

(Inter)cultural components in EFL teaching: evidence from pre-service teachers' projects

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Abstract

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is an object of recent studies in the areas of applied linguistics, education and teacher training, those discussing theoretical underpinnings of the intercultural approach and those focusing on classroom implications. In Poland, fostering FL learners' ICC has become an ambitious goal of both FL education and FL teacher training. The paper discusses the results of the study which examined the empirical projects produced by pre-service FL teachers, participants of EFL training organized within a university setting. The topics of all the projects revolve around introducing intercultural elements in EFL teaching. The analysis examined the aims of the students' projects, the methodology applied and the theoretical perspectives that underlined the studies. The findings allowed the author of the paper to construct the profile of a FL teacher who would be prepared to promote the principles of the intercultural approach in FL teaching. The paper may be of interest to those involved in FL education, including FL teacher training.

Keywords: *intercultural communicative competence, teacher education, teaching English as a foreign language*

Introduction

Joining the European Union by Poland in 2004 involved introducing considerable changes, also in foreign language education. A new goal was set – fostering students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which entails preparing students to understand foreign cultures and teaching them how to draw on this new competence in communication with foreigners. In Poland, clear guidelines concerning this new approach in education are laid down in the *Core Curriculum for primary and secondary education* issued by the Ministry of National Education (MEN 2017, 2018), which is based on the internationally recognized document - *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001). It is worth emphasizing that this new situation has influenced the nature of FL teacher education, which aims to prepare trainees to face new challenges in their role as FL teachers.

Intercultural communicative competence has attracted the attention of numerous studies conducted in the area of FL learning and teaching, those discussing ICC from a theoretical perspective and those investigating the issue in a more practical manner. However, there seems to be lack of research that would explore pre-service teachers' interests in this important area of FL teaching. The present paper looks at a selection of MA projects developed by pre-service teachers, participants of the teacher training in one of the higher education institutions in Kraków, Poland. The analysis explored how the notion of ICC is perceived by the student teachers and what aspects of ICC are the foci of their projects. It was assumed that the results of this analysis can provide useful information concerning the student teachers' understanding of the role of ICC in FL teaching and their readiness to implement the principles of the new approach in their future professional activities.

Theoretical background

In this part of the paper, the role of ICC in FL teaching and FL research, particularly in the Polish context, will be discussed. Byram's model of ICC as a theoretical perspective inspiring both researchers and practitioners will be presented as well. Since the present study focusses on pre-service teachers being trained in Poland, more information about this system of FL teacher education will be given.

FL teacher education in Poland

In Poland, foreign language (FL) teachers can be trained in tertiary education institutions, such as universities and vocational schools. FL teacher training programs organized within higher education

institutions are informed by two documents: *the Decree of Minister of Science and Higher Education on teacher qualifications standards* (MNiSW 2019) and *National Qualifications Framework* (2011), in Polish *Krajowe Ramy Kwalifikacyjne (KRK)*. The first document specifies the main objectives of teacher education and provides clear guidelines for study programs. The latter one describes exit standards concerning academic competences within science disciplines (in the case of FL teachers – modern language philology) that university students are required to develop.

As regards general academic competences, students are expected to extend their knowledge about the discipline of English philology and its connection with other disciplines. In the area of academic skills, students should practice research skills, critical thinking skills and self-study skills. Along with developing the abovementioned competences, student teachers receive training in a set of teaching competences. Apart from developing proficiency in a FL, trainees acquire general pedagogical competences and skills necessary in EFL teaching, such as selecting teaching materials, evaluating students' learning, giving feedback. Trainees develop reflection skills in relation to their own teaching; they learn how to analyze and talk about their own teaching experiences. A vital goal of the teacher training concerns preparing student teachers to cope with the changing reality of contemporary education, which may involve teaching children who have a limited knowledge of the Polish language and come from culturally distant backgrounds. It is important that novice teachers develop efficient strategies of teaching children affected by migration, who may have difficulties to adjust to new school realities. Therefore, an essential objective of teacher training is to improve trainees' knowledge of FL cultures and to raise their intercultural awareness. To sum up, it is crucial that teacher training institutions offer programs that are comprehensive enough to cater for graduates' linguistic, didactic and intercultural competences.

The role of ICC in FL teaching in Poland

Recently, the relationship between FL teaching and culture has attracted interest among language educators. Globalization, migration and immigration (social phenomena that influence all the countries in the world, including Poland), have challenged the existing understanding that foreign language learning involves primarily developing knowledge and skills related to a given language (e.g. Chlopek 2008, Moeler & Osborn 2014). A call for a cultural component in FL education has been emphasized by e.g. Byram, Gribkova & Starkey (2002). This new approach, called in the present paper the intercultural approach, requires introducing changes in teaching techniques, which in turn involves adopting new roles by both the teacher and learners. Documents prepared by the Council of Europe (2001, 2018) promote developing ICC and provide teachers with useful guidelines that can enrich their understanding of the main concepts related to ICC and thereby inspire them to implement the new ideas in their language classrooms. A more recent document CEFR. *Companion volume with new descriptors* (Council of Europe 2018) seems particularly valuable for underlining the need for developing in FL learners' mediation abilities which can "facilitate a positive interactive environment for successful communication between participants of different cultural backgrounds, including in multicultural contexts" (Council of Europe 2018: 122).

Since English has become the language used in various countries for different purposes also by non-native speakers, it has become evident that Polish students need to develop language skills along with intercultural skills. Some general instructions on how to employ the principles of the intercultural approach in FL education in Poland are offered in *the Core Curriculum for primary and secondary education* (MEN 2017, MEN 2018), documents which provide guidelines for school syllabi and teaching materials, including coursebooks. *The Core Curriculum for primary education* (MEN 2017) recommends that school instruction promotes the attitudes of openness and curiosity towards foreign cultures, not only those related to foreign languages taught at school. *The Curriculum for teaching foreign language in secondary schools* (MEN 2018) advocates familiarizing learners with FL cultures and increasing their

awareness of the connection between foreign cultures and their own culture. Another important aim emphasized in this document is developing learners' intercultural sensitivity.

ICC in FL research in Poland

The place of ICC in FL teaching and learning has been explored by many studies conducted in Poland. An overview of selected studies carried out and published in Poland in 2007-2017 done by Kusiak-Pisowacka (2018) suggests that most of the studies reviewed by the researcher drew on Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence. A substantial part of the studies (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich 2009) focuses on practical applications of the intercultural approach, such as materials development and designing appropriate techniques. There are hardly any studies (Owczarek 2016) that explore an issue of evaluating ICC of FL learners. Similarly, a relatively small number of studies (Owczarek 2009) discuss the theoretical foundations of developing ICC.

Since ICC has been widely acknowledged as a crucial element of FL teaching, studies that explore FL teachers and their beliefs regarding this area of education seem to be of special interest. It is crucial to explain that in the intercultural approach, the teacher is expected to take a role of "an intercultural mediator" (Bandura 2007, Miłuńska 2009). To perform this new role, the teacher needs to acquire sound knowledge of foreign cultures and his/her own culture, and develop intercultural sensitivity. Last but not least, the teacher should be willing to develop his/her skills as a participant of intercultural communication and promote this attitude among his/her students. A number of studies, e.g. Bandura (2007), Miłuńska (2009), and Young and Sachdev (2011), imply that even experienced teachers do not feel comfortable in this new role. Although most of the FL teachers investigated in the aforementioned studies approved of the need to teach intercultural communicative competence, they admitted that it is not a direct goal of their English instruction. An interesting conclusion was drawn by Bandura (2007); Polish teachers of foreign languages, the subjects of her study, expressed the opinion that it is native speaker teachers of English who should undertake the role of an intercultural mediator for their students.

It is important to emphasize that in the numerous studies that focus on FL teachers, there seems to be a lack of research that would look at pre-service teachers and their readiness to incorporate intercultural components in FL teaching. The study presented in this paper aims to fill this gap.

Byram's model of ICC

Byram (1997) model of intercultural competence draws on Hymes's (1972) concept of communicative competence. It is an extension of communicative competence, i.e. linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, consisting of five integrated components: knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, attitudes as well as critical cultural awareness.

In a nutshell, the model aims to encourage FL teachers: "to prepare [their learners] for interaction with other cultures; to enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors; and to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience" (Byram et al. 2002: 10).

In more specific terms, i.e. in relation to the components of the model, teaching ICC should involve the following:

- equipping FL learners with **knowledge** (information) about one's own and other cultures, their products and policies, such as daily life, history, art, institutions and non-verbal behavior;
- developing FL learners' **skills of interpreting** of documents or events from another culture and teaching students how to explain and **relate** them to documents or events from one's own culture;
- enhancing learners' **skills of discovering and interacting**, which means showing learners how to use the abovementioned knowledge and skills in real life situations as well developing their understanding of a new environment and an ability to interact with its representatives;

- developing FL learners' **attitudes**, such as openness, curiosity and sensitivity to cultural aspects of the interlocutor;
- developing learners' **critical cultural awareness** – an ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices and products of one's own and other cultures, which would result in viewing cultures in a more objective way and being aware of potential areas of conflict.

Byram's (1997) model of ICC has been very influential both in compiling documents applied in FL education, such as CEFR (Council of Europe 2001) discussed above and in educational studies investigating FL teaching (as concluded by Kusiak-Pisowacka 2018). However, in the area of teaching, the model has been evaluated as difficult to implement by teachers, which was recognized by Byram himself (2013:12), partly due to the absence of transparent teaching objectives and not enough attention given to the dynamic character of becoming an intercultural speaker.

The study

This section presents a meta-analysis of eleven projects written by the MA graduate students of the Jagiellonian University in the years 2014- 2019. All the projects investigate issues connected with developing FL learners' ICC. Below detailed information concerning the context of the study, its participants, the aims of the research and the outcomes is given.

The context of the study and its participants

The subjects of the study described in the present paper were the students of MA seminars run at the Jagiellonian University. All the students participated in the EFL teacher training, which was organized according to the national standards explained in chapter 1.1. The main aim of the MA seminar was to assist students in designing and conducting their own research projects. For the purpose of the study, all the theses that aimed to explore the issues connected with ICC were selected. This group constitutes 10 % of all the theses written in 2014-2019 by the students who participated in the teacher training program. All the projects, apart from student K's project, were set in the context of secondary schools, where the teaching practice part of the students' training was organized, which provided the trainees with a valuable opportunity to cooperate with their mentors, experienced teachers who acted as the trainees' supervisors.

The purpose of the study

Two research questions informed the study:

- 1/ How is the notion of ICC investigated by the student teachers in their MA projects?
- 2/ On the basis of the trainees' MA projects, what conclusions can be drawn about the trainees' readiness to incorporate intercultural elements in FL teaching?

To answer question 1, the following more specific questions were put forward:

- 1a/ What aspects of FL teaching were the foci of the trainees' investigations?
- 1b/ What research methods were applied by the trainees to investigate ICC?
- 1c/ What theoretical models did the student teachers draw on as the background of their projects?
- 1d/ What were the outcomes of the trainees' projects?

Methodology

In the present study, a qualitative methodology was employed. The study was exploratory in nature and no hypotheses were set prior to the research. The "insider", close to the data perspective was applied; the author of the present paper (who was the student teachers' supervisor or reviewer) was also the one who conducted the analysis of the trainees' projects. Another feature of the present study was that it was process-oriented, i.e. one stage of the study informed another one.

The analysis of the trainees' projects took two stages, each corresponding to one research question. In order to answer research question 1, a meta-analysis of the MA projects was conducted. It entailed analyzing the texts against the criteria put forward in questions 1a/, 1b/, 1c/and 1d/ presented above. It seems crucial to note that all the MA projects were extensive essays that followed the IMRD macrostructure, i.e. Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion. This way of organizing the MA theses noticeably facilitated the process of reading and analyzing the texts. Stage 2 focused on research question 2. In the context of the study, the results obtained at stage 1 (the meta-analysis) served as the data for stage 2.

The results of the analysis – Stage 1

The main findings of Stage 1 analysis are summarized in Table 1. The table indicates the following information in reference to each student: the main focus of the study (question 1a), methods applied in the project (question 1b) and the theoretical perspective that the student drew on in his/her project (question 1c).

Table 1: The results of the analysis of the student teachers' projects.

Student	Focus of the study	Research method	Theories behind the project
Student A	Teachers' and students' attitudes towards intercultural competence as a goal of FL teaching	1/ Interviews with teachers 2/ Questionnaire for students	Byram's (1997) model of ICC; focus on the notion of "intercultural speaker" as an alternative way to look at a foreign language learner
Student B	Teachers' beliefs concerning their understanding of the Byram (1997) model	1/ A case study with 3 teachers (an interview, an observation, and a discussion) 2/ Questionnaire for 23 teachers	Byram's (1997) model of ICC
Student C	The effectiveness of "intercultural" lessons in developing secondary learners' attitudes towards foreign cultures and their cultural curiosity	Action research, i.e. "intercultural" lessons with interviews with students as feedback	Byram's (1997) model of ICC; Kramsch's (1993) advice concerning implementing the intercultural approach
Student D	Adaptation of online sources as supplementary coursebook materials to develop learners' ICC	Action research, i.e. "intercultural" lessons with the mentor's comments and the researcher's self-evaluation as feedback	Byram's (1997) model of ICC
Student E	The effectiveness of song-based lessons on students' knowledge about the target culture	1/ Action research, i.e. FL song-based lessons with feedback from interviews with students and FL culture tests 2/ Questionnaire for teachers	Not stated
Student F	Evaluation of cultural content in coursebooks for primary schools	Content analysis by means of a checklist	Byram's (1993) checklist of topics

Student G	Evaluation of secondary school coursebooks in terms of developing ICC	1/ Content analysis by means of a checklist 2/ Interviews with teachers who use the coursebooks	Byram's (1997) model of ICC
Student H	Evaluation of one secondary school coursebook in terms of developing ICC	Content analysis by means of a checklist	Byram's (1997) model of ICC
Student I	The evaluation of the cultural content of coursebooks for secondary schools	1/ Content analysis by means of a checklist 2/ Interview with the teachers who use the coursebooks	Moran's (2001) criteria to evaluate culture-related knowledge in coursebooks
Student J	The evaluation of primary school coursebooks in terms of developing ICC	1/ Content analysis by means of a checklist 2/ Interview with the teachers who use the coursebooks	Äijälä (2009) criteria, based on Byram's (1997) model
Student K	The impact of the Polish-Ukrainian exchange program on students' ICC, i.e. their perceptions of the other culture and their own culture	1/ An ethnographic analysis of emails, reflections and the data from observations 2/ Questionnaire for the participants of the exchange program	Byram's (1997) model of ICC

Below the main outcomes of each MA project are presented, as specified by its author, which corresponds to research question 1d/.

Student A: The study revealed that both the students and the teachers valued the ability to communicate successfully with the representatives of different cultures. This ability was considered to be crucial in education, professional career and everyday life. However, the results of the study showed that teachers lack preparation to teach intercultural competence.

Student B: The majority of the respondents are not familiar with the ideas promoted in the Byram model. The teachers view teaching culture as providing their students with information about foreign language countries and their people. It seems that they did not understand the advantages of fostering their students' intercultural skills.

Student C: The questionnaire administered before the ICC lessons showed a medium level of the students' interest in foreign cultures. The learners demonstrated "passive" knowledge and did not seem to be open to foreign cultures. The learners' attitudes seemed to change after a series of ICC lessons. The students began to appreciate cultural diversity, declaring their willingness to explore the topics discussed even further.

Student D: The online search indicates that although most of the Internet materials were not directed specifically for EFL students, it was possible to adapt them successfully to serve the intended purpose. In the process of adaptation and identifying appropriate sources, the familiarity with the model of ICC and the taxonomy of intercultural tasks proved very useful.

Student E: Both the students and the teachers were open to enriching their knowledge about FL culture and approved of the use of songs in FL teaching. It was interesting to find that both parties viewed song lyrics as an opportunity to practice listening skills or learn vocabulary rather than a source of cultural knowledge.

Student F: The analysis of the coursebooks showed the dominance of male characters and contemporary celebrities. The findings revealed that both texts and activities prioritize the countries in which English is used as a native language.

Student G: The coursebooks analyzed offer very few tasks that can be applied directly in developing students' ICC. As regards the analysis of target, source, and other cultures, topics connected with the target culture are the most common (both representing small c and big C culture). Students' own culture is present in the coursebooks, but it is mostly big C culture and no topics related to small c culture are presented. Additionally, the analysis showed that there are very few activities that aim to develop learners' attitudes. There is a limited number of activities that can enable learners to compare different cultures or different aspects of the same culture, which could facilitate learners' critical cultural awareness.

Student H: The coursebook contains a considerable number (21%) of tasks that can be used to develop intercultural communicative competence. The majority (61%) of the coursebook tasks develop "knowledge", 14% - "skills of discovery and interaction", 13% - "skills of interpreting and relating" and only 6 % of the tasks account for "attitudes and critical cultural awareness". The coursebook does not provide students with tasks that could enable them to assess their intercultural competence; thus, it fails to indicate areas for improvement in their development of this competence.

Student I: All the coursebooks analyzed contain references to Poland and its culture; however, the insight into Polish culture seems limited and not sufficient. None of the textbooks includes activities intended to assess students' cultural knowledge. None of the coursebooks encourages students to develop their knowledge; there are no additional sources that students could use to find additional information on cultural matters. There are very few activities that present the same issue from various perspectives and encourage students to look at one issue from different angles. No instances of encouragement for students to step outside their own culture were found in the coursebooks, although some tasks that ask students to reflect on certain aspects of their culture were identified; usually such activities follow the texts in which these issues are presented.

The questionnaire results showed that despite the fact that all the teachers used the same coursebook, their approaches to the coursebook materials differed noticeably. This suggests that the quality of the cultural content offered in the coursebook is as important as the way this material is used by teachers.

Student J: The evaluation looked at the following aspects of ICC: "Knowledge of cultures", "Interpreting and relating cultural elements", "Intercultural interaction" and "Attitudes towards cultures". The findings showed that there are no learning tasks that would develop the skill of intercultural interaction (defined in the analysis as "functioning as a mediator between cultures and dealing with conflict situations"). Most of the learning tasks focus on developing the knowledge of cultures (defined as "factual knowledge of cultures"); these are mainly reading and listening tasks.

Student K: The exchange program led the learners to the feelings of cultural shock. Their written reflections point to the students' new intercultural encounters connected with everyday life, such as meals, dress code, traffic rules, etc. The results of the ethnographic approach showed that at the beginning of the visit, the students were able to notice only differences between the two countries; later they began to notice similarities. It seems that thanks to the exchange visits the participants developed the ability to compare and contrast various aspects of culture, such as attitudes and customs.

Comparing and contrasting attitudes towards their own culture and the foreign culture brought the students to an interesting conclusion: Polish people have poor knowledge of their own culture and Polish teenagers are even ashamed of their own culture. It is what the Polish participants had not realized before the visits. The students suggested that school education is to blame since it does not cultivate national culture to a sufficient extent.

The interpretation of the results of the analysis – Stage 1

The analysis of the trainees' MA theses indicates that the student teachers were successful in designing and conducting their own projects. Since the students were free to choose the topic and goals of their MA projects, the fact that 10 percent of all the trainees decided to explore the issues connected with ICC seems to indicate that ICC attracted a moderate amount of student interest.

Let us have a closer look at the projects in the context of the first research question, i.e. How is the notion of ICC was investigated by the student teachers in their MA projects?

The student teachers explored ICC in the following aspects of FL teaching: teachers' and students' attitudes towards ICC as a goal of FL teaching (2 students), the effectiveness of ICC lessons and culture-based materials (3 students), evaluation of coursebooks (5 students) and the students' exchange (1 student). The research methods applied were questionnaires and interviews (as elicitation instruments), the action research procedure (which allowed the trainees to explore the effectiveness of ICC lessons) and coursebook evaluation. Student K's project was the most original and involved an ethnographic approach. (However, it seems useful to add that the student was not the author of the reported project, but one of the participants.). The projects allowed the young researchers to look at the issue of developing ICC from several perspectives. Coursebook evaluation studies gave the student teachers an opportunity to investigate teaching ICC from a distance; whereas action research studies engaged the students in a more personal manner and enabled them to experiment and examine their own classroom from the inside. In all the cases, the young researchers treated ICC as complex, multifaceted concept, which they explored with due attention.

Byram's model (1997) of ICC turned out to be the most popular theoretical perspective which directed the students in the design of their projects. The model provided the young researchers with theoretical background necessary to understand the nature of ICC and its development. Additionally, the students drew on the model – particularly on the five dimensions of ICC that Byram specifies – in constructing their research techniques, such as criteria for coursebook evaluation, questions in elicitation techniques (questionnaires and interviews) and objectives for ICC lessons. One student focused on the notion of "intercultural speaker" as defined by Byram (1997), as an alternative way to look at a foreign language learner. It seems that Byram provided the students with guidelines in which they managed to place their study.

The summary of the conclusions drawn by the trainees presented above indicates that the trainees were able to discuss the results of their studies in reference to the goals of their research. It is worth emphasizing that some of the projects investigated the key issue from a number of perspectives, e.g. by means of coursebook evaluation and interviews with teachers (e.g. Student I and Student J). This triangulation is reflected in the conclusions, e.g. Student I claims that the results obtained from the coursebook evaluation did not confirm the teachers' opinions about the coursebooks analyzed.

The results of the analysis and conclusion – Stage 2

The aim of Stage 2 was to estimate the trainees' readiness to incorporate intercultural elements in FL teaching on the basis of the trainees' MA projects. The analysis of students' MA projects offered some evidence that enabled the author of the present paper to identify certain characteristics and construct a **profile of the teacher** who would be ready to integrate FL teaching with developing ICC. Below there is a list of skills and attitudes demonstrated by the trainees in their texts that seem to be conducive to introducing intercultural components in FL teaching. Some of them are illustrated with the extracts taken from the trainees' texts (see Appendix 1).

- 1/ understanding the principles of implementing intercultural components in FL teaching; being familiar with theoretical models, such as the Byram (1997) model, can be helpful (as reported by one of the student teachers in the present study; see Appendix 1);

- 2/ awareness of the importance of introducing novelties, such as intercultural materials, in one's teaching;
- 3/ abilities to evaluate the existing teaching materials, e.g. coursebooks;
- 4/ abilities to reflect on one's practices (as suggested by one of the student teachers, see Appendix 1);
- 5/ abilities to evaluate the effectiveness of the newly developed materials and innovative techniques;
- 6/ eagerness to cooperate with other teachers (as suggested by one of the trainees, see Appendix);
- 7/ an ability to see the issue of developing ICC as a more general problem, i.e. within the school or the system of education (as reported by one of the trainees, see Appendix 1).

One of the implicit goals of the present paper was to emphasize the role of pre-service training in preparing student teachers for new challenges that they are likely to face in contemporary education, such as teaching multicultural classes. Developing learners' ICC will not refer only to teaching Polish learners, but may refer to students of other nations or children of Polish emigrants who returned to Poland and sent their children to Polish schools. The findings of the study seem to imply that when given appropriate support from the teacher training institution and the school in which the teaching practice is organized, the goal of sensitizing novice teachers to intercultural components in education can be successfully achieved.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

An important question as to the trainees' readiness to incorporate intercultural elements in their future professional work was posed at the onset of the present study. However, on the basis of the data obtained, it is not possible to answer this question in an unequivocal way. Unfortunately, MA theses did not encourage the student teachers to reveal their personal reflections and explanations of their teaching and research decisions, which could have made this task easier. A helpful strategy would be to elicit the trainees' opinions in an interview or a questionnaire. In the process of constructing the questions in this kind of survey, the characteristics listed in the profile of the teacher discussed above could be useful. Another idea could be following the graduates in their careers' development to explore further their classroom practices and their opinions concerning the implementation of intercultural components in FL teaching.

The analysis of the MA projects indicated that it was Byram's (1997) model of ICC that proved to be the most often used by the student teachers as a theoretical perspective for their empirical projects. However, it is not clear why the trainees opted for this very model and what assumptions of this perspective they found the most appealing. Eliciting trainees' voices concerning their difficulty in implementing this model for didactic and research purposes can produce more informative results, particularly in the light of the criticism of Byram's theory in this respect (see chapter 1.4.).

The present study focused on the state (product) of student teachers' knowledge and abilities concerning teaching ICC in a FL classroom as demonstrated in their MA projects. It would be interesting to gain more insight into how novice teachers develop their perceptions, opinions and skills connected with this area of teaching.

More research is needed into this important goal of FL education and teacher training. It is the hope of the author of the present text that the outcomes of the study and its shortcomings will inspire both teacher trainers and researchers to embark on similar investigations.

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Appendix 1.

Extracts taken from the projects.

The language of the texts was slightly adjusted by the author of the paper.

For me, a novice teacher, the process of materials development was difficult and time-consuming because it coincided with the duty to perform the lessons. ...However, the action research I conducted contributed immensely to my professional development. Not only did I learn many good practices when selecting and developing educational materials but I also began to realize how useful educational theories such as the ICC model can be in the process of selecting teaching materials.

Several suggestions on how to introduce changes can be offered. First, a database of online sources developing ICC can be gradually created and arranged topically. What is more, other English language teachers, for example, within one school or through different social media groups can be encouraged to collaborate in the creation of such a database. The distribution of responsibilities can be suggested. For example, teachers who are more computer literate can take upon themselves the task of searching for the materials, whereas the more experienced teachers can check their effectiveness in the classroom context.

The curriculum change in teachers' education takes time. Therefore, those who would like to incorporate the development of ICC into their classroom practices initially have to rely on themselves instead of waiting for a change at the national level.