

Gauging and Linking Intercultural Competence and English Learning Motivation of Non-English Majors in Selected HEIs in China

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Abstract: This quantitative study determined whether students' intercultural competence predicts their English learning motivation significantly. The study was conducted in selected schools in Guangdong, China, and involved a sample of 372 non-English majors currently enrolled in a college English course. A survey was used to assess their level of intercultural competence in terms of intercultural knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness. The survey also gathered data on students' English learning motivation, measured by intrinsic and extrinsic learning motivation. Data analysis revealed that students recognize the importance of intercultural competence and generally exhibit a good level of competence, especially regarding intercultural attitudes. Regarding their English learning motivation, they demonstrated strong motivation. However, it should be noted that both their intercultural competence and English learning motivation have room for further improvement. The study also indicated that intercultural competence significantly predicts the respondents' continuing professional development. The study's findings have implications for enhancing English learning motivation in schools. They highlight the importance of strengthening students' intercultural competence to motivate them to learn English. Given the predictive role of intercultural competence, its development and targeted cultivation strategies are essential to increase its effectiveness further.

Keywords: Students' Intercultural Competence; English Learning Motivation; Intercultural Teaching.

1. Introduction

As the most widely used language in the world, English plays a vital role in international communication and scientific, technological, and cultural exchanges. According to the College English Teaching Guide (2020), learning English helps students to establish a global perspective, cultivate international awareness, and improve humanistic literacy, as well as providing an essential tool for knowledge innovation and preparing them for the challenges and opportunities of the era of globalization (Ministry of Education, 2020). As an English teacher, the researcher recognizes the benefits of having good English capabilities among the students. She also acknowledges the need to improve students learning in English. According to Li Huan & Li Jiaying (2019), learning English among college students in China is not optimistic. Analysis of class performance and examination results indicated the current situation of English learning among Chinese college students needs much improvement (Zhang Tian, 2019). After researching non-English major students and university English teachers, Niu Tengfei & Tang Hongbo (2020) discovered that autonomous English learning in universities is far from ideal.

Through questionnaire surveys and interviews, Shang Jianguo (2018) investigated the current situation of English learning investment among non-English major college students in four undergraduate institutions in Jiangsu. The results showed that the overall level of English learning investment among Chinese college students is not high, with behavioral, cognitive, and emotional investments all at relatively low levels. Moreover, Yu Chunyan Tian Xiaoho (2021) believes that many exist in the current

English learning situation of non-English major college students. Although some students have positive attitudes and

strong desires towards English learning, they perform poorly in practical actions. The effect of students learning English is related to their learning motivation. The stronger the motivation, the greater the investment in learning (Wang Nan, Xu Hongxia & Wu Wenjing, 2021). Learning motivation plays a vital role in determining learning success (Bao Hongji, Kang Li, 2021). College students' independent learning of English courses can improve their English proficiency and lay a solid foundation for future employment and development. (Lu Xingyu, Zhao Ruining, 2023). Learning motivation is affected by many factors, including students' intercultural competence.

By investigating the British and American cultural identity and learning motivation of English majors, Wang Weihong's (2020) research revealed a significant positive relationship between the two. The research results show a significant positive correlation between the overall British and American cultural identity and the overall motivation of English major college students in the English learning process. At the same time, British-American cultural identity not only directly affects learning motivation but also indirectly promotes English learning by enhancing personal development motivation. Huang Limin's study (2020) explored the relationship between intercultural communicative ability and English learning motivation among English majors and found a significant positive correlation. Students with strong cross-cultural communication skills tend to have higher learning motivation. Students' mastery of cross-cultural communication skills can stimulate their interest in learning English in English learning. Therefore, Huang Limin's research (2020) revealed the relationship between English major students' intercultural communicative ability and English learning motivation. It can be seen from these studies that the learning motivation of English major students is

affected by students' intercultural competence (ICC). However, for non-English major students, whether there is also a specific relationship between intercultural competence (ICC) and English learning motivation (ELM) was investigated in this study.

Intercultural competency is a composite concept, including three essential elements: emotion, knowledge, and behavior; intercultural competency is both a personal trait and an interactive skill, and it is a dynamic development process; intercultural competency is the ability to be perceived and recognized by both parties in communication (2019, Dai Xiaodong). Michael Byram renewed his book (1997) with the second edition (2020). In the new edition, he took the development in theory and practice concerning intercultural competence based on the 1997 edition, a fundamental and classic book on intercultural competence. Byram (1997) stated that foreign languages are the communication tools in intercultural communication, which determines the significance of foreign languages in ICC. The model has four critical components: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. *China's National Standard for Foreign Languages and Literatures Teaching Quality* issued in 2018 described the qualities contained in Intercultural Competence (ICC) as follows: respect for cultural diversity of the world, having intercultural empathy and critical cultural awareness, mastery of basic knowledge of intercultural study theories and analytical methods, understanding the essential characteristics of Chinese and foreign cultures, ability to interpret and evaluate different cultural phenomena and products, ability to conduct effective and appropriate intercultural communication, ability to help people from different cultural background to communicate effectively.

In December 2020, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE) released the latest version of *Guide to College English Teaching (2020 Edition)* (shortened as *The Guide*) (Ministry of Education, University Foreign Language Teaching Guidance Committee for Higher Education, 2020). *The Guide* cultivates students' English application ability and enhances their cross-cultural communication awareness and ability (Yuan Jing, 2021). According to *The Guide*, College English is a teaching system guided by the theory of foreign language teaching. It focuses on knowledge of the English language and its application of skills, cross-cultural communication, and learning strategies and combines a variety of teaching modes. Wang Tingting (2022) analyzed the integration of cross-cultural competence and the content related to the action of College English teaching. In her paper, she discussed the importance of cultivating students' cross-cultural competence to realize the goal of College English teaching better. Sibiu, Romania (2019) discussed the importance and ways of developing the attitudes and communication skills necessary for multicultural exchange in everyday life and within organizations. In the first chapter, Jane Jackson (2019) introduced the reason for studying language and intercultural communication and the conception of intercultural communication, interpersonal communication, and cross-cultural communication. Intercultural competence was discussed by Wolff, F., & Borzikowsky, C. (2018) as a set of abilities necessary for effective interaction with individuals from different cultures. Pan Xin (2021) also highlighted the importance of cross-competence cultivation in College English classes. Pan holds that cross-cultural education enables students to learn about

foreign societies and cultures through College English, enhance their understanding and awareness of the differences and similarities between Chinese and foreign cultures, and cultivate cross-cultural communication skills.

Given the importance of ICC and learning motivation in English education, it is imperative that knowledge about them should be deepened. According to the survey conducted by Tang Hongbo, Wang Na (2020) among non-English major students, there is still a need to study non-English majors' ICC. In response to this need, this paper is proposed. This paper assessed non-English majors' English learning motivation and intercultural competence. It is also hoped that this study will determine areas in ICC and motivation that need improvement. Furthermore, the study determined the predictive role of ICC on motivation in learning English.

For the assessment of motivation in learning English, this paper employed Gao Yihong et al.'s model (2003). It comprises seven variables: intrinsic interest, immediate achievement (grades, certificates), learning situation, going abroad, social responsibility, individual development, and information medium. In assessing the students' ICC, the study utilized the model developed by Wu Weiping and Fan Weiwei (2013). It is composed of the following sub-variables: knowledge of domestic culture, knowledge of foreign culture, attitude, intercultural communication skills, intercultural cognitive skills, and awareness. This ICC Rating Scale for Chinese college students was proven reliable and valid in actual measurement. They published the research in the *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, a well-known, authoritative core journal in China. This study will mainly adopt the questionnaire. Moreover, the study will investigate the predictive role of ICC on motivation. It is also hoped that this study will determine areas in ICC and motivation that need improvement.

1.1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The study is anchored on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) proposed by Milton J. Bennett in 1986. It is a grounded theory based on constructivist perception and communication theory (Bennett, 2017). It assumes that the experience of reality is constructed through perception and that more complex perceptual categories bring more complex experiences. Moreover, the DMIS assumes that people construct boundaries of "self and others" in ways that guide our experience of intercultural events. The development of communicators' intercultural sensitivity can be divided into six stages: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration, which are sequential stages composing a continuum (Bennett, 2017). The study is also anchored on E. L. Deci and R. M. Ryan's self-determination theory. It focuses on whether the motivation is of inside or outside control. There are three essential psychological resources: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. According to the resources of motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985) classify motivation into three groups: intrinsic, extrinsic, and motivation. Self-determination theory categorizes motivation into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The study examined the relationship between college students' intercultural competence and English learning motivation as manifested in their participation in College English Courses in China. Specifically, the study answered

the following problems:

1. What is the level of intercultural competence of the respondents in terms of:

1.1 intercultural knowledge (domestic and foreign cultural knowledge)

1.2 intercultural attitude

1.3 intercultural skills (intercultural cognitive and communicative skills)

1.4 intercultural awareness

2. What is the level of English learning motivation in terms of:

2.1 intrinsic motivation

2.2 extrinsic motivation

3. Do the sub-variables of intercultural competence predict significantly the respondents' English learning motivation?

4. Based on the study's results, what intercultural teaching program can be proposed?

Research Paradigm

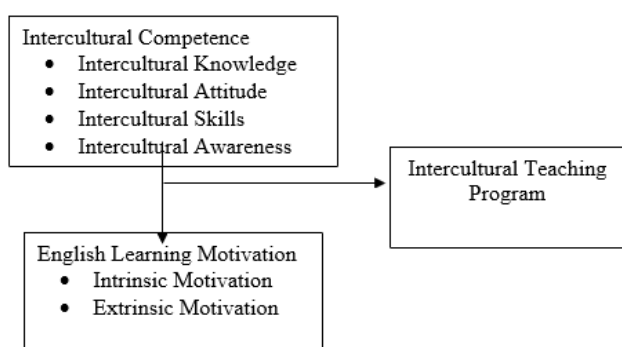


Figure 1. The Research Paradigm

Figure 1 shows the flow of the study. First, the intercultural competence of the respondents was assessed using the following dimensions: intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, intercultural skills, and intercultural awareness. On the other hand, English learning motivation was evaluated based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. After the assessments, the study determined whether intercultural competence (ICC) predicts students' English learning motivation. For the study's output, the researcher developed an intercultural training program based on the findings.

1.3. Hypothesis

H₀. The intercultural competence of the respondents does not predict significantly their English learning motivation.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This research gauged and lined the college students' intercultural competence and English learning motivation. It is significant both theoretically and practically for the following groups.

Students. The study will reveal the status of students' intercultural competence and the level of English motivation. Such information will help the school make interventions to address possible weak points in the students' intercultural competence and motivation and sustain what is doing well at the moment.

Faculty Members. The study will help English teachers clarify their students' motivation in learning the course and their intercultural competence. Based on the findings, the teachers can formulate corresponding teaching activities from a cultural perspective to improve students' motivation to learn

English. Furthermore, the study can help teachers guide students to treat ethnic Chinese and foreign cultures correctly in the actual teaching process.

School Administrators. The study can provide school administrators with new data on students' motivation to learn English and intellectual competence for policy formulation. Learning motivation is essential in the school's quest for good education. On the other hand, intercultural competence is a crucial aspect of equity in education, which requires data-driven decisions from school administrators.

English Curriculum Makers. The study can inform curriculum makers when designing the English course. It can show which aspect of students' motivation needs more focus in the course design. If the study shows that intercultural competence significantly predicts English motivation, the curriculum makers can also include cultural aspects in the English course.

Parents. The ultimate goal of the study is to contribute positively to enhancing English education.

For Future Researchers

Literature research found that most researchers mainly focus on studying the ICC, SLLM, or ELM, respectively, while fewer have been involved in gauging and linking between the two aspects. Therefore, the research on ICC, ELM, and their gauging and linking might be deepened through this study. Moreover, a detailed analysis of the types of English learning motivation of college students discussed in this research may enrich the theory of English learning motivation of non-English major college students. It is helpful to promote the new research direction on learning motivation and foreign language teaching and its further development.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This research aims to determine the predictive role of intercultural competence on learning motivation in College English courses. This quantitative study has two variables: students' intercultural competence and English learning motivation. Assessing the scale for students' intercultural competence involves four dimensions: intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, intercultural skills, and intercultural awareness, while students' English learning motivation will be measured in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

The study's respondents were non-English major college students currently enrolled in Guangdong University of Science and Technology, Xinhua College of Sun Yat-sen University, and Dongguan City University during the school year of 2023-2024. A sample size of 372 was selected randomly. Survey questionnaires were used to measure the variables. It has two parts: one is for measuring English learning motivation (Gao Yihong et al., 2003), and the other is for measuring intercultural competence (Wu Weiping, 2013). Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the study's hypothesis.

Definition of Terms

English Learning Motivation refers to the factors that drive individuals to learn the English language. It can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. More specifically, it includes intrinsic interest, immediate achievement, learning situation, going abroad, social responsibility, individual development, and information medium.

Intrinsic Motivation refers to language-related motivation, such as one's passion for the language itself, including intrinsic interest, immediate achievements for grades or

certificates, going abroad, and individual development.

Extrinsic Motivation refers to outside driving forces unrelated to the language and the learners, including learning situation, social responsibility, and information medium.

Intercultural Competence refers to the ability to effectively communicate, interact, and work with people from different cultures. It involves knowledge of different cultures, empathy, respect, and openness toward other cultures, as well as the skills to navigate and bridge cultural differences.

Intercultural Attitude is a mindset or orientation characterized by openness, curiosity, respect, and empathy towards people from different cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural Awareness refers to an individual's consciousness and sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities between themselves and others.

Intercultural Knowledge is about various cultural norms, values, beliefs, traditions, customs, and communication styles.

Intercultural Skills refer to the abilities and competencies that enable individuals to navigate and engage effectively in intercultural interactions and contexts.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The study used a quantitative method to generate numerical descriptions of variables. In the study, numerical description was used to probe the level of non-English majors' intercultural competence and English learning motivation. The study is also predictive correlational, where intercultural competence is the independent variable and English learning motivation is the dependent variable. Using multiple linear regression analysis, the predictive role of intercultural competence on English learning motivation was tested.

2.2. Sampling Method

The study respondents are non-English major college students enrolled in College English courses in the first semester of the school year in 2023-2024 in 3 universities in Guangdong. A sample size of 372 will be selected randomly from the 24145 students. The sample size is determined by the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator set at a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%.

Table 1. Sample Size Distribution

Schools	Students in English	
	Population	Sample
School 1	11059	170
School 2	6080	94
School 3	7006	108
Total	24145	372

As shown in Table 1, the sample size is distributed proportionately per school. School 1 has 170 respondents, School 2 has 94, and School 3 has 108.

2.3. Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire used in the study has two parts. The first part measured the level of intercultural competence of the respondents. The items were adopted from the questionnaires developed by Wu Weiping (2013). The second part of the questionnaire measured the respondents' motivation for learning English. The items in this section are adapted from the scale proposed by Gao et al. (2003). All the items in the questionnaire were fitted with a four-point response scale. Since the items in the research instrument were all adopted, they were no longer subjected to validation and pilot testing.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

Before the data gathering, the researcher submitted the research proposal for ethical review in China. After receiving the ethics review certificate, the researcher asked permission from the selected school administrators to conduct the study. After the request was granted, the researcher coordinated with the English Departments of the universities chosen to select target respondents randomly. The target participants were invited to participate in the study through e-mails. The invitation also included the informed consent form which explained the extent of the respondents' participation in the research and how their rights would be protected in the process. Those who responded affirmatively to the invitations and agreed to the consent form became the study's

respondents. They were given the survey questionnaires through the Wenjuanxing Questionnaire System, an online platform. The respondents were given a week to submit their responses to avoid bias based on time pressure.

2.5. Statistical Treatment of the Data

The data gathered was processed using SPSS 26.0 set at a 0.05 level of significance. Specifically, the following tools were applied to the treatment of data: descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to assess the students' intercultural competence and English learning motivation. The means were interpreted using the scale:

Range	Interpretation
3.51- 4.00	Very Good
2.51-3.50	Good
1.51-2.50	Poor
1.00 -1.50	Very Poor

On the other hand, the means in the assessment of motivation were interpreted using the scale:

Range	Interpretation
3.51- 4.00	Very High
2.51-3.50	High

1.51-2.50 Low

1.00 -1.50 Very Low

Meanwhile, multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine whether the students' intercultural competence significantly affected their English learning motivation.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The following are ethical issues that the research will take into consideration for this study.

Conflict of Interest

The researcher will conduct the study on her own, with no funding from any individual or organization. Therefore, no conflict of interest will be declared.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The welfare of the respondents will be protected at all stages of the study, and their privacy will be guaranteed. The researcher will ask permission from them in all circumstances involving their given information. These aspects are detailed in the informed consent form that will be explained to them once they express their intent to participate in the study.

Informed Consent

Before the data collection, the informed consent form (see the appendix) will also be given to the respondents, mainly including research purpose, research object, research content, research procedures, data processing methods, and research results that may be presented, possible risks, discomforts and inconveniences, possible benefits, confidentiality/ anonymity, disclosure of data and sharing of results, rights of the participants and so on to make sure that they agree to participate in the study on the basis of complete knowledge of the study.

Vulnerability

The respondents in the study do not belong to a vulnerable group. Despite this, the researcher will still protect their welfare. When conducting the study, the researcher will explain to the respondents that the questionnaire will be conducted anonymously, that their information and answers will be kept strictly confidential and can only be seen by the researcher, and that the questionnaires will be collected in a way that best protects their privacy. Furthermore, it will be

explained to them that they can stop their participation anytime they want, and that will not be taken against them.

Recruitment

The research will take great care to ensure that it does not create conditions under which potential participants feel pressure to join the study. The researcher will always remember that people may feel pressure to participate even if that has not been the intention of the researcher. They will also be explained to them also that the recruitment is prely random, and that the selected respondents can also refuse participation in the study.

Assent

Assent is the agreement of someone unable to give legal consent to participate in the activity. The research will not involve such populations.

Risks

Measures will be taken to minimize the risk of inadvertent disclosure of identifiers and research data that will arise in or result from the research, such as using password protection (at a minimum) and encryption (preferred) for computer files and digitized audio or video files; using removable storage devices (thumb or flash drives) that are encrypted and password protected; locking filing cabinets where paper files are stored; and quickly transcribing unprotected, taped interviews and notes on paper so they can then be destroyed.

Benefits

This study will provide insights to schools with the same problem regarding students' engagement in their English courses.

Incentives or compensation

Since the respondents agreed to volunteer for the study, they will not receive any incentives or compensation.

Community considerations

The communities involved in this study are mainly the selected schools. This study is primarily aimed at the students' engagement. It will not include damage to the community's natural environment and will also help to improve the community's management level in the future.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Assessment of Intercultural Competence

Table 2. Intercultural Knowledge

Items I have ...	Mean	SD	VB	INT	Rank
Knowledge of the history, geography and socio-political aspects of the country	3.26	0.68	Agree	Good	2
Knowledge of the country's way of life and values	3.34	0.63	Agree	Good	1
Knowledge of social etiquette and religious culture of the country	3.22	0.71	Agree	Good	3
Knowledge of history, geography and socio-political knowledge of foreign countries	2.92	0.90	Agree	Good	4
Knowledge of lifestyles and values of foreign countries	2.83	0.91	Agree	Good	6
Knowledge of social etiquette and religious culture of foreign countries	2.81	0.92	Agree	Good	7
Knowledge of strategies and techniques for intercultural communication	2.85	0.84	Agree	Good	5
Overall	3.03	0.68	Agree	Good	

Legend: VB (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation): Strongly Agree (Very Good 3.51-4.00; Agree/Good 2.51-3.50; Disagree/Poor 1.51-2.5; Strongly Disagree/Very Poor 1.00-1.50)

Table 2 shows the intercultural knowledge of non-English majors enrolled in College English is good. Knowledge, including both language knowledge and cultural knowledge, is a crucial component of intercultural competence (Yang Guihua & Zhao Zhiyun, 2018). The overall mean score across all items is 3.03. The mean scores for each item range from 2.81 to 3.34, indicating that respondents generally agree with

their level of intercultural knowledge. The standard deviations range from 0.63 to 0.92, suggesting varying degrees of consistency in respondents' answers.

Students know the most about the daily life and values of a country (item 2), with an average score of 3.34. Their answers were also relatively consistent. They also have a good understanding of a country's history, geography, and politics

(item 1), scoring an average of 3.26. At the same time, they have a decent grasp of a country's social customs and religious culture (item 3), with an average score of 3.22. However, there was more variation in the responses. The area where these students know the least is about foreign countries' social customs and religious culture (item 6), with the lowest average score of 2.81. There was also the most variation in the answers. Knowledge about foreign countries' history, geography, and politics (item 4) and their lifestyles and values (Item 5) also scored low, with averages of 2.92 and 2.83. This means that there's room for improvement in understanding foreign cultures.

Zhao (2024) suggests that due to the profound influence of their native culture, students tend to focus primarily on their own linguistic and cultural background, which can result in a lack of awareness and respect for the cultures of other countries and regions. Dai Yunhong's research (2019) on students' intercultural knowledge indicated that most students have a basic understanding of foreign cultural elements while they lack knowledge in areas such as lifestyle, historical events, literature, music, politics, and values, indicating a need for improvement in these areas. Additionally, Cai Ying (2023) held a similar view that students have a limited understanding of foreign history, political systems, and social

customs.

College students have limited knowledge of religious and social customs in English-speaking countries, particularly regarding privacy taboos. In contrast, they are more familiar with domestic lifestyles, values, and social etiquette. This is mainly due to growing up in a native cultural environment where they are more exposed to local customs. At the same time, their exposure to foreign cultures is minimal, leaving them unfamiliar with foreign lifestyles and cultural practices (Fan Hui, 2019).

The top three items (items 2, 1, and 3) relate to respondents' knowledge of their country's cultural, social, and political aspects, indicating a more robust understanding of domestic intercultural knowledge. The lower-ranked items (items 6, 5, and 4) are focused on foreign countries, reflecting a need for further learning and exposure to intercultural aspects beyond the home country. The data reveal that students have a relatively better understanding of China's cultural aspects, such as its values, history, and socio-political structure. However, there is a noticeable knowledge gap regarding foreign countries, particularly in social etiquette and religious culture. The gap means students could learn better about and connect with foreign cultures.

Table 3. Intercultural Attitude

Items I demonstrate my ...	Mean	SD	VB	INT	Rank
1. Willingness to communicate with and learn from foreigners from different cultures.	3.23	0.73	Agree	Good	3
2. Willingness to be tolerant of foreigners' different values, eating habits, taboos, etc.	3.28	0.64	Agree	Good	1
3. Willingness to learn foreign languages and understand foreigners.	3.26	0.69	Agree	Good	2
Overall	3.26	0.60	Agree	Good	

Legend: VB (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation): Strongly Agree (Very Good 3.51-4.00; Agree/Good 2.51-3.50; Disagree/Poor 1.51-2.50; Strongly Disagree/Very Poor 1.00-1.50)

Table 3 shows the respondents' assessment of intercultural attitudes. The students generally have a positive attitude towards cross-cultural interactions, with an average score of 3.26. This indicates that students have a good attitude towards interacting with people from other cultures and are open to different cultures. The small variation (SD = 0.60) means that students' opinions are coherent.

Item 2, the most agreed upon, got the highest mean score of 3.28. This means that students have high acceptance of cultural differences. Item 3 scored second, with an average of 3.26. It shows that students have a strong interest in learning about other cultures and languages but with more variation in responses. Item 1 came third, with an average of 3.23. This is still a positive score, but it's a little lower than the others, suggesting there might be room for encouraging more interactions with people from different cultures.

The results show that students generally have a good attitude toward interacting with people from other cultures, especially in accepting cultural differences. While there's a high level of agreement in all aspects of cross-cultural attitudes, the willingness to actively engage with foreigners is a bit lower, indicating there might be an opportunity to improve cross-cultural communication skills. Overall, students show a solid openness to learning about different cultures.

Researchers generally agree that a positive attitude towards other cultures and effective communication strategies are also essential to ensure successful intercultural interactions (Yang

& Zhao, 2018). This aligns with Zhou Haiyan's (2019) research, which shows that students are eager to understand and accept diverse cultures, including values, dietary habits, and taboos. This view is further supported by Shen Wen and Hu Bangjie (2023), who found that students not only accept and understand foreign cultures and values but also actively engage with them with an open attitude. Similarly, Zhong (2021) noted that most students are eager to improve their intercultural communication skills and seek to enhance their knowledge and abilities with the support of their teachers and their efforts. Huang Limin (2020) also highlighted that undergraduates generally maintain positive and open-minded attitudes when interacting with foreigners in intercultural contexts.

Table 4 presents the respondents' assessment of intercultural skills. They agreed to all the indicators, resulting in a mean score of 3.04, with a standard deviation of 0.62. This indicates that students have good intercultural abilities. Among the skills, the highest score was for being polite when communicating with foreigners (item 3), with a mean of 3.21. This is followed by avoiding prejudice and stereotyping when interacting with foreigners, with a mean of 3.19. The third highest score was for using body language or other non-verbal means when facing a language barrier (item 1), the mean of which is 3.16. The relatively high scores in these areas suggest strong recognition of these skills. This indicates that they possess a certain level of confidence when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds,

particularly in being polite to foreigners and avoiding prejudice and stereotypes. However, the ability to acquire knowledge about intercultural communication through direct contact with foreigners (item 5) got the lowest mean with 2.89. Also, using various methods, techniques, and strategies to help learn foreign languages and cultures (item 6) or using a

foreign language to communicate with people from different socio-cultural backgrounds and fields (item 2) rank lower with means of 2.91 and 2.90. This suggests that students may face challenges in engaging with and learning from foreign cultures in practice.

Table 4. Intercultural Skills

Items I have the ...	Mean	SD	VB	INT	Rank
1. Ability to use body language or other non-verbal means of communication when there is a language barrier.	3.16	0.72	Agree	Good	3
2. Ability to use a foreign language to communicate with people from different socio-cultural backgrounds and fields.	2.90	0.87	Agree	Good	6
3. Ability to treat foreigners politely when communicating with them.	3.21	0.66	Agree	Good	1
4. Ability to avoid prejudice and stereotyping of foreigners when interacting with them.	3.19	0.66	Agree	Good	2
5. Ability to acquire knowledge about intercultural communication directly through contact with foreigners.	2.89	0.84	Agree	Good	7
6. Ability to utilize various methods, techniques and strategies to help learn foreign languages and cultures.	2.91	0.82	Agree	Good	5
7. Ability to reflect on and learn from cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings and to seek appropriate solutions when they occur.	3.01	0.76	Agree	Good	4
Overall	3.04	0.62	Agree	Good	

Legend: VB (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation): Strongly Agree (Very Good 3.51-4.00; Agree/Good 2.51-3.50; Disagree/Poor 1.51-2.50; Strongly Disagree/Very Poor 1.00-1.50)

Many students need help negotiating or explaining their culture effectively during intercultural misunderstandings (Yang & Zhang, 2024). They struggle to apply their knowledge flexibly, showing limited sensitivity to cultural differences and lacking proactivity (Cai, 2023). Their hesitation in handling communication breakdowns with foreigners is mainly due to a focus on language instruction in university English teaching, which needs more attention to

oral communication skills (Zhou, 2019). Consequently, students need more sensitivity and strategies to resolve intercultural conflicts and ensure mutual understanding (Fan, 2019). As these skills are crucial for deepening intercultural understanding and enhancing intercultural communication, teachers must provide more opportunities for skill development and guide students to engage in more practical experiences.

Table 5. Intercultural Awareness

Items I have the ...	Mean	SD	VB	INT	Rank
1. Awareness of cultural similarities and differences when interacting with foreigners	3.17	0.68	Agree	Good	2.5
2. Awareness of the differences between one's own cultural identity and the other's cultural identity when interacting with foreigners	3.18	0.68	Agree	Good	1
3. Awareness of differences in cultural styles and language use and their impact on social and work situations	3.17	0.70	Agree	Good	2.5
Overall	3.17	0.62	Agree	Good	

Legend: VB (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation): Strongly Agree (Very Good 3.51-4.00; Agree/Good 2.51-3.50; Disagree/Poor 1.51-2.50; Strongly Disagree/Very Poor 1.00-1.50)

Table 5 shows the mean scores and standard deviations for students' intercultural awareness. The respondents agreed with all the indicators, resulting in an overall mean score of 3.17, with a standard deviation of 0.62. The highest-rated item is the "awareness of the differences between one's own cultural identity and the other's cultural identity when interacting with foreigners" (item 2), which means 3.18. Two items share the second position: "awareness of cultural similarities and differences when interacting with foreigners" (item 2) and "awareness of differences in cultural styles and language use and their impact on social and work situations" (item 3). Both got a mean of 3.17. These scores suggest a consistently positive self-assessment of participants' intercultural awareness across all items.

This result contrasts Zhao Liya's (2024) findings, which

indicated that many students needed more vital intercultural awareness. Wang (2022) emphasizes the need for teachers to enhance students' intercultural awareness and sensitivity and problem-solving from diverse perspectives. Wang (2021) stresses that learners must possess a strong cultural awareness—understanding differences in values, social customs, history, and philosophy across cultures. However, Yang and Zhang (2024) discovered that some students lack the initiative to engage with other cultures and express Chinese culture in English, perceiving their intercultural awareness as weak. Despite this, Zhou Haiyan (2020) found that students generally demonstrate tolerance and equality towards cultural differences, supported by Fan Hui (2019), who observed that most students approach different cultures objectively and rationally.

Table 6. Overall Intercultural Competence

Domains	Mean	SD	VB	INT	Rank
Intercultural Knowledge	3.03	0.68	Agree	Good	4
Intercultural Attitude	3.26	0.60	Agree	Good	1
Intercultural Skills	3.04	0.62	Agree	Good	3
Intercultural Awareness	3.17	0.62	Agree	Good	2
Overall	3.13	0.55	Agree	Good	

Legend: VB (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation): Strongly Agree (Very Good 3.51-4.00; Agree/Good 2.51-3.50; Disagree/Poor 1.51-2.50; Strongly Disagree/Very Poor 1.00-1.50)

Table 6 presents the overall assessment of the respondents' intercultural competence. All domains indicate a good level of intercultural competence, mirrored in the overall mean of 3.13 (SD =0.55). The highest scoring domain is "Intercultural Attitude," with a mean of 3.26. It indicates that students demonstrate strong positivity and openness in intercultural attitudes. Following closely is "Intercultural Awareness," with a mean of 3.17, which suggests that the respondents know the existence and impact of cultural differences. "Intercultural Skills" ranks third with a mean of 3.04, indicating that students possess a certain level of capability in practical cross-cultural communication and interaction. The lowest scoring domain is "Intercultural Knowledge," with a mean of 3.03, revealing a relatively weaker grasp of theoretical knowledge and a specific understanding of other cultures.

The finding is from some previous research. The overall intercultural sensitivity of college students is high (Zhang Xinyue, 2022), but there are notable gaps in their

competencies. While students show strong attitudes and willingness toward intercultural communication, their knowledge and skills are weaker (Wu Yuanqing, Luo Xiaowei, & Lu Zongli, 2021; Feng Junru, 2021). Specifically, students excel in attitudes but score lowest in knowledge, with significant variation in knowledge and skills (Zhong Yuhong, 2021). Zhou Haiyan (2020) highlights a deficiency in intercultural skills and knowledge despite positive attitudes. Students perform well in politeness (Fan Hui, 2019) but need more practical experience and opportunities for intercultural engagement, affecting their understanding of cultural differences and communication styles (Fan Hui, 2019). Overall, while intercultural competence is generally good (Liu Xing, 2022), improvements are needed in cultural analysis and application skills (Feng Junru, 2021).

3.2. Assessment of English Learning Motivation

Table 7. Intrinsic Motivation

Items	Mean	SD	VB	INT	Rank
1. I love learning foreign languages.	3.14	0.68	Agree	High	3
2. I learn English because I like the language.	2.97	0.76	Agree	High	7
3. I learn English because I am interested in people from English-speaking countries.	2.92	0.80	Agree	High	9
4. I study English because I am interested in English songs, movies and TV dramas, or literature.	3.10	0.71	Agree	High	5
5. I study English to prepare for my graduate/doctoral exams.	2.96	0.77	Agree	High	8
6. I study English to get certificates of English level exams, such as CET-4 and CET-6 certificates.	3.19	0.68	Agree	High	2
7. I study English to pass the English final exam.	3.10	0.75	Agree	High	5
8. I study English for the purpose of obtaining university diplomas and degrees.	3.23	0.63	Agree	High	1
9. I learn English to seek better educational or job opportunities abroad.	2.81	0.82	Agree	High	11
10. I am learning English in order to go abroad and experience the culture of other countries.	2.90	0.77	Agree	High	10
11. I am learning English in order to eventually emigrate abroad.	3.10	0.68	Agree	High	5
Overall	3.04	0.51	Agree	High	

Legend: VB (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation): Strongly Agree / Very High 3.51-4.0; Agree/High 2.51-3.50; Disagree/ Low 1.51-2.50, Strongly Disagree/Very Low 1.00-1.50

Table 7 presents the data on intrinsic motivation for English learning, with mean scores and standard deviations indicating participants' motivation levels. The overall mean score for inherent motivation to learn English is 3.04, with an SD of 0.51, indicating a high level of agreement among participants that intrinsic factors play a significant role in their motivation to learn English. The highest-ranked motivation is studying English to obtain university diplomas and degrees (item 8), with a mean of 3.23. It indicates that academic goals powerfully drive English learning. Following closely is studying English to get certificates for English-level exams, such as CET-4 and CET-6 (item 6), whose mean is 3.19. The third-highest motivation is the love for learning foreign languages (item 1), with a mean of 3.14. It suggests a genuine

interest in language learning. The lowest-ranked item is learning English to seek better educational or job opportunities abroad (item 9). It got a mean of mean of 2.81. It is followed by learning English to experience the culture of other countries (item 10), the mean of which is 2.90. These scores indicate that career and cultural aspirations influence English learning but are not as strong as academic motivations. The data suggests that intrinsic motivations vary among participants, with pursuing university diplomas and degrees being the most potent motivators. In contrast, the least prominent motivator is the desire to seek better opportunities abroad. The relatively low standard deviations indicate a consensus among students regarding their intrinsic motivations.

Fan Hui (2019) found that most students see English learning as a tool to meet academic requirements, such as earning credits, passing exams, and obtaining certificates like CET-4 and CET-6. They believe failing to meet these requirements could impact graduation and job prospects. Zhang Xinyue (2022) revealed that only some students are motivated by intrinsic interest. Immediate achievement, such

as passing exams or fulfilling school requirements, is a stronger motivator. She noted that students are more motivated by immediate achievement, as their primary goal is to pass exams and obtain degree certificates. Additionally, even fewer students cite studying abroad as their primary motivation for learning English.

Table 8. Extrinsic Motivation

Items	Mean	SD	VB	INT	Rank
1. I study English because my parents/school want me to.	3.01	0.71	Agree	High	11
2. My motivation to learn English depends largely on whether I like my English teacher	3.06	0.69	Agree	High	9
3. My motivation to learn English depends largely on the quality of my English lessons.	2.86	0.80	Agree	High	13
4. My enthusiasm for learning English largely depends on whether I find the textbook content interesting.	2.98	0.73	Agree	High	12
5. My motivation to learn English depends largely on whether I like the learning atmosphere of my current English class.	2.36	1.01	Disagree	Low	14
6. I am studying English to help the world understand China.	3.23	0.62	Agree	High	4
7. By learning English well, I can contribute more to China's prosperity.	3.25	0.61	Agree	High	2
8. I learn English well to live up to my parents' expectations.	3.05	0.71	Agree	High	10
9. Learning English well may help me find a good job in the future.	3.20	0.63	Agree	High	5
10. English is an important stepping stone on the path of life.	3.27	0.61	Agree	High	1
11. English proficiency is a symbol of educational level and personal refinement.	3.11	0.70	Agree	High	8
12. I learn English in order to learn my field better.	3.19	0.63	Agree	High	6
13. I study English to access information on the economy, technology, and entertainment industries from around the world.	3.17	0.66	Agree	High	7
14. I learn English to communicate effectively with foreigners.	3.24	0.61	Agree	High	3
Overall	3.07	0.50	Agree	High	

Legend: VB (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation): Strongly Agree / Very High 3.51-4.0; Agree/High 2.51-3.50; Disagree/Low 1.51-2.50, Strongly Disagree/Very Low 1.00-1.50

Table 8 shows the extrinsic motivation factors that influence English language learning among the respondents. The degree to which these motivations drive students to learn English varies. With an overall mean score of 3.07, the respondents are considered to have a high level of motivation stemming from several external factors. The highest-ranked motivation was the belief that English is an important stepping stone in life (item 10). It has an overall mean of 3.27. The second and the third rank are motivations to contribute more to China's prosperity (items 7 and 14). Their means are 3.25 and 3.24, respectively. They indicate that students see English as a valuable tool for both personal and national growth.

On the other hand, the lowest score (mean =2.36) comes from motivation, depending on the learning atmosphere of the current English class (item 5). The respondents expressed disagreement with this item, indicating that the class

environment is not a major motivational factor for learning English. The findings suggest that students are more motivated by long-term goals such as career advancement and personal development than by immediate educational experiences. The relatively lower scores for motivations related to the quality of teaching and learning materials indicate that while these factors are essential, they are not the primary drivers for most learners.

According to Zhang Xinyue (2022), many students are strongly motivated to learn English to access information, with personal development being another critical driver. A smaller portion of students are motivated by social responsibility, viewing English proficiency as a way to strengthen China and enhance global understanding. However, motivation linked to learning environments, such as teachers, class quality, and materials, is generally weaker, as students must complete English courses regardless of these factors.

Table 9. Overall Motivation

Items	Mean	SD	VB	INT	Rank
Intrinsic Motivation	3.04	0.51	Agree	High	2
Extrinsic Motivation	3.07	0.50	Agree	High	1
Overall	3.05	0.48	Agree	High	

Legend: VB (Verbal Description), INT (Interpretation): SA (Strongly Agree) /VH (Very High) 3.51-4.00; A (Agree)/H (High) 2.51-3.50; D (Disagree)/L (Low) 1.51-2.50, SD (Strongly Disagree)/VL (Very Low) 1.00-1.50

Table 9 presents the overall motivation for learning English. It has a mean of 3.05 (SD =0.48), indicating that students have high English learning motivation. The close mean scores for intrinsic and extrinsic motivations indicate a balanced emphasis on personal interest and external pressures in students' motivation to learn English. The slightly higher

ranking of extrinsic motivation may reflect the practical considerations often accompanying language learning, such as the need for English in professional or academic settings. This differs from Zhang Xinyue's (2022) research, in which college students' general motivation for learning English is only at the middle level.

3.3. Intercultural Competence as Predictor of Motivation

Table 10. Multiple Regression Model

Independent Variables	R Square	Beta	Sig	Interpretation
Intercultural Knowledge	0.509	0.140	.002	Predictor
Intercultural Attitude		0.126	.004	Predictor
Intercultural Skills		0.252	.000	Predictor
Intercultural Awareness		0.096	.022	Predictor

Table 10 shows the result of the multiple regression analysis. It yielded a model with intercultural knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness as predictors of motivation. The predictors explain 50.9% of the variance in motivation (R square = 0.509). Intercultural knowledge with Beta = 0.140, and sig = .002 can cause a 0.14 change in motivation for every unit increase. Regarding intercultural attitude (Beta = 0.126, and sig = .004), a unit increase can result in a 0.126 change in student motivation in English.

Meanwhile, intercultural skills (Beta = 0.252, sig = .000) can cause a 0.252-factor change in motivation for every unit change. The least predictive ability can be seen in intercultural awareness, whose Beta = 0.096 and sig = .022. For every unit change in intercultural awareness, student motivation can increase by 0.096 only. The higher the students' intercultural competence, the stronger their motivation. As learners develop the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, their motivation to learn English increases. This may be because when learners perceive language teaching as a means to enhance their cross-cultural communication, the learning process's relevance and practicality are heightened.

The finding aligns to the claim of Liu Xing (2022) that intercultural competence and English learning motivation are correlated. Similarly, Wu Lan (2018) observed a significant positive correlation between adult students' cultural identification with English-speaking countries and their English learning motivation. The stronger their cultural identification, the higher their motivation for learning English, with instrumental motivation surpassing integrative motivation. Additionally, students taking intercultural courses tend to have higher English learning motivation than those not (Zhang Xinyue, 2022). The finding implies that intercultural competence can be essential to students' motivation to study English.

3.4. Conclusion

Based on the results and findings, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. The overall intercultural competence is at a good level but far from excellent.

The respondents have acquired intercultural knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness. With the good level of intercultural competence among students, the school can successfully engage in intercultural interactions. It can navigate and bridge differences among students of different cultural backgrounds.

2. The motivation for English learning among students is high. They are highly motivated to learn intrinsically and extrinsically. The students have strong drive to perform well in their English class. Their motivation, however, still has a lot of room for improvement.

3. Intercultural competence has a predictive influence on the students' English learning motivation. Fostering intercultural knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness

motivates students to learn English. Intercultural competence can be an important element in English education.

3.5. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn, the following are being recommended.

1. The level of intercultural competence has yet to be very good. To improve it further, English teachers can incorporate more intercultural content, including case studies, literature, history, and media from various cultures, to provide students with a comprehensive global perspective. Teachers also need to shift from traditional methods focusing solely on language knowledge to approaches emphasizing cultural background and context. This involves introducing real intercultural communication cases to help students understand and analyze cultural differences and characteristics. The proposed program may be used for a more organized approach to intercultural competence enhancement.

2. There is still plenty of room for improvement in motivation in English learning. The teachers should conduct an orientation session at the beginning of the semester so that students will realize the importance of having good English proficiency. In the conduct of the course, the teachers should also provide opportunities for students to realize the practical benefits of learning.

3. Intercultural competence should be considered an important element of students' English learning motivation. Efforts to improve students' motivation may be tied up to enhancing intercultural competence. Teachers should emphasize to the students that English, the universal language, is an important tool for intercultural interactions. It can help students to navigate and bridge cultural diversity.

3.6. Program of Intercultural Competence Enhancement

Rationale

The modern, globalized world demands a high level of intercultural competence. The data indicates that while students possess a satisfactory level of intercultural competence and English learning motivation, there is significant potential for improvement. The data reveals that students' intercultural knowledge requires enhancement to deepen their understanding of cultural contexts. Their intercultural skills also need strengthening to handle cross-cultural interactions better. Intercultural awareness needs further refinement to enrich cultural sensitivity, although it is good. The intercultural attitude is positive but could benefit from increased appreciation for cultural diversity. From the regression analysis, it can be found that all dimensions of intercultural competence significantly predict English learning motivation. Students' intercultural competence significantly correlates with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in English learning. Enhancing these competencies can lead to greater motivation in learning English. Providing a structured program that integrates intercultural teaching aims

to develop students' intercultural competence and thereby improve their English learning motivation.

General Objective:

Table 11. The project is designed to elevate students' intercultural competence and motivate them to learn English

Areas of Concern	Objectives	Activities and Time Frame	Persons In Charge	Budget	Success Indicators
Intercultural competence (ICC) and English learning motivation (ELM)	1. To become acquainted with general concepts of intercultural competence and English learning motivation	1. A half-day lecture on intercultural competence and English learning motivation 2 nd week of the semester	English Department Head	2000 RMB	Explaining the association between ICC and ELM
Intercultural competence	To introduce the program and its objectives.	1. A half-day kick-off event on the importance of intercultural competence 3 rd week of the semester	English Department Head	5000 RMB	Enhanced awareness of intercultural competence
Intercultural knowledge	To integrate intercultural topics into the current English course; To develop supplementary materials for intercultural learning.	A two-day integration workshop of intercultural topics into existing English courses 4 th week of the semester	Senior English Teachers	10000 RMB	Enhanced intercultural knowledge
Intercultural knowledge and intercultural skills	1. To incorporate intercultural content into their teaching. 2. To discuss best practices for teaching intercultural skills.	1. A two-day teacher training workshop for English teachers on incorporating intercultural content into their teaching 5 th week of the semester	Cross-cultural Experts	15000 RMB	Increased intercultural knowledge and intercultural skills
ICC: Experimenting	1. To practice intercultural communication; 2. To organize cultural exchange events with international students.	1. A two-day workshop of teaching training and interactive learning activities through role plays and simulation practice in class 6 th week of the semester	English Teachers	5000 RMB	Increase in intercultural skills
Intercultural knowledge and intercultural skills	1. To complete a peer-mentoring program for intercultural learning; 2. To make students lead workshops on various cultural topics.	1. A one-day seminar on peer-mentoring intercultural learning engagement 7 th week of the semester	Student Representatives	10000 RMB	Increase in intercultural learning engagement
ICC: Keeping up to date	1. To assess students' progress in intercultural competence; 2. To collect feedback from students and teachers on the effectiveness of the project.	1. A half-day seminar on assessment and feedback in progress in intercultural competence 8 th week of the semester	Cross-cultural Experts	5000 RMB	Increase in reflecting and feedback activities
Intercultural attitude and awareness	1. To organize a campus-wide cultural festival; To present students' intercultural learning experiences.	A half-day cultural festival to embrace diversity 9 th week of the semester	Student Affairs Officer	10000 RMB	Increased engagement in keeping up to date activities
Intercultural competence: feedback, collaborating for improvement	1. To review the project's achievements and gather suggestions for improvement.	1. A half-day seminar on intercultural teaching and learning and reviewing the program 10 th week of the semester	Cross-cultural Experts	5000 RMB	Increase in reflecting and feedback activities.

Plan of Implementation

The program will be carried out in the sequence outlined in the chart, running for ten weeks. All activities should be scheduled and finalized in advance, including their specific dates, times, and locations. Timely communication of these details to participants is crucial. Before the program begins, all financial and material resources must be secured, venues must be reserved, and the participation of guest speakers must

be confirmed. Additionally, the process for documenting and liquidating program expenses should be established early. A designated committee will oversee financial management, procurement of necessary materials, and catering arrangements for the participants.

Throughout the program, consistent monitoring is essential. A monitoring committee should track participant attendance, resource speaker engagement, and ensure that activities are

executed according to plan. They will also assess whether any adjustments are required during the implementation.

After the program concludes, a thorough evaluation will take place. An evaluation committee will review the program's success in meeting its objectives and assessing the overall execution. Participants should provide feedback, and the committee will recommend improvements for future iterations. A comprehensive report detailing the program's implementation, including documentation, evaluations, and financial summaries, will be compiled and presented.

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