessary to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity—elements crucial to fostering students' intercultural awareness and sensitivity (Imsa-ard, 2023) [7], (Vongsila & Reinders, 2016) [11]. Given teachers' pivotal role in promoting cultural understanding, it is imperative to investigate how targeted professional development could enhance Thai EFL teachers' capacity to effectively integrate intercultural dimensions into their pedagogical practices. This study addresses this research gap through a

two-cycle action research methodology focused on enhancing Thai EFL teachers' ICC and IS capabilities through a structured intervention program.

The present study offers significant contributions to the field by addressing the extant dichotomy between theoretical frameworks and practical applications in intercultural education for EFL practitioners, with particular emphasis on the Thai educational context. Through the implementation of a systematic and empirically-grounded framework for ICC and IS development, this research presents a transferable model applicable to analogous educational environments characterized by limited cultural diversity and cross-cultural or intercultural exposure. Furthermore, the empirical findings hold substantial implications for curriculum development specialists and educational policymakers, which highlights the imperative nature of incorporating comprehensive intercultural training within teacher professional development initiatives. Significantly, the implications of this investigation could extend beyond the geographical boundaries of Thailand, as the derived insights have the potential to inform and enhance culturally responsive pedagogical practices across diverse EFL contexts globally. This broader application aligns with the international imperative to foster educational environments that authentically embrace and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within language instruction.

Objectives

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a one-month workshop in enhancing the intercultural communicative competence (ICC), intercultural sensitivity (IS), and inclusive teaching practices of Thai EFL teachers. This study focused on measuring changes in Thai EFL teachers' ICC and IS before and after the workshop using validated assessment tools, and assessing teachers' perceptions of the workshop's structure, content, and applicability in fostering inclusive and equitable classroom practices. Specifically, it sought to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent does participation in a one-month ICC and IS workshop improve Thai EFL teachers' levels of intercultural communicative competence, intercultural sensitivity, and inclusive teaching practices?
2. How do Thai EFL teachers perceive the effectiveness of the workshop in enhancing their ICC, IS, and ability to create equitable learning environments?

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017) [12], combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of targeted intercultural training on Thai EFL teachers' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and intercultural sensitivity (IS). The quantitative component measured changes in participants' ICC and IS levels using established scales, while the qualitative component involved follow-up interviews to gain in-depth insights into the teachers' experiences and perceptions of the workshop. This mixed-methods approach

allowed for both numerical analysis of ICC and IS improvements and a nuanced understanding of the teachers' personal reflections on the training.

Participants

The participants of this study included 15 Thai EFL teachers, purposively selected for their interest in intercultural competence and willingness to engage in a month-long training workshop. Participants were drawn from Phase One (Imsa-ard, 2024) [1] responses, where they had previously expressed a commitment to enhancing their intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and intercultural sensitivity (IS). These teachers represented diverse educational backgrounds and teaching experiences but shared a common characteristics of teaching English at secondary school level and a common goal of improving their ICC and IS to create more inclusive and culturally responsive classrooms. The selection process was guided by the principle of purposeful sampling, ensuring that participants were not only motivated but also had the potential to benefit from ICC and IS training, making them ideal candidates for evaluating the workshop's effectiveness.

Research instruments

The study utilized three primary research instruments: (a) the ICC and IS scales developed by Imsa-ard (2023) [7], which served as pre- and post-assessment tools to evaluate participants' intercultural competencies, (b) a one-month workshop with four sessions tailored to address specific ICC and IS components, and (c) semi-structured follow-up interviews to capture participants' perspectives on the training's impact.

The ICC questionnaire used in this study aimed to evaluate participants' intercultural communicative competence. Originally developed by Zhou (2011) [13] and later adapted by Imsa-ard (2023) [7], the questionnaire consists of 20 items, with five items each targeting the sub-scales of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness. This scale was selected due to its high internal consistency, demonstrated by a coefficient alpha of .96. Additionally, this study employed an intercultural sensitivity (IS) instrument, initially created by Chen and Starosta (2000) [14] and subsequently revised by Wang and Zhuo (2016) [15], with further adaptation by Imsa-ard (2023) [7]. The modified IS scale provides five levels of agreement: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. The decision to use this adapted intercultural sensitivity scale (ISS) was informed by confirmatory factor analyses, which showed that the revised version better suited data in time-limited contexts (Wang & Zhuo, 2016) [15]. The scale includes five sub-scales: interaction engagement (7 items), respect for cultural differences (6 items), interaction confidence (5 items), interaction enjoyment (3 items), and interaction attentiveness (3 items).

The one-month ICC and IS workshop was conducted in four structured sessions (six hours per week, three hours per session). Each weekly session (Imsa-ard, 2024) [1] was structured around specific learning objectives to ensure a focused and progressive development of intercultural competence and promotion of inclusion and equity:

Workshop Structure and Activities

The one-month ICC and IS workshop was structured into four progressive sessions, each designed to enhance intercultural communicative competence (ICC), intercultural sensitivity (IS), and inclusive teaching practices. The sessions combined lectures, discussions, interactive tasks, and reflective exercises to provide participants with both theoretical knowledge and practical strategies.

Session 1: Understanding Cultural Diversity

Focused on raising awareness of cultural diversity's importance in language teaching and introducing ICC fundamentals, alongside strategies for developing self-awareness and cultural sensitivity.

- **Objective:** To raise awareness of cultural diversity and introduce ICC fundamentals.
- **Activities:**
 - **Self-Reflection Task:** Teachers completed a *Cultural Identity Map*, outlining aspects of their own culture and discussing how these influence their teaching styles.
 - **Case Study Analysis:** Teachers examined real-life classroom scenarios where cultural misunderstandings occurred, identifying strategies to promote inclusivity.
 - **Guided Discussion:** Questions such as "*What cultural biases might influence your teaching?*" and "*How do you currently address cultural diversity in your classroom?*" encouraged reflection.
- **Outcome:** Teachers developed a heightened awareness of cultural influences on communication and teaching.

Session 2: Exploring Cultural Differences

Aimed at deepening teachers' understanding of cultural differences and their impact on language learning, providing practical classroom strategies, and encouraging the use of authentic resources.

- **Objective:** To deepen understanding of cultural differences and their impact on language learning.
- **Activities:**
 - **Role-Playing Exercise:** Teachers acted out culturally diverse classroom situations (e.g., responding to different politeness norms in student interactions).
 - **Comparative Analysis:** Teachers compared high-context vs. low-context cultures and discussed their implications for language learning.
 - **Discussion Prompts:** "*How can teachers address students' different cultural learning styles?*" and "*What strategies can help bridge cultural misunderstandings?*"
- **Outcome:** Teachers recognized the challenges of cross-cultural interactions and explored strategies for making classrooms more culturally responsive.

Session 3: Developing Intercultural Sensitivity

Focused on fostering intercultural sensitivity, equipping teachers with strategies to implement it in their classrooms, and guiding them to develop action plans for ICC integration.

- **Objective:** To equip teachers with strategies for fostering intercultural sensitivity in students.
- **Activities:**
 - **Perspective-Taking Exercise:** Teachers were given controversial intercultural dilemmas (e.g., *Should students be required to adopt Western classroom norms?*) and asked to argue from multiple cultural viewpoints.
 - **Peer Collaboration Task:** Teachers designed lesson plans incorporating intercultural sensitivity principles.
 - **Guided Reflection:** Questions such as *"How can you encourage students to value cultural differences?"* and *"How does intercultural sensitivity influence classroom interactions?"* helped teachers translate theory into practice.
- **Outcome:** Participants gained practical techniques to help students appreciate and engage with cultural differences.

Session 4: Practical Application and Wrap-up

Allowed teachers to apply what they learned, share experiences, and engage in a Q&A session for further clarification.

- **Objective:** To allow teachers to apply what they have learned and reflect on their experiences.
- **Activities:**
 - **Micro-Teaching Session:** Teachers demonstrated intercultural teaching techniques, receiving peer and facilitator feedback.
 - **Group Discussion:** Teachers shared challenges and solutions in implementing ICC and IS strategies.
 - **Action Plan Development:** Teachers created individualized intercultural teaching plans outlining how they would sustain ICC and IS practices in their classrooms.
 - **Closing Reflection Questions:** *"What specific changes will you make in your teaching?"* and *"How can you measure progress in fostering intercultural sensitivity in students?"*
- **Outcome:** Teachers felt confident in implementing ICC and IS strategies and had concrete plans for integrating intercultural practices into their teaching.

In addition, the semi-structured interview protocol was designed to explore teachers' understanding of ICC and how it could be integrated into their teaching, as well as to gather their perceptions and opinions of the workshop. The protocol was piloted with three Thai EFL secondary school teachers prior to implementation to ensure that all questions were valid and reliable. This phase ensured that the interviews

effectively captured teachers' reflections on equity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness in their classrooms. The example questions are:

1. *How has the workshop influenced your understanding of intercultural competence and sensitivity?*
2. *What specific strategies from the workshop have you applied in your classroom?*
3. *What additional support or resources would help you integrate ICC and IS into your teaching?*
4. *How do you plan to continue developing your intercultural competence?*

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through online platforms to facilitate accessibility and ensure continuity in participation. Pre- and post-workshop assessments were administered digitally using the ICC and IS scales, which allowed for streamlined data collection and analysis. Follow-up interviews were also conducted via online video conferencing to accommodate participants' schedules and capture rich, qualitative data on their experiences and perceptions of the workshop.

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from the ICC and IS scales were analyzed by comparing pre- and post-workshop scores to assess changes in participants' intercultural competencies. In this study, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) provided an overview of participants' improvement levels. Given the small sample size ($N = 15$) and the potential for non-normal data distribution, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to assess the statistical significance of changes in ICC and IS scores. This non-parametric test was selected because it does not assume normality and is particularly suitable for small-scale studies where paired measurements are compared.

In addition, a thematic analysis was conducted on semi-structured interview transcripts and participant reflections, following a six-step coding process to ensure systematic and replicable findings. Data familiarization involved reading transcripts and noting key patterns, followed by inductive coding to allow themes to emerge naturally. Codes were then grouped into broader themes and sub-themes related to intercultural competence, inclusivity, and workshop applicability. Themes were refined for coherence, clearly defined, and supported with participant excerpts for credibility. Triangulation with quantitative findings strengthened validity, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the workshop's impact on ICC, IS, and inclusive teaching practices. This combination of data analysis methods allowed for a robust evaluation of the workshop's impact on participants' intercultural competence and sensitivity.

Results

To answer the first research question on how participation in a one-month ICC and IS workshop affected Thai EFL teachers' levels of intercultural communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity, the results are reported in the table below.

Table 1 A comparison of mean scores of the four dimensions of ICC for Thai EFL teachers.

Aspects	Pre Workshop		Post Workshop		p-value
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	
Knowledge	4.28	High	4.86	High	**
Skills	3.83	High	4.51	High	**
Attitude	4.03	High	4.67	High	**
Awareness	4.41	High	4.89	High	**

From Table 1, it is evident that participants had higher levels of ICC after the workshop at a significant level ($p < .01$). This finding suggests that the one-month ICC and IS workshop had a statistically significant positive impact on the Thai EFL teachers' intercultural communicative competence. To answer the first research question, this finding implies that the workshop effectively enhanced the ICC levels of Thai EFL teachers, as indicated by a meaningful increase in their ICC scores post-intervention. The significance level ($p < .01$) indicates a high level of confidence that this improvement was not due to chance, thus supporting the conclusion that the workshop successfully contributed to developing the teachers' intercultural competence. This result aligns with the objective of assessing the workshop's impact, confirming its effectiveness in promoting ICC among the participants.

Table 2 A comparison of mean scores of the four dimensions of IS for Thai EFL teachers.

Aspects	Pre Workshop		Post Workshop		p-value
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	
Interaction engagement	4.01	High	4.73	High	**
Respect for cultural differences	4.29	High	4.77	High	**
Interaction confidence	3.67	High	4.59	High	**
Interaction enjoyment	4.21	High	4.84	High	**

From Table 2, the results indicated a significant improvement in Thai EFL teachers' levels of intercultural sensitivity (IS) following their participation in a one-month ICC and IS workshop. Each dimension of IS—*interaction engagement*, *respect for cultural differences*, *interaction confidence*, and *interaction enjoyment*—showed an increase in mean scores from pre- to post-workshop. Specifically, interaction engagement increased from a mean of 4.01 to 4.73, respect for cultural differences from 4.29 to 4.77, interaction confidence from 3.67 to 4.59, and interaction enjoyment from 4.21 to 4.84. All dimensions were rated as "High" both before and after the workshop, yet each increase was statistically significant ($p < .01$), indicating that the workshop effectively enhanced teachers' intercultural sensitivity across all aspects measured. This finding demonstrates the positive impact of the workshop on participants' ability to engage confidently and enjoyably with diverse cultures, as well as their respect for cultural differences.

After the workshop, to answer the second research question on how Thai EFL teachers perceived the effectiveness of the workshop in improving their ICC and IS, all the teacher participants took part in the follow-up interviews. The qualitative findings from the interviews with 15 Thai EFL teachers highlight the positive impact of the workshop on their intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and intercultural sensitivity (IS). Four main themes emerged from the teachers' reflections, demonstrating how the workshop influenced their *understanding*, *attitudes*, *confidence*, and *practical teaching skills*.

To begin with, **Enhanced Cultural Knowledge and Awareness** emerged as a key outcome of the workshop. Most teachers reported gaining a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and a heightened awareness of cultural nuances that shape communication. This increased awareness made them more mindful of the various cultural backgrounds represented by their students.

As one participant noted, "*The workshop gave me a deeper understanding of cultural diversity. I am now more aware of cultural differences and how they influence communication. This awareness has made me more mindful of the different cultural backgrounds of my students.*"

This finding suggests that the workshop helped teachers recognize the importance of acknowledging and respecting diversity in their teaching environment.

Another significant theme was **Increased Confidence in Intercultural Interactions**. Prior to the workshop, some teachers expressed hesitation about discussing cultural differences, fearing that they might inadvertently offend or misrepresent certain aspects. However, the workshop boosted their confidence in engaging with these topics.

One teacher shared, "*I used to feel hesitant about addressing cultural differences in the classroom, but the workshop boosted my confidence. Now, I feel prepared to engage in and lead discussions about cultural topics with my students.*"

This shift in confidence suggests that the workshop effectively empowered teachers to take on a more active role in facilitating intercultural discussions in their classrooms.

The theme of a **Positive Shift in Attitudes Toward Cultural Differences** also emerged strongly. Most teachers indicated that the workshop helped them develop a more open and accepting attitude toward diverse cultures, which, in turn, influenced their teaching practices.

One participant explained, *“The sessions really helped me develop a more open and accepting attitude toward different cultures. I’ve learned to approach cultural differences with respect and understanding, and I can see this change in my teaching style.”*

This transformation highlights the workshop’s role in encouraging teachers to view cultural differences as an asset rather than a challenge, fostering a more inclusive classroom environment.

Finally, teachers emphasized the **Practical Application of Skills in Teaching** as one of the workshop’s most valuable aspects. The practical strategies and techniques they learned could be immediately integrated into their teaching practices, enhancing the inclusivity and cultural sensitivity of their instruction.

As one teacher remarked, *“What I found most valuable was the practical aspect of the workshop. The techniques and strategies we learned are things I can use immediately in my classroom, which has already made my teaching more inclusive and culturally sensitive.”*

This practical focus underscores the workshop’s effectiveness in equipping teachers with concrete tools for fostering intercultural understanding among their students.

Beyond improvements in ICC and IS, qualitative findings also indicated that the workshop positively influenced teachers' ability to foster inclusion and equity in their classrooms. Participants reported increased awareness of diverse student needs and a stronger commitment to creating culturally responsive learning environments. Several teachers described implementing inclusive teaching strategies, such as incorporating students’ cultural backgrounds into classroom discussions, using multicultural materials, and adjusting lesson plans to ensure equitable participation.

Additionally, teachers demonstrated greater confidence in addressing cultural differences in class, reducing their initial concerns about potential misunderstandings.

One participant noted, *“I used to avoid discussing cultural topics for fear of making mistakes, but now I feel more confident to facilitate these discussions while ensuring all students feel respected and valued.”*

Another teacher shared, *“I now make an effort to encourage some quieter students to share their perspectives. This is to ensure that all voices are heard.”*

These findings suggest that the workshop not only enhanced teachers’ intercultural competence but also equipped them with practical tools to create more inclusive and equitable English classrooms. The observed shifts in teacher attitudes, classroom discourse, and instructional practices indicate that targeted ICC and IS training can serve as a catalyst for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in EFL settings.

In summary, these qualitative findings indicated that the workshop was effective in enhancing Thai EFL teachers’ intercultural competence and sensitivity. Through increased cultural awareness, boosted confidence in intercultural discussions, positive attitude shifts, and practical applications, the workshop facilitated meaningful improvements in the teachers' approach to teaching in diverse, multicultural contexts. These findings underscore the value of targeted ICC and IS training for EFL educators, providing insights into how such training can contribute to creating inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments.

Conclusions and Discussion

Clearly, the findings of this study demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in Thai EFL teachers' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and intercultural sensitivity (IS) following a one-month ICC and IS workshop. This improvement was observed across all dimensions of ICC—knowledge, skills, attitude, and awareness—as well as all aspects of IS, including interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, and interaction enjoyment, with significance levels at $p < .01$. These quantitative results align with previous literature (Imsa-ard, 2024) [1], (Deardorff, 2006) [2], (Imsa-ard, 2023) [7], (Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017) [16], Saricoban & Oz, 2014) [17], which highlights the potential of targeted intercultural training to enhance educators' competence in culturally diverse settings. More explicitly, the ICC and IS improvements observed in this study align with findings from Saricoban and Oz (2014) [17], who reported significant intercultural gains among pre-service English teachers in Turkey. Similarly, Mostafaei Alaei and Nosrati (2018) [18] found that targeted ICC training for Iranian EFL teachers resulted in measurable improvements in intercultural engagement. However, unlike these studies, our research extends this knowledge to in-service Thai EFL teachers, highlighting the applicability of ICC training in a non-Western, in-service teaching context. Moreover, this research revealed that, in both pre and post intervention, Thai EFL teachers demonstrate a high level of sensitivity toward cultural differences and value interactions with people from diverse backgrounds. More specifically, Charoensukmongkol (2016) [19] noted that Thai individuals appreciate cultural experiences and enjoy connecting with people from other backgrounds, while Jitpakdee and Thapa (2012) [20] highlighted the increasing cultural interactions within Thai society. This trend may help explain the positive relationship between Thai society's evolving engagement with diverse cultures and teachers' interaction engagement. However, there were some teachers reporting some hesitant about addressing cultural issues in the classroom. This reluctance of Thai EFL teachers to incorporate intercultural discussions due to concerns over controversy mirrors findings from Herzog-Punzenberger et al. (2023) [8] in Austria and Ireland. Both studies highlight teachers' hesitancy in navigating culturally sensitive topics, suggesting a need for structured training that equips educators with confidence to handle diverse perspectives.

However, while these results suggest that the workshop was effective in achieving its primary objective, several critical issues require further examination to evaluate the broader implications. First, although the ICC and IS improvements are statistically significant, the absence of a control group limits the study's ability to definitively attribute these gains to the workshop itself. Without a control group or comparative intervention, it is difficult to rule out alternative explanations, such as participants' natural progression in ICC and IS over time or the influence of other external factors. Future research could strengthen the validity of these findings by employing a quasi-experimental design by comparing the workshop group with a control group of similar teachers who did not undergo the training. Additionally, while qualitative feedback from participants highlights perceived benefits in terms of increased cultural knowledge, confidence, positive attitudes, and practical skills, the lack of longitudinal data, despite a one-month period with four sessions, leaves questions about the sustainability of these effects. Teachers

reported feeling more confident and culturally aware immediately after the workshop, but it remains unclear whether these changes in ICC and IS are maintained over time and actively influence their classroom practices in the long term. Follow-up studies could address this gap by assessing teachers' ICC and IS at multiple points after the intervention (delayed post-assessment), and this could provide some insight into the durability of the workshop's impact on their teaching practices.

Another critical point to consider is the workshop's focus on general intercultural competencies without specifically addressing the unique cultural dynamics present in Thai EFL classrooms. While participants reported a heightened awareness and respect for cultural diversity, it would be valuable to explore whether the workshop content was sufficiently tailored to address the specific intercultural challenges faced by Thai EFL teachers. Cultural sensitivity is context-dependent, and a one-size-fits-all approach to ICC training may overlook the nuanced intercultural dynamics that Thai teachers encounter with their students. Future workshops might benefit from including case studies or examples directly relevant to the Thai educational context to enhance the training's contextual relevance and applicability. Lastly, although teachers valued the practical strategies presented in the workshop, the qualitative data suggest a need for more individualized support in applying these strategies effectively. Teachers appreciated the practical applications but may benefit from follow-up coaching or peer support groups to help them integrate these skills into their specific teaching contexts. While the workshop provided foundational skills, ongoing support mechanisms could facilitate deeper, context-specific intercultural engagement and enhance teachers' ability to handle complex cultural interactions as they arise in the classroom.

In conclusion, this study offers promising evidence for the effectiveness of targeted ICC and IS workshops in enhancing Thai EFL teachers' intercultural competencies. However, the limitations discussed—such as the absence of a control group, lack of longitudinal data, potential need for context-specific training, and insufficient follow-up support—underscore the need for further research to build on these findings. Addressing these issues could not only strengthen the reliability and applicability of ICC and IS training for EFL teachers but also provide more robust strategies for fostering culturally responsive education in diverse classroom settings. Pedagogically, teachers can adapt lesson plans to include diverse cultural perspectives, integrating authentic materials (e.g., stories, texts, and case studies) from different cultures to expose students to a variety of worldviews. Moreover, classroom activities such as comparative discussions on cultural norms and values will help students reflect on and appreciate diversity. In addition, teachers can facilitate intercultural dialogue sessions, allowing students to share experiences and perspectives, fostering mutual respect and understanding. In terms of assessment, teachers can assess students equitably by designing assessments that account for linguistic and cultural diversity, avoiding culturally biased materials. Also, creating rubrics that evaluate diverse perspectives and intercultural competencies, rather than just language accuracy, ensures a more holistic assessment of student learning. Significantly, ensure the sustainability of diversity, inclusion, and equity in English classrooms, follow-up mechanisms should be integrated into professional development. For example, establishing teacher learning communities where educators can share best practices, challenges, and successful strategies for

integrating ICC and IS. Moreover, schools and institutions should offer refresher workshops or mentorship programs that allow teachers to continue building on their intercultural competencies. Ideally, policymakers and curriculum developers should embed intercultural competence training into teacher education programs to ensure that new teachers are prepared to cultivate inclusive and diverse classrooms from the start of their careers.

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