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文化接觸：台灣大學生與非英文母語外籍生的跨文化溝通與

文化學習

Cultural Encounters: Intercultural Communication and  
Cultural Learning of Taiwanese College Students with  
Non-native English Speakers

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### 中文摘要

近年來文化學習在第二／外國語言學習領域漸受重視。為使文化學習充份融入語言學習中，Byram (1997)提出以「田野工作」(fieldwork)方式學習文化，能避免文化刻板印象的產生，並能促使發展「開放的態度」(openness attitude)與真實地經驗對話溝通。然而，過去文獻有關於透過田野工作學習文化的相關研究，多著重於第二／外國語言學習者與英文母語人士的文化接觸。目前英文已成為國際語言，語言學習者有不少機會與同為非英文母語人士溝通。Alptekin (2002)認為語言學習者若只學習英文母語人士之文化已不符合現今的需求。基於此，本研究迎合目前非母語人士與非母語人士溝通為普遍現象的現況，以就讀北台灣的一所大學的四位大學生為研究對象。研究過程中，四位大學生兩兩成對，分別與亦為非英文母語人士的同校外籍生進行文化交流。本研究探討此活動對學生跨文化溝通能力(Intercultural competence)的影響、進而了解學生的溝通困難，以及學生對於進行此活動的感受。本研究資料取自學生的活動後書面感想、訪談，以及學生與外籍生之間的對話語音記錄。

本研究結果發現此活動幫助學生在他國文化、本國文化，以及在跨文化溝通等三方面上知識的增進。除此之外，本活動發展學生「開放的態度」(openness attitude)去面對其他外國文化，並且激發學生熱衷介紹本國文化及了解他國不同生活方式的興趣。針對溝通困難，本研究的資料顯示，學生的溝通困難涵蓋語言、情感、溝通技巧，以及社會文化相關知識等方面。一般而言，參與本研究的學生皆對本活動給予正面的評價，然而，學生亦提到本活動無法對學生在進行對話時所使用的英文文法進行糾正。學生更進一步建議增加外籍生的人數以及交談的次

數。

本研究提供了一個鼓勵面對面的跨文化溝通以及一個如何在學習者本國文化當中了解「世界英語」(world Englishes)的學習方式。以下為本研究在英語教學實務上的應用。本活動可幫助學生了解英語的溝通目的，以致於提升學生的學習動機。學生的語言能力(linguistic competence)，例如單字量的多寡以及發音的正確性，在跨文化溝通上仍為重要的因素。能詮釋和聯結(the skill of interpreting and relating)以及能發現和互動(the skill of discovering and interacting)的技能在跨文化溝通上更是不可或缺，應在語言課程中多培養練習。



## ABSTRACT

The TESL/TEFL professionals have drawn considerable attention to the growing importance of cultural learning in recent decades. To embed cultural learning into language learning, Byram (1997) has suggested that the fieldwork approach is one of the efficient ways to avoid reinforcing cultural stereotypes, help develop openness attitude (Robinson & Nocon, 1996; Bateman, 2002), and experience real time, unrehearsed interaction. Nevertheless, amid previous cultural research associated with the fieldwork approach, most attention was given to the investigation of L2 learners' contact with native speakers of English. This focus has claimed to be unrealistic since English now serves as an international language (Alptekin, 2002). Catering to the fact that nonnative-nonnative communication prevails, the present research involved four college freshman participants from diverse disciplines studying at a public university in northern Taiwan, paired up to communicate with international students who are nonnative speakers of English, studying in the same university. The study attempted to investigate how the intercultural task could foster the development of intercultural competence and to discover L2 learners' communication difficulties and perception on the task. Data was collected from L2 learners' written self-reflection reports, transcript of post-interviews, and transcript of the intercultural conversation between the learners and the international students.

Results showed that the task helped L2 learners increase knowledge of foreign culture, native culture, together with knowledge of intercultural interaction. The task also fostered the development of the "openness" attitude, and aroused considerable interest in introducing one's own culture to others and in knowing other people's way of life. In terms of communication difficulties, the results indicated that the difficulties covered aspects of linguistics, affection, communication strategies, and sociocultural knowledge. In general, the learners showed positive attitudes toward the

intercultural experience; however, few limitations such as little grammar correction given during the task were reported. The learners further suggested the number of foreign interlocutors and the frequency of the intercultural interaction perhaps could be increased.

The present study is likely to provide a framework to enhance face-to-face intercultural interaction and to help L2 learners approach world Englishes (Kachru & Nelson, 1996) in L2 learners' country. A few pedagogical implications were provided. Activities of having L2 learners conduct the intercultural task could possibly bring them to see the communicative purpose of English, further boosting motivation for English learning. Linguistic competence remains crucial; sufficient vocabulary repertoire and comprehensible pronunciation are fundamental to successful intercultural communication. Furthermore, the skill of interpreting and relating and skill of discovering and interacting (Byram, 1997) are discovered to be paramount and advised to practice in English class.



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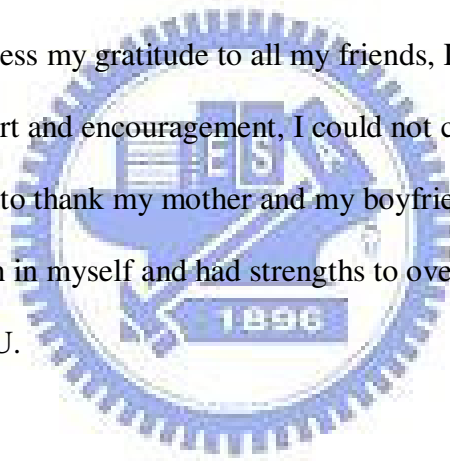
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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The Foreign Language or Second Language (henceforth FL or SL) professionals have drawn considerable attention to the growing importance of real language use in recent decades. This particular focus has become prevalent since the mid-1970s after the startling discovery that language learners, though competent in linguistic rules, are unlikely to deal with the real-time conversation with native speakers of the target language. This discouraging revelation is mostly attributed to the fact that linguistic competence (Chomsky, 1965) does not suffice to help SL or FL learners manage a multitude of variables emerging moment by moment in the genuine conversation. For most learners, the destination goal for language learning, in essence, is to develop the abilities of fulfilling the communicative need of learners themselves rather than to satisfy the cognitive demand for linguistic rules. In an attempt to compensate for the limitation of the traditional, grammar-focused language curriculum, the term, communicative competence (Hyme, 1967, 1972) has been coined to preach the doctrine that SL /FL education ought to expand its focus to an extent that the curriculum encompasses authentic tasks or practices to help learners mobilize linguistic rules learned. According to the definition of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain in 1980, competent SL/FL learners are defined as learners who have sociolinguistic knowledge of the target language so as to eschew possible misunderstanding resulting from intercultural differences. In addition, skillful learner-communicators excel in the negotiation of meaning and deftly use

communication strategies which help sustain the interactive process to make meanings across in real, unrehearsed situations with native speakers of the target language.

Inheriting the premises of communicative competence, the FL/SL profession thus has laid a great deal of emphasis on the target-culture learning, for the sociolinguistic knowledge of the target language is partly derived from the culture where the language is spoken. The underlying tacit culture of the society gives meaning to language or a set of social convention or rules used for behavior evaluation. In a word, language learning cannot be divorced from culture learning if communication is the ultimate goal. Without knowing the target culture, it seems that language learners might struggle to receive the intended meaning given by native speakers of the target language and to speak proper language in the right context.

Nevertheless, this awareness of the pivotal role of the target culture plays in FL/SL learning likely fail to consider the fact that languages are spreading (Alptekin, 2002). Take the English language for example. Many English variations exist, e.g., British English, American English, Australian English, South African English or Singaporean English. Each English variation is characterized by its unique cultural or social heritage. It is unlikely to prioritize them, choose one particular culture, and integrate it into the second or foreign language education unless judging them by their social value. Additionally, English now serves as an international language, a utilitarian tool for intercultural communication. As early as the late-1990s, the number of already fluent and competent English speakers was approximately around 1.2 billion to 1.5 billion because of the three-pronged development of first-language, official-language, and foreign-language speakers (Crystal, 1997). As such, it can never be rare that a nonnative speaker of English communicates with interlocutors from other cultural background who also learns English as SL or FL; that is to say, the

nonnative-nonnative intercultural conversation prevails today.

In effect, intercultural communicators require the ability of utilizing English to interact with not only native speakers of English, but also with nonnative speakers of English. Byram (1997) has argued that the concept of communicative competence is so constrained that it only indicates the necessity of learning the target culture, and disregards the equivalent importance for SL/FL learners to explore cultures in which English is used as the lingua franca. Byram (1997) then has proposed the term, intercultural communicative competence, or intercultural competence, which adds the “intercultural dimension” to make up for the constraints of communicative competence. A learner with intercultural communicative competence, also known as an “intercultural speaker” (Byram, 1997), is distinguished by his or her “cultural versatility” (Robinson, 1991). Furthermore, an intercultural speaker is mindful of both their own and others’ culturally constructed selves, and regards culture as a constant process of formation and transformation rather than the assumption that culture is constituted with a set of straightforward facts (Roberts et al., 2001). That is to say, in the wake of the globalization phenomenon of English serving as an international language, the need for L2 learners to be competent in carrying out socially appropriate behaviors during the interaction with their foreign interlocutor coming from whichever culture has become pressing.

However, to connect culture with language learning is somewhat uneasy. In most cases of the cultural education design, the uncertainty of the concept of culture begets the misemployment of pedagogical methods. Some teachers regard culture as the natural outgrowth of language learning. That is to say, teachers need not offer any educational help to cultural learning based on the assumption that a person who learns a language would naturally grow an understanding of that culture. This “Magic-Carpet-Ride-to-Another-Culture- Syndrome” (Robinson, 1978) assumption is

apparently problematic since bilinguals can possibly carry negative attitudes toward the second culture and this dissenting proclivity retains even after a few years of the second language education (Nocon, 1991).

Another false elucidation of what is composed of culture also influences the effectiveness of cultural learning. Here, culture is mistakenly viewed as factual knowledge and acquired through memorization. Given that learners do not seem to see the relationship between the knowledge of culture and language learning (Bateman, 2002; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996), the cultural facts introduced in class become learners' extra cognitive burden on top of the language learning. What is even worse, this way of cultural learning would hinder learners from inquiring into foreign cultures since it is indicated that some students regard cultural learning as unnecessary or even distracting in language learning on the condition that culture is presented in sets of facts (Bateman, 2002). Investigating the relevant literature in the past, the present study tries to avoid repeating the mistakes by basing itself on the rationale of cultural learning—culture is a process. The following lies in the elaboration of the culture definition the present study takes with.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Aware of the fact that culture is not the natural outcome of language learning nor a set of facts, the present study is based on the premise that culture is regarded as a process. That is, culture is defined as “a way of perceiving, interpreting, feeling, being in the world, wanting to smile, wanting to scream, loving, hating, and relating to where one is and who one meets” (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996, p. 432). This alludes to the fact that culture is not static. Culture in fact lies in the everyday practices of individuals and groups and is likely to reveal itself through face-to-face interaction with an individual. As such, the dynamic nature of interaction as the result



of a combination of variables of interlocutors and contexts affects how people in the interaction perceive or evaluate the interactive culture. Thus, the present study, adhesive to the viewpoint of regarding culture as a process, focuses on helping learners realize the situational, dynamic nature of culture.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In a great effort to facilitate the learners to see the situational nature of culture, the present study has adopted the fieldwork approach to encourage intercultural learning. Byram (1997) has claimed that the method of fieldwork— meaning having an authentic intercultural contact with the foreign culture outside classroom, is addressed to be the most effective way to foster learners' attitude change toward other culture or otherness (Byram, 1997; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996). In addition, the fieldwork approach enables L2 learners to develop skills in real time. During interaction, learners bring their knowledge to bear on specific situations and discover new information, added to their knowledge base provided in class; they can also experience communication under time pressures and be aware of the importance of nonverbal communication (Byram, 1997). Aside from the positive stimulation from the fieldwork approach mentioned, it is noteworthy that the fieldwork approach concurs with the premise that culture, as a process, reveals during interaction. The fieldwork approach encourages authentic intercultural interactions, in which foreign culture is presented as a varying entity based on communicator's individual experience or interpretation.

In the previous literature, research relevant to the fieldwork approach can be generally subcategorized into two types: study-abroad program and virtual intercultural contact. In view of the former type, some scholars have integrated the “study-abroad” program into the language-and-culture study (e.g., Barro et al., 1993;

Murphy-Lejeune, 2003; Roberts, 2003), by which learners can seize the opportunities of staying in the foreign culture to enrich their intercultural experiences as well as to enhance their English ability. Moreover, regarding the latter type, virtual intercultural contact, here, the definition of the fieldwork is expanded due to the advent of the Internet access. Face-to-face intercultural interaction becomes feasible in the cyber land, and this kind of virtual interaction, most remarkably, enables learners to do the “arm-chair traveling” in their native country. Studies of this type (e.g., Ham, 1995; Liaw & Johnson, 2001) certify that the virtual interaction can serve as an alternative to facilitate intercultural interaction in some education contexts where the traveling aboard task is less likely to be implemented.

The field work, encouraging authentic intercultural communication via either the study-aboard program or the Internet is proven to help receive high quality of cultural knowledge (Barro et al., 1993; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003), attitude change (Bateman, 2002; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996) toward the target culture, long-term relationship build-up with the interlocutor (Galloway, 1995), and the development of communication strategies and sociolinguistic competence (Murphy-Lejeun, 2003). Nevertheless, most previous fieldwork in intercultural studies, either by the overseas traveling or by the Internet connection, focuses on the learners’ interaction merely with so-called native speakers of the target language. Aside from the expensive costs of traveling and potential difficulties in getting hold of cyber-mates for class, this type of intercultural learning with an emphasis on experiences with so-called native speakers of the target language has become problematic and insufficient nowadays (Alptekin, 2002).

Due to the fact that languages are spreading, the ownership of a language might not be exclusive to a single nation or a culture. Therefore, it is almost impossible to decide which target culture to learn. For instance, choosing either British culture or

American culture as the target culture to learn would become an unsettled problem in sketching an English-as-second/foreign-language curriculum design. In addition, languages are subject to the globalization phenomenon. For the purpose of communication, a certain language would be chosen as the common language among some areas or nations. English, in particular, now serves as an international language, to enable people of different cultural backgrounds to communicate. English is used in not only the native-native or nonnative-native communication, but also it, more often, serves as the mediator during the nonnative-nonnative conversation, diminishing the possible communication hurdle, originating from the fact that multiple languages are spoken on earth. It thus will make less sense for English learners nowadays to expose to merely so-called native-speaker culture of English. Instead, English learners in the modern time ought to be intercultural speakers, who do not only understand one specific culture, but who can relativize self (Byram, 1997), accept otherness no matter which culture they encounter. With the aptitude of “cultural versatility” (Robinson, 1991), they are mindful of their own identities and cultures and of how they are perceived by others, and have an understanding of the identities and cultures of those with whom they are communicating (Byram & Fleming, 1998).

As a result, similar to previous studies focusing on the authentic intercultural interaction, the present study aims to integrate the fieldwork approach into language learning. However, unlike most previous studies, the present study targeted at the nonnative-nonnative intercultural interaction in which L2 learners communicated with foreign residents in the learners’ native country with the use of the target language, English, as the mediating tool. It took place in the context where English is learned as the foreign language (the EFL context). For most learners in the EFL context, chances of using English are relatively fewer, let alone using English to acquire multiple cultures in their own country. The present research thus seeks ways to compensate for

the learning disadvantage that learners possibly face in the EFL context by encouraging learners to conduct the intercultural task. After the intercultural interaction with a chosen interlocutor, who also learns English as second or foreign language and has different culture from the learners, the learners then reflected upon the intercultural interaction.

The significance of the present study lies in the fact that it scrutinizes the intercultural interaction between nonnative and nonnative speakers of English. This focus is in accord with the growing need of the cultural education after the impact of English serving as an international language. Moreover, the present study attempts to provide a teaching framework to enhance face to face intercultural interaction in learners' native country. As seeing cross-country traveling prevails, authentic intercultural interaction need not be compromised to be carried out in the virtual world. After all, the human-human interaction, rather than human via computer interaction, is likely to be the ideal mode for language learning. Specific research questions of the present study are posited as follows.

- (1) What types of intercultural competence development did the intercultural task bring on the EFL learners?
- (2) What communication difficulties did the EFL learners encounter during the intercultural talk?
- (3) From the students' perspective, what were the positive/negative aspects of the task?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter elaborates on the importance of the cultural learning for L2 learners in today's multiethnic or multicultural world and literature of ways to implement the cultural learning into language education. Firstly, I offer a general introduction to major shifts of foci in language education and the relationship between culture and language. These demonstrate the necessity of the cultural instruction that helps L2 learners develop intercultural communication competence and become successful "intercultural speakers" (Byram, 1997). Further, I indicate factors and difficulties in intercultural communication. Lastly, relevant research about ways to implement the cultural learning into language instruction is highlighted.

#### **Focus Shifts in Second/Foreign Language Instruction**

The Foreign/Second language learning profession has undergone several developing phases in terms of appropriate language instruction objectives. One of the main shifts in focus has been the movement from linguistic competence (Chomsky, 1965), encompassing knowledge of vocabulary and rules of morphology, phonology, syntax, and semantics, to communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), an ability to interpret or negotiate meanings in order to maintain conversations with others. This shift in focus has been generally expedited by the discouraging fact that the L2 learners, educated in a curriculum with an emphasis on linguistic rules, do not seem to be productive in language use.

It has been discovered that L2 learners who learn sets of linguistic rules are not capable of producing the language, either in verbal or in written form. That is to say, the understanding of the linguistic rules does not directly lead to the result of using

them. This incapability of speaking the target language (TL) concerns FL/SL teachers most, partly for language is used for the purpose of communication. Speaking is the most direct way to transmit messages, and not being able to speak the language is considered the greatest disadvantage for L2 learners who have devoted themselves to the language learning.

The primary reason that the L2 learners fail to exercise the language they learned is that face to face communication involves many variables. Successful communication cannot be achieved simply by the application of the “rules” of the language. In fact, the characteristics of the interlocutors differ greatly. L2 learners are likely to suffer from situational problems occurring during conversations. The possible combinations made by the factors of personality, accent, delivery speed, voice volume, and so forth, can easily bewilder L2 learners. It is very possible that L2 learners who know a great inventory of linguistic rules would still gape at the speaker after being daunted by the fleeting spoken language.

As a result, L2 learners’ incompetence in using the TL reveals the limitation of linguistic competence. In light of the importance of language use, FL/SL language professionals have redirected the instructional focus to put more emphasis on developing the ability of L2 learners to deal with authentic, natural conversations with native speakers. As such, the term “communicative competence” has been coined to compensate for the limitation of linguistic competence, and the concept of communicative competence has been heatedly discussed within the FL/SL learning discipline in recent decades.

## **Language and Culture**

### **Defining Communicative Competence**

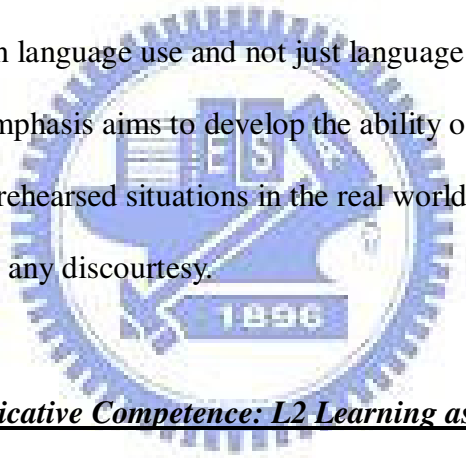
As communication is a complicated process in which various kinds of

information are transmitted, many FL/SL scholars have scrutinized the construct of communicative competence. Hymes first defined communicative competence as the competence that “enables us to interpret and negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts” (Brown, 2000, p.246). Following Hymes’s unprecedented assertion, scholars, such as Canale and Swain (1980) and Savignon (1983), have tried to substantiate communicative competence. Among these, the classic model of communicative competence portrayed by Canale and Swain (1980) and later modified by Canale (1983) has subcategorized communicative competence into four components: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.

The first type of competence, linguistic competence refers to Chomskyan linguistic competence, and the aim of this ability is to the linguistic mastery of a language, including knowledge of vocabulary, rules of morphology, phonology, syntax, and semantics. The next type of competence, discourse competence, goes beyond sentential-level grammar to inter-sentential relationships. That is, this competence deals with skills of producing series of sentences in a cohesive or coherent manner. Third, sociolinguistic competence emphasizes the ability to understand the social context in which the language is used. The social context mentioned here involves variables, such as roles of communicators, functions of the interaction, shared information, and other factors that determine the appropriateness of utterances. The fourth competence in this model, strategic competence, requires the adept use of either verbal or non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for possible communicative breakdowns due to insufficient language competence. Strategies, like paraphrasing, repetition or avoidance, are within this subset.

Canale and Swain’s model of communicative competence has undergone a few modifications. Bachman’s language competence model in 1990 for example is one of

the representatives. Notwithstanding disparate terminologies used to explain the construct of communicative competence among the several models, most scholars have agreed that aside from linguistic competence, it is suggested that learners be equipped with skills of conveying appropriate, coherent, and strategically-efficient utterances to native speakers (Alptekin, 2002). In other words, successful, competent L2 learners are judged by their capability of using the language appropriately and by the degree to which they can deal with situational problems and maintain conversations with native speakers. That is to say, L2 learners have to develop the ability to behave or act properly in the eyes of native speakers, which requires the sociolinguistic knowledge of the TL. Accordingly, communicative competence puts considerable emphasis on language use and not just language usage, to fluency and not just accuracy. This emphasis aims to develop the ability of L2 learners to apply classroom learning to unrehearsed situations in the real world and to act or speak properly without causing any discourtesy.



### ***The Impact of Communicative Competence: L2 Learning as Enculturation***

After the FL/SL professionals acknowledge the importance of communicative competence, teaching native speakers' social value, or the sociolinguistics of native speakers, has become mandatory in language learning classrooms. The reason for learning the sociolinguistics of the TL community is that the appropriateness of language use with which communicative competence is concerned only makes sense within its social context. L2 learners need to become like native speakers of English: speak like them and act like them in order not to cause any offense while conversing with native speakers. In this light, lessons that emphasize culture-specific meanings then are highlighted in the communicative language teaching classroom. Take the sentence, "Is your mom there?" for example. The traditional language-usage-oriented



class only centers on vocabulary meanings or grammar. This constrained way of language instruction has been proven to be of limited benefit to real language use. Contrary to the traditional way of teaching, in the communicative teaching classroom, L2 learners need to know not only that this interrogative sentence is used to ask for the presence of the receiver's mother, but also that the speaker is expecting an answer with yes or no to inform whether the receiver's mother is home. Competent L2 learners also know that when this sentence is spoken in the context of telephone dialogues, the speaker is expecting the answerer can go call her or his mother to answer the phone if she is available. This example explicitly explains a sentence can be used for different functions or for different communicative purposes in varied contexts. Teaching students to understand context-dependent meanings has become a niche for educators to teach L2 learners to use the TL as authentically as native speakers do.

It is clear that L2 learners need this ability of context sensitivity to attain speakers' real intentions. However, it is not easy for L2 learners to understand those highly context-dependent meanings. This challenge is mainly related to the fact that the social or cultural values between the native community and the target community are not transferrable since each society exists in its own right. Without the knowledge of cultural-specific meanings, L2 learners undoubtedly will have problems understanding native speakers, which can lead to communication breakdowns.

Seeing the necessity of sociolinguistic competence instruction in FL/SL instruction, we can infer that the focus of FL/SL learning should be directed at facilitating L2 learners to be "encultured" with cultural conventions of the target-language community. That is to say, if communicative competence is the ultimate goal, then FL/SL learning process is akin to a process of "enculturation" in which L2 learners obtain a set of new social criteria for their behavior and use these

learned principles to evaluate the appropriateness of their own behavior. Traditionally, the term enculturation refers to the socialization process in which individuals learn sets of skills, attitudes, and values that enable them to be fully functioning people in their own society (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Individuals have been experiencing the process of enculturation in order to be accepted in the society in which they reside since birth. However, here the term is used to describe the new socialization process of L2 learners internalizing primary values or social norms of another culture into their native value system in their native-culture country. Another similar term acculturation is often addressed as speaking of foreign culture learning as well. However, acculturation often describes the socialization process in which immigrants or refugees learn about the new culture as immersing in the new society and that process enables them to be adaptive to their “new” homeland (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The present study accentuates the implementation of foreign language or foreign culture education in the native culture; as a result, the term enculturation, is adopted to depict the process of foreign culture learning.

Following the striking impact of communication competence, it is the sense of “cultural awareness” that influences the modern FL/SL learning profession. It is noted that “without the cultural dimension, successful communication is often difficult: comprehension of even basic words and phrases may be partial or approximate, and speakers and writers may fail to convey their meaning adequately or may even cause offence (DES, 1990, p. 37).” As such, it can be concluded that cultural learning is indispensable in language instruction. In fact, words or sentences are used as a medium or a tool to present meaning; culture, playing the role of an underlying factor, livens up sets of linguistic entities by offering meaning or functions, which can never be disregarded.

To sum up, the impact of communicative competence brings up the issue of

language use, and this new direction for L2 learning does not superficially imply oral ability outweighs other skills, such as reading or writing. The theory of the communicative competence model alludes to the importance of helping L2 learners familiarize with the social norms of the TL. To be more specific, L2 learners are advised to understand the target culture and further to be capable of acting or speaking like people from the TL society to send their intended meaning across. In this regard, L2 learners need to go through a new process of enculturation so as to obtain a new value system from the target-culture community. The traditional method, which overlooks cultural studies in the FL/SL learning, seems to fail to usher L2 learners to an extent that L2 learners can perform properly when carrying out conversations in the TL. Therefore, a new and efficient way of L2 learning ought to integrate cultural studies into L2 learning curricula whereby L2 learners can understand the viewpoint of people from the TC, speak the TL, and act properly in the right social context.

Yet, the conclusion of the imperative integration of second/foreign language and second/foreign culture has put most FL/SL professionals in a quandary. The communicative competence model seems unrealistic and problematic in terms of its standardized native speaker norms and its negligence of the *lingua franca* status of English nowadays.

### **Problems with Communicative Competence**

Following the impact of communicative competence, it is indicated that L2 learners of English need to undergo a new process of second enculturation in which they learn a new set of social values and then they can behave or speak the TL properly in the eyes of native speakers of English. In other words, it is vital to have a set of standardized native speaker norms in order to put the premise of communicative competence into practice. A model of standardized linguistic features and social

values of the TL is thus expected to aid SL/FL teaching; however, determining such a standard model is not easy. This difficulty is in large part attributed to the fact that English includes many variations.

If we take the traditional viewpoint to determine the legitimate ownership of English, “inner circle” (Kachru, 1986) countries are infallible candidates. In this way, each of the following inner circle countries, including the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, is entitled to be orthodox. Nonetheless, each variation is inherent with its own exquisite word choices, sentence structures, and social or cultural norms. No one can claim that one language pattern is more proper or correct than the others. If a certain variation is chosen, this must be judged according to social values, and not according to linguistic norms. As a result, it seems to be impossible to have a certain standard model chosen for L2 learning amongst these inner circle countries. On top of this, who are the real native speakers of English that exemplify correct and proper language use? Thomas Paikeday self published a book, “The Native Speaker is Dead!” in 1985, and has contended that native speakership is a linguistic myth. Since then, this controversial issue of real native speakers of English has been critically examined (Davies, 1991; Kachru, 1985; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Paikeday, 1985; Quirk & Widdowson, 1985; Widdowson, 1994). The entitled native speaker at the outset refers to people who have a privilege by birth. As they are born and raised in English-speaking countries, they endow the ability to recognize what is grammatical or ungrammatical, or what is proper or what is definitely wrong. Having these intuitive abilities of judging grammaticality and social appropriateness incurs that many nonnative speakers of English consider them as arbiters when it comes to uncertain linguistic usages or proper cultural manners. However, as recent decades have given great attention to non-standard language, the natural endowment of native speakers has been challenged. It has been found that “native speakers perhaps have a

natural feel about the language, but they are not always as correct and not as precise as linguists' analyses" (Paikeday, 1985, p.43). That is to say, though with natural inheritance by birth, they do not necessarily construct perfect grammatical sentences. Those native speakers by birth, at most, can be regarded as "proficient users of the language." In this light, communicative competence, adhesive to the premise that native speakers of English ought to be regarded as ideal models for L2 learners, seems unrealistic.

Besides, "communicative competence, based on standardized native speaker norms, fails to reflect the lingua franca status of English" (Alptekin, 2002, p.60). People in the world use English for various purposes. Due to the effect of globalization, English has been considered the lingua franca, a common language for communication among people with different mother tongues. As early as the late-1990s, the number of English speakers, both native and nonnative speakers, was approximately around 1.2 billion to 1.5 billion, which was relatively greater than that of Chinese language, 1.1 billion at that time (Crystal, 1997). Speaking English seems to be a requirement, proven by the global fad of English learning. For instance, people who dwell in the context of "outer circle" (Kachru, 1986), such as Singapore, India, Ghana, and Hong Kong, use English as their second language as well as the official language. They use English as a mediating tool under domains as government, law courts, the academic system or the media. As to people in the "expanding circle" (Kachru, 1986) countries, like Taiwan, Japan, and Korea; English there is regarded as a foreign language. Despite English is not given official status, still English is the first learnt foreign language once they arrive in the education system, and this emphasis on English is undoubtedly subject to the fact that English now serves as a utilitarian language, which can help intercultural communication. As indicated above, so many nonnative speakers of English actually use English to meet different purposes that

English conversations can not only occur in nonnative-native cases, but more often in nonnative-nonnative situations.

With respect to the increasing number of learners who take English as their second or foreign language, Willowson (1998) warned of the usefulness of native speaker norms of English to L2 learners, and reported the language that is real for native speakers is not necessarily real for nonnative speakers. What sense is there for Taiwanese learners who often do business with Japanese to learn British business conventions in language classes? In a word, the standardized native speakers' norms are unlikely to suit the present situation that English is an international language. In effect, learners of English language nowadays are advised to develop the abilities of dealing with communicators from different cultural backgrounds.

In brief, as indicated previously, it is almost impossible to prioritize English variations based on linguistic correctness. It is also apparently unrealistic to follow native speakers' linguistic behavior as they are not always correct and L2 learners might in fact have more chances to interact with nonnative speakers of English. Beyond these, if we really teach standardized native speaker norms, the efforts are to no avail. By only teaching native speakers' culture, L2 learners' native culture has been marginalized. The new culture of native speakers bombards L2 learners, causing them to feel they are placed in a very awkward position of totally embracing native speakers' sociolinguistic standards. In fact, L2 learners' indigenous culture is the most familiar asset to both teachers and learners. This shared cultural inheritance can serve as a prompt to second or foreign cultural learning, given that learning becomes efficient when it is built on something already known. Moreover, the teaching of the monolithic native speakers' social acceptability or culture inhibits the development of multi-competent minds. Nowadays, as situated in the multicultural, multiethnic world, L2 learners need to have the ability to deal with the coexistence of multiple languages

or multiple cultures. As a result, the definition of communicative competence requires modifying in order to become suitable and favorable for all English users across the globe.

### **Redefining Communicative Competence**

It gradually becomes clear that the real communicative behavior that communicative competence has proposed needs to be redefined as English now is used as an international language. The use of English by native speakers in English-speaking countries is real and so is the use of English by nonnative speakers. Due to the limitations of communicative competence, Byram (1997) has added an “intercultural dimension” into the model, and proposed a new concept of “intercultural competence”. He then redefined Canale and Swain’s definitions of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence and the components of intercultural competence proposed by Byram are listed as follows.

- “Linguistic competence: the ability to apply knowledge of the rules of a standard version of the language to produce and interpret spoken and written language.”
- “Sociolinguistic competence: the ability to give to the language produced by the interlocutor—whether native speakers or not—meanings which are taken for granted by the interlocutor or which are negotiated and made explicit with the interlocutor.”
- “Discourse competence: the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the production and interpretation of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for the particular purposes (Byram, 1997, pp. 48).”

Byram’s revised model retains some of the primary essence of Canale and

Swain's model. His redefinition of linguistic competence takes the dimension of language use into account, which explicitly states the ultimate objective of language learning lies in whether learners can activate linguistic rules and execute those in unrehearsed, authentic situations, and whether they can apply those rules to interpret interlocutors' intended meaning. The redefinition of sociolinguistic competence excludes the standardized native speaker sociolinguistic norm and includes meanings that are taken for granted by the interlocutor. Learners need to have the ability to discover those implicit meanings or negotiate with the interlocutor to make the tacit meanings explicit. By the same token, the redefinition of discourse competence also considers the abilities of discovery and negotiation. However, Byram mentioned that discourse competence requires the ability of adaptation, meaning the ability that learners and their interlocutors can negotiate their modes of interaction so as to fit into the nature of intercultural communication. Byram illustrated that this adaptability might include, for instance, negotiated meta-commentary, meaning that each side of the interaction knows when or how to interrupt the normal flow of conversation or knows when or how to ask for further elaboration on differences or dysfunctions if ever emergent during the talk.

As indicated by Byram, communicative competence needs to take intercultural aspect into account to face the reality of English now serving as an international language. He then has coined the term intercultural competence to make up for the limitation of communicative competence. With competent intercultural competence, L2 learners, as intercultural speakers, have the ability "to interact with others, to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives, to be conscious of their evaluations of difference" (Kramsch, 1998, pp. 5). Moreover, Byram and Fleming (1998) also defined intercultural speakers as "...the learners who are aware of their own identities and cultures and of how they perceive



by others, and who also has an understanding of the identities and cultures of those with whom they are interacting.” All these definitions conclude that intercultural speakers have the ability to reflect on their native value system or cultural assets, along with the ability to observe or discover foreign cultures. In other words, curious and open to foreign cultures, intercultural speakers will enquire about information of another culture. During the inquiry of another culture, learners can justify their stereotypes upon another culture by real encounters with the representatives of the certain foreign culture and gradually develop a much more objective viewpoint on otherness. Their stereotypical thoughts, such as Americans always do this, or Japanese always do that, will be modified as they learn to consider that situational factors (e.g. education background, personalities and socio-economic status) can possibly affect the cultural phenomena that they have observed. Aside from the benefit of acquiring knowledge of another culture and dispelling cultural myths, intercultural speakers will try to understand how one’s own culture is viewed by others and then magnify self-culture of which they usually are not consciously aware, the process also known as “reflexive impact” (Byram & Fleming, 1998), a focus on learners’ native culture. In the way, L2 learners also as intercultural speakers can be much able to deal with social or cultural encounters that occur in today’s multiethnic or multicultural world.

## **Intercultural Communication**

### **Factors in Intercultural Communication**

Byram (1997) asserted that intercultural communication involves several key components (refer to Figure 2.3): attitudes, knowledge, and skills and critical cultural awareness.

	<b>Skills</b> Interpret and relate	
<b>Knowledge</b> of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal	<b>Education</b> Political education Critical cultural awareness	<b>Attitudes</b> Relativising self Valuing others
	<b>Skills</b> Discover and/or interact	

*Figure 2.3 Factors in Intercultural Communication*

Byram (1997) explained that **attitudes** refer to the feelings one holds toward people from other cultural communities. FL/SL teachers mostly concern L2 learners' attitudes toward those people who are perceived as different in terms of their cultural meanings, beliefs, and behaviors, for these attitudes readily become prejudices or stereotypes. Seeing that the factor of attitudes is preconditioned to successful intercultural communication, Byram suggested that competent intercultural speakers be required "to have attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram et al., 2001, p.5). That is to say, L2 learners need to undergo a process of dismantling their subjective world view and reconstructing a new reality. This process is called "tertiary socialization" (Byram, 1989), in which learners are able to "decentre" (Kohlberg et al., 1983) and internalize other's perspectives into their own.

Moreover, the success is also dependent upon whether one has enough **knowledge** of self and another culture to uphold intercultural communication. Knowledge here refers to the knowledge an individual brings to an intercultural interaction. Knowledge here is defined as "the knowledge of social groups and their products and practice in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (Byram et al., 2001). In other

words, knowledge encompasses two types: knowledge of one's own culture and another culture, and knowledge of interaction at both individual and societal levels.

The first type of knowledge an intercultural speaker needs is received through family education or the process of socialization given in one's native society. In fact, this common, shared knowledge with people from the same social background contains the knowledge that enables an individual to address what is emblematic of his/ her culture, and to distinguish his/her culture from another culture and to mark the boundaries (Barth, 1969). Moreover, the knowledge of one's own culture also facilitates the knowledge development of other culture. Byram explained that knowledge of other cultures is mostly obtained by going through the process of constant comparison of one's own and other culture. For example, how can a woman's right be interpreted of differences in one's own and other culture? After specifying disparities between self and others, an individual soon acknowledges other culture in relation to self one, and forms an understanding of the foreign culture. That is to say, knowledge of one's culture and knowledge of other culture go hand in hand because for learners to understand other cultures often needs to be based upon learners' knowledge of one's native culture.

Regarding the second type of knowledge, the knowledge of interaction at both individual and societal levels is closely related to the first type; in fact, the first type of knowledge leads to the development of the second type of knowledge. The first type of knowledge, knowledge of one's and other culture, could foster the awareness of how one's own culture has been perceived by others, and how one's beliefs or behaviors have been influenced by the macro social context of one's native country. All of the awareness mentioned above constitutes his or her knowledge of how to interact with people from other culture and provides groundwork for successful intercultural communication. The more awareness an individual has been aroused

after the examination of the relation between one's own and other culture and degrees of how one is subject to one's own culture, the more knowledge he or she knows about how ways to interact with people from another country.

In addition to the components of attitudes and knowledge, Byram continued that the nature of intercultural exchange process is mostly based on the functions of the **skills** interlocutors bring to the interaction. The skills here are divided into two types: firstly, skills of interpreting and relating and secondly, skills of discovering and interacting.

The first type of skill refers to the “ability to interpret a document or an event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents, or events from one's own” (Byram et al., 2001, p.6). During the interpreting procedure, one relies on his or her knowledge of one's own culture and on that of the foreign culture, to find out any common grounds, similar concepts or values, and cultural connotative meanings between the two cultures, or discover contradicting cultural concepts that possibly lead to cross-translation failure. As can be seen, the skill of interpreting is based upon the skill of finding the relationships between one's and other culture; moreover, Byram addressed that competent intercultural speakers are expected to find out possible solutions to intercultural communication failure or to pinpoint unsolvable issues when making meanings across cultures.

The second type of skill, the skill of discovering or interacting, refers to “the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (Byram et al., 2001, p.6). Based upon Byram's elaboration on this type of skill, this skill comes into play when one only has limited knowledge or no knowledge of the foreign culture. The skill of discovering can be operated in one's own time whereas the skill of interacting must consider the demands

of social interaction, such as the constraints of time, mutual perceptions and attitudes.

Finally, competent intercultural speakers need a great degree of **critical cultural awareness**. Byram et al. (2001) explained this critical cultural awareness is “an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries (p.7).” To put it differently, competent intercultural speakers are required to be mindful of their own values, inclusive of their degrees of openness, curiosity or tolerance toward another culture, as well as how their values have affected their viewpoint on others or otherness.

Byram (1997) added that lessons for critical cultural awareness do not aim to cause any changes in learners’ values, but to make their own values or native cultural heritage explicit and conscious. Moreover, there is a fundamental value position that all language teachers need to facilitate L2 learners to develop. That is, to promote a position that learners acknowledge respect for human dignity and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for social interaction (Byram et al., 2002). This pursuit of dignity and equality overall is believed to be the ultimate goal for L2 learners in the cultural learning. Byram (2000) also proposed criteria for assessment of intercultural competence, and the criteria are listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 *Criteria for Accessing Intercultural Competence* (Byram, 2000)

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A. Interest in other people's way of life

1. I am interested in other people's experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media.
  2. I am also interested in the daily experience of a variety of social groups within a society and not only the dominant culture.
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B. Ability to change perspective

- I have realised that I can understand other cultures by seeing things from a different point of view and by looking at my culture from their perspective.

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C. Ability to cope with living in a different culture

- I am able to cope with a range of reactions I have to living in a different culture (euphoria, homesickness, physical and mental discomfort etc.)

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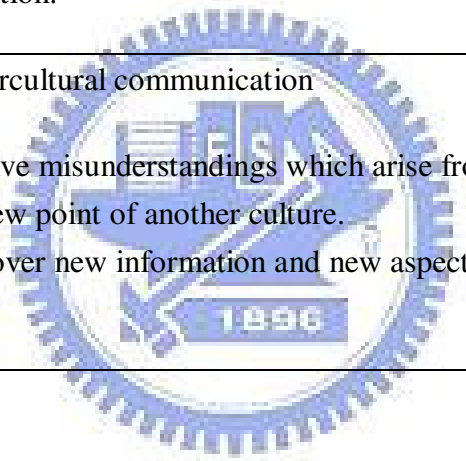
D. Knowledge about another country and culture

1. I know some important facts about living in the other culture and about the country, state and people.
2. I know how to engage in conversation with people of the other culture and maintain a conversation.

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E. Knowledge about intercultural communication

1. I know how to resolve misunderstandings which arise from people's lack of awareness of the view point of another culture.
2. I know how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for myself.



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**Difficulties in Intercultural Communication**

Barna in 1994 categorized six stumbling blocks in intercultural communication: assumption of similarities, language differences, nonverbal misinterpretations, preconceptions and stereotypes, tendency to evaluate and high anxiety. The six types of difficulties in intercultural communication are elaborated below.

The first type of intercultural communication results from the misbelief that “there are sufficient similarities among people of the world to make communication easy (p.337).” According to Barna, some people would assume that we are all human beings so that we have common requirements such as food, shelter, security and others which make us alike. However, this assumption neglects how differently

people could react to these biological and social needs. In fact, these common biological similarities are less helpful when it comes to communication. During conversation, we exchange opinions or information or cooperate to work out issues. In order to handle the delicate interaction, we can not merely depend on the biological commonalities among humans.

The second intercultural communication hurdle is derived from language differences. The difference of vocabulary, syntax, idioms, slang, dialects, pragmatics and so on all could lead to a hazard of intercultural communication breakdown. Barna added that the worst language problem is that people have a tendency to cling on one meaning of a new word or a phrase without considering its cultural connotation. An example of “Won’t you have some tea?” was mentioned by Barna. After hearing the sentence, a nonnative speaker of English answered, No, meaning that he or she wants some tea. However, the U.S. hostess overlooks the double negatives because of the common usage, and the guest eventually gets no tea.

The third type is nonverbal misinterpretations. People from different cultures see, feel, hear, and smell differently. These different senses cause people from different culture to interpret what they see or hear in different ways. For example, a glance of a wink may mean nothing in one culture, while it might be a nonverbal signal in another country, showing a person has a crush on someone.

The fourth stumbling block is the presence of preconceptions and stereotypes. Stereotypes and preconceptions one hold could interfere with his or her viewpoints on the reality. Barna described that stereotypes are very hard to be removed, even with some evidence, because they are solidly established as myths of truism by one’s own national culture. As such, people tend to selectively perceive pieces of new information that corresponds to their imagined reality.

Another hurdle to understanding between different ethnic groups is the tendency

to evaluate. It is likely that people think their culture or ways of life is proper or right. This skewed thought could deter the subjective attention needed to perceive the behaviors from the other's point of view. Once a cultural difference is noticed, the communication could be cut off by arising emotions and feelings toward the difference. In place of the possible emerging evaluation on the difference, this is the time to look and listen emphatically. Also, it is time to open one's mind and to have the courage to "risk changing our own perceptions and values to dare to comprehend why someone thinks and acts differently from us (p.342)."

The last deterrent mentioned to intercultural communication is high anxiety. Too much anxiety or tension will lead to defenses, such as distorted perceptions, withdrawal or hostility. Barna added that high anxiety, unlike the other five categories, can be distinct or underlie the other stumbling blocks. For example, the use of stereotypes and preconceptions can be the defense mechanism to alleviate the stress of intercultural communication. Moreover, tense feeling could affect both parties in the dyad. A person in the host country may feel uncomfortable as talking with a foreigner; likewise, the foreign member in the communication could feel uneasy when their normal behaviors are challenged by the host national. Both sides of the communication could employ defenses or other mechanism to deal with overwhelming anxiety.

### **Cultural Instruction in Second/Foreign Language Learning**

FL/SL teachers have recognized the importance of cultural studies, but linking language learning and cultural studies seems to be uneasy or even uncomfortable for most educators. The problem lies in the fact that the teaching of culture is relatively new and a considerable number of FL/SL teachers are uncertain about what culture really is. Indeed, the term culture is easy to address, but hard to define. This



uncertainty can bring forth misuse of teaching methods. For example, it is not uncommon to see some FL/SL teachers, based on their intuition, directly transfer teaching methods used in linguistic instruction to the teaching of culture regardless of the different nature of these two types of study. Some of the teachers, for instance, write cultural notes on the board and ask students to memorize them. If cultural studies are all about memorizing cultural notes, we can foresee learners will be petrified by how thick textbooks have become after adding numerous pages of cultural notes. Learners' queasy feelings over the heavy study-load prohibit them from setting foot in the realm of cultural studies. In other words, L2 learners' motivation to learn about another culture or desire to speak with people from another culture will wane in cases of the use of improper teaching approaches. Therefore, what we expected — cultural studies in SL/FL learning can help learners have openness attitudes toward another culture or help them become intercultural speakers in a long run (Bateman, 2002) — has become merely a wishful thought.

In order to foster successful cultural teaching in the language learning, Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) signified three different viewpoints on culture that had ever been implemented in the language learning: a) culture as automatic outcome, (b) culture as knowledge, and (c) culture as a process. They have decried the first two viewpoints and have explained that culture studies should be built upon the canon that culture resides in the process of interaction. The three perspectives are illustrated in the following respectively.

### **Culture as Automatic Outcome**

The first cultural learning perspective Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) mentioned is based on the mistaken assumption that learning a FL/SL language will automatically open doors to the culture of the language. In other words, this statement

assumes that even without any pedagogical treatment on the facilitation of the cultural study, learning a foreign language itself will enable learners to arise intercultural awareness so that they could tolerate and handle misunderstanding resulting from cultural differences. However, this perspective is problematic. Robinson (1978) contended, “No research has shown attitude change to be an automatic outcome of any type of foreign language instruction” (p.138). In other words, without intervention, language learners are unlikely to develop a high interest in another culture naturally. In fact, some empirical studies attempted to examine this “Magic-Carpet-Ride-to-Another-Culture” (Robinson, 1978) assumption and investigated to what degree the language instruction itself could possibly influence learners’ attitudes toward the culture of the language they learned and toward people from the culture. The findings of these studies are documented as follows.

First, the classic St. Lambert’s experiment conducted in Canada in 1973 revealed that functional bilingualism could be achieved even under a program in which linguistic experience had no positive effect on attitudes towards speakers of the language (cited in Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996). That is to say, for learners to develop competent second /foreign language abilities does not require positive attitudes toward the foreign culture. They further showed that the test group of English-speaking children, who had been in French immersion class from Grade 1 to Grade 5 held the same attitudes toward French culture as the control group, who only attended normal English class.

Two decades later in 1991, similar results were found in Nocon’s study. The data derived from 500 students in the beginner Spanish classes in San Diego State University showed that studying a foreign language was unlikely to generate a positive attitude toward speakers of the language or even had any effects on their attitude. What is more, Nocon discovered that most of the learners agonized over the

language learning because the class was a required course. Instead of growing high interest, the likelihood was that the learners' agony toward the TL expanded to the culture or to people from the culture in cases of language learning being forced.

In conclusion, in light of Byram's intercultural communication model, successful intercultural communication requires openness attitudes, meaning curious and tolerant attitudes to cross-cultural differences, and perceptive awareness of one's own culture and another culture. Nonetheless, all of the prior studies have concluded that language learning more or less leads to negative attitudes to the culture where the TL is used or to people from the culture in cases of language classes being required. This negative-attitude generation is commonly seen in the EFL countries, such as Taiwan, Japan, and Korea where English is not an official language but English is required learning during compulsory-education years. If we hope for the success of cultural studies, teaching methods ought to require inspiring culture-acquisition procedures in which learners can change their negative attitudes toward another culture and help learners be aware of their stereotypical or negative opinions on another culture or people from the culture. It is evident that intercultural understanding is never the natural outgrowth of language learning.

### **Culture as Knowledge**

The second cultural viewpoint that Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) contended is based on the false assumption that culture learning is about the acquisition of foreign culture knowledge. This cultural perspective assumes that culture is embodied in numbers of cultural facts, which can be learned and cognitively consumed. In this sense, culture teaching should mainly focus on informing learners of as much knowledge as possible and intercultural understanding will then occur. Following this incorrect assumption, the use of cultural textbooks would be the easiest way to present

culture lessons, given these commercial materials contain cultural specifications, already well edited and organized by themes, and they are available at teachers' disposal. However, becoming gradually more aware of the weak link between cultural knowledge and learners' intercultural awareness and understanding, FL teachers are discovering that all their efforts to the intercultural competence development are futile, based upon the following empirical evidence.

Bateman (2002) presented the students' evaluation results of the Spanish class, in which cultural components were taught via textbook articles. Overall, the textbooks were concerned with political and social issues and the class was lectured by a native speaker from Spain. Several learners gave negative evaluation on the cultural learning sections of the class:

“The weakest aspect of the course was having to learn culture, I personally, would improve the class by teaching more of the language and not as much, if any, culture.”

“Spending a lot more time on the grammar and making sure it is understood would help a lot. It's great learning the culture, but I came to learn how to speak, listen, and write Spanish!”

“I feel like the concentration on culture severely detracted from my learning of the language (and I pay to learn language)” (p.319).

The results indicate that language learners see little or no connection between language learning and cultural learning when cultural learning is all about the knowledge gained of another culture (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996; Bateman, 2002). Even if the cultural learning is embedded with interesting cultural topics, such as festivals, food, or the like, still, learners do not seem to understand why the culture information introduced can be beneficial to them or to their intercultural competence; these highlighted cultural notes would only be considered as another part of the course requirements awaiting learners to be cognitively absorbed. It is predictable that

FL/SL teachers will feel disappointed after seeing that culture learning is regarded as an unpopular subject for L2 learners, no matter how hard they try to spoon-feed students with foreign-culture knowledge. What is worse, this perspective of culture learning can backfire. Textbooks tend to pluralize almost all cultural specifications, such as all Canadians do this; all French do that. In this way, cultural stereotypes are strengthened and L2 learners are unconsciously taught to build tall walls or strict barriers for racial or cultural discrimination.

All this eloquence makes an insightful conclusion: culture, unlike subject matters, is never inclusive of sets of knowledge. This does not imply the unimportance of the knowledge of another culture. Byram (1997) has mentioned the knowledge of another culture is a staple factor in successful intercultural communication. Yet this is to say that most learners acquire knowledge of another culture in their native country perhaps through media, books or lectures. Most L2 learners do not favor this kind of culture knowledge gained in a way for this cultural teaching approach hardly helps them see the connection between foreign cultural knowledge and the opportunities of increasing their communicative competence of the TL. Furthermore, these preconceptions of another culture obtained through this kind of cultural teaching approach might not always be correct or be applicable to all situations in the TL community, but L2 learners barely have a chance to validate the cultural information told by textbooks or lecturers. In this light, the cultural knowledge from documents or other sources is important. What is more important for L2 learners is that they can have a chance to receive first-hand information so that they can develop their own perceptions of another culture rather than being told by others or books, and then they can gradually realize the substantial role of culture playing in reaching intercultural understanding.

### *Culture as Process*

Considering culture as a process is the third cultural learning perspective stated by Robinson and Nocon (1996). This viewpoint is based on the recent constructivist perspective that culture is constructed by people in their everyday lives, and language is the main tool for constructing culture (Roberts et al., 2001). It is implied that culture is not static, stored in sets of cultural artifacts or forms; culture is dynamic and active in the lives of people. In other words, to seek cross-cultural understanding, L2 learners ought to be open to executing interpersonal interaction with people from the foreign culture in which both sides of the interaction exchange cultural information and interpret or negotiate meaning. This viewpoint of cultural studies emphasizing negotiating meaning coincides with the definition of cultural understanding proposed by Robinson in 1988:

“Cultural understanding is an ongoing, dynamic process in which learners continually synthesize cultural inputs with their own past and present experience in order to create meaning. As such, cultural understanding involves a synthesis between the learner’s home culture, the target culture input and the learner as an individual” (pp.11-12).

As indicated, through meaning negotiation during interaction, L2 learners are aware of one’s own culture and try to better understand the foreign culture from the perspective of the interlocutor. It is noted in Robinson’s “Color Purple” theory that to reach intercultural understanding does not require L2 learners to forego their native value system or cultural inheritance. Imagine that the native culture and the foreign culture are two individual circles inherent with their respective unique cultural heritage: the native culture is shaded in blue; the foreign culture is shaded in red. Intercultural understanding arrives at the state that L2 learners can develop a “purple” vision, the overlapping part of the two circles to value both the native culture and the

foreign culture. To put it differently, with the purple vision comes the state the L2 learners can progress from an ethnocentric view of the world to one that can recognize the existence of diverse cultural perspectives. L2 learners then can quote cultural phenomena, considering the specification of the cultural factors, such as age, gender, regional origin, ethnic background, and social class (Kramsch, 1993). In this way, cultural stereotypes can further be justified by the help of authentic information collected from direct interaction with people from the foreign-culture community.

In brief, cultural studies are necessary in language learning programs. However, some FL/SL teachers though with enthusiasm may not effectively guide learners to the stage where learners can see the relationship between cultural studies and being well functioning members in today's multi-cultural world. This failure of the cultural teaching is largely due to the reality that culture is a conceptual term, which confuses most FL/SL educators. As known that competent language learners in terms of linguistic aspect are not analogous to competent intercultural communicators, the teaching of culture is advised to be incorporated into language learning syllabi in order to facilitate successful intercultural communication. Nevertheless, cultural studies cannot be delivered via the study of cultural facts of another culture. We cannot deny that those highlighted cultural notes to some degrees, help learners imagine what another culture is like. Yet this information of another culture would interfere with the contact of people from foreign cultures in ways that the previously learnt cultural knowledge has stereotyped learners' perception on another culture. Instead of infusing cultural learning with lots of cultural knowledge, cultural learning needs genuine interactions with foreign cultures so that learners can dismantle stereotypes and go through the process of "tertiary socialization" (Byram, 1989) in order to rebuild one's new world view. It is noted that after being familiar with more and more individuals from the foreign culture, learners will gradually realize that

generalizations cannot be applicable to everyone (La Brack, 1993). All in all, since culture is not sets of knowledge, but a way of living, learners are best to have a close contact with people of another culture. Unlike outcome of teaching cultures through sets of cultural facts, the cultural knowledge received through interaction is meaningful to L2 learners for the interlocutor, to some extent, is a live cultural artifact, entity from the foreign culture. The interlocutor himself or herself transmits cultural information in a common language with a L2 learner in the way that the learner can see how the foreign culture has nurtured or influenced the interlocutor and how he or she differs from the L2 learner in certain ways. Only after experiencing this process can L2 learners see how a language learned can facilitate successful interpersonal interaction with people from another country, acquire foreign cultures, expand their horizon at cultural differences across the globe, and finally arrive at the “purple vision” to value otherness.



### **Incorporation of Intercultural Contact into Language Class**

Under the premise that culture is a process, cultural learning is advised to be implemented via authentic intercultural interaction. The previous research relevant to cultural learning through authentic intercultural contact can be generally divided into three types: travel abroad programs, virtual intercultural interaction, and face to face intercultural contact in one’s own country. These three types are further elaborated in the following.

#### **Travel-abroad Programs**

The most direct way to encourage intercultural contact is to place language learners in a foreign country. Some language class syllabi thus have been integrated with “study abroad” program that involves a period of short time of staying in



foreign-culture nations. This kind of class of incorporating a travel abroad session into the language learning has proven to have positive influences on learners.

Analyzing the collection of interviews with 50 students who spent a year in a European country, Murphy-Lejeune (2003) claimed that travel-abroad experiences could have considerable influence on language and culture knowledge, social competence, strategic skills, and attitudes.

The results in the study indicated that the cultural knowledge gained from the experiences include (a) history, geography, economics, politics, literature, (b) sociocultural knowledge, and (c) study/work-based knowledge. As for the language aspect, communicative competence was mentioned to be improved.

Moreover, it is addressed that the travel experiences boosted the students' social confidence in ways that they knew how to establish new social relationship better. Since living abroad requires the ability of self managing one's life, the student-travelers reported that their self confidence was elevated because they but no others had to cope with all the trivial of life: taking in charge of one's life needs courage and confidence, and having the full ability to handle life events proves student-travelers themselves.

Last but not least, the enrichment of the student-travelers derived from the travel-abroad experience came from a deeper thinking of their self identities and of the relation between self and other or otherness in the unfamiliar social surroundings. For instance, the travel experience enabled one of the students to reflect upon the relation between self and other by saying that it was easy to conjure up some thinking, like someone wearing that sort of clothes, I was not going to talk to him in the native-culture country, but this type of racist opinions was less likely to come up in the unfamiliar social context. As seen, this kind of distance-maintaining manner is hard to sustain since unfamiliarity leads to the suspension of judgments on others. The

study also proposed an empirically-driven model of the four types of development that language learners can gain from travel abroad experiences.

Table 2.2 *A Model for Student-travelers' Development in Learning Abroad Program*

---

(1) Knowledge

- Factual knowledge: history, geography, economics, politics, literature, etc.
  - Sociocultural realities: understanding contemporary society, its structure and rules,
  - Study/work-based knowledge in a professional milieu and
  - Language proficiency and communicative competence.
- 

(2) Strategic skills

- Autonomy: to live on one's own (previous experiences, organizational know-how)and
  - Self-confidence: learning 'how to cope'.
- 

(3) Social Competence

- Communicative and social confidence: sociability, sociocultural participation and
  - Relational ease or how to get on with people: establishing new social relations.
- 

(4) Personal and interpersonal attitudes

- Openness: curiosity, tolerance, flexibility and
  - Critical awareness of self and others: learning culture as intercultural.
- 

Further, in order to enrich learners' intercultural experiences when abroad, studies such as Barro, Byram, Grimm, Morgan and Roberts (1993), Hickey (1980), Jurasek (1995), Roberts et al. (2001), and Roberts (2003) have been integrated with the ethnographic method. It was expected that with well trained ethnographic methods prior to overseas traveling, student-travelers would become better observers or explorers when abroad. This type of research generally follows three sequential stages.

- The first stage: language teachers help learners acquire and practice ethnographic skills in the native country;
- The second stage: learners exercise the ethnographic skills to explore the target culture while abroad;

- The third stage: learners recount and write the travel experience after returning back home.

At the first stage, learners at the current stage are advised to acquire the integral skills of ethnography. Learners at this stage are trained to be “professional strangers” (Agar, 2000) once they are abroad. The paradoxical term means that someone is defined as an outsider because of the lack of familiarities whereas he or she is rich in skills to obtain information. Equipped with ethnographic skills, he or she seems to be given a new identity that legitimizes that he or she can be a stranger in systematic ways to observe or participate in foreign cultural events.

After acquiring the skills, learners arrive at the second stage of traveling aboard, in which they experience being intercultural learners and employing the skills learnt to deepen the intercultural experiences. This stage mainly concerns the issue of identity, which involves considering the relation between self and others (Roberts, 2003).

After returning to their native country, learners are committed to drawing upon all the experiences and recounting their travel stories by writing up their ethnographic project. The third stage is more concerned with “knowing” something of the group they have studied.

Among these studies of the integration of ethnographic interviews with intercultural contact, it was indicated that high quality cultural information was elicited during the trip; furthermore, the awareness of stereotypes or preconditioned thoughts were aroused in a great degree for further justification because learners relied more on their own observation of reality rather than on perceived knowledge (Barro et al., 1993). In addition, Roberts (2003) revealed that the “travel-abroad, living as an ethnographic life” project could offer personal development in that learners formed the “habit of reflexivity” to falsify the assumption that cultural facts

are the only benefits that could receive from the intercultural contact. Aside from culture and language learning, the project also could bring forth “deep learning” (Entwistle, 1981), which is characterized as being able to examine new facts and ideas critically, and make links into their existing cognitive structure.

### **Virtual Intercultural Contact**

Additionally, due to the advent of the Internet access, virtual intercultural contact also becomes feasible. Learners can have intercultural contact without leaving their own country. That is, their learning is no longer impeded by high expenses of overseas traveling because computer technologies have helped melted the geographical boundaries among countries. Email, Skype, MSN, ICQ, and other cutting-edge communication interfaces or devices fulfill the need of crossing cultures in the language education.

Aware of the dominance of homogenized American culture portrayed by Hollywood movies or American popular sitcoms, Galloway (1995) assisted Japanese EFL university students to understand cultural relativity by email correspondence with students in Los Angeles. The email correspondence was conducted after class discussion on selected cultural themes, and therefore, Japanese learners could carry on the topic and discuss with their keypals for further exploration. The accumulative feedback on this email activity revealed most of the students gave positive responses to the project. On top of this, a significant discovery in the study was that some of the students who attended in the project formed a lasting contact with their keypals. Galloway pinpointed that one of the student tried to explain to his keypal why Japanese was not likely to accept offers of help from aboard during the time when Kobe earthquake vigorously struck Japan, which entails that this activity can facilitate both sides to open their mind and enable either side to explain or clarify intercultural

misunderstanding to the other side.

Similarly, Ham (1995) incorporated email-writing activities into the Advanced German Conversation and Writing Course taken by undergraduate university students in the US in a great effort to enhance intercultural learning experience. The intercultural exchange took place by email communication with native German partners who took American studies in the American learners' sister university in Kassel, Germany. American students revealed that they talked about the cultural themes, naturally emerging during the process of negotiating meaning, and because of this way of choosing topics, what they discussed became much more meaningful and relevant to themselves. Ham concluded that the success of the email project largely depended on chances of direct contact as opposed to the traditional way of informing learners of second-hand cultural information.

More recently, Liaw and Johnson (2001) implemented a virtual interaction via email correspondence between university EFL students in Taiwan and pre-service ESL teachers in the US. Data were gathered from email entries and end-of-project reports to lighten up intercultural communication process. The findings showed that the recurrent cultural themes over the email communication include: (a) geographical information, (b) holiday celebrations, (c) school systems, (d) names, (e) holidays, language, and religion, (f) interpersonal relationships, and (g) current events. In addition, the study indicated that Taiwan students after the project realized the significance of the fact of culture to the success of intercultural communication aside from linguistic competence. The students reported that they had realized that language deficiency was not the only factor of communication breakdown; the awareness of cultural subtleties was as important as linguistic competence.

Liaw (2006) conducted a study in which EFL learners in Taiwan utilized an online learning environment developed to foster the learners' intercultural competence

through reading articles focusing on topics of Taiwan's culture and communicating their responses with speakers of the target language. The findings showed that all the EFL learners could still communicate fluently with the speakers of the target language without the help the online tools. In addition, four types of intercultural competences were discovered after the analysis of the students' e-forum entries: (a) interest in knowing other people's way of life and introducing one's own culture to others, (b) abilities to change perspective, (c) knowledge about one's own and others' culture for intercultural communication, and (d) knowledge about intercultural communication processes.

As indicated above, virtual communication, though not as authentic as face-to-face communication, could also serve as an alternative teaching method to facilitate open attitudes to foreign culture and increase intercultural understanding (Liaw & Johnson, 2001). As a matter of fact, in the today's globalization world, having face to face intercultural communication without traveling abroad is feasible for L2 learners; however, few studies have drawn attention to face-to-face intercultural interaction in learners' native country, except for Robinson-Stuart and Nocon's study in 1996.

### **Face-to-face Intercultural Contact in One's Own Country**

Robinson-Stuart and Nocon's study was inclusive of 26 college students, mostly native speakers of English, who took elementary-level Spanish class at San Diego State University. After a few times of in-class training of interviewing skills, the learners were to manage face-to-face interviews with native speakers of Spanish. Most of those students chose to interview international students; some interviewed people in their residential communities or work places. After the interviews, learners were required to present their interview experiences in Spanish in class. Students'

in-class presentations together with prior and post questionnaires of concerning learners' attitude change were collected for data analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data collected revealed that the close interaction with the representatives of native speakers of Spanish would have positive effects on learners' desire to learn Spanish and on their attitudes toward Spanish speakers.

Years later, Bateman (2002) replicated the study of Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) with the additional attention to learners' TL (Spanish) use during intercultural interviews. Aside from the emphasis of intercultural competence, the study also inspected learners' language learning aspects, such as (a) how much time they spent in the interviews, (b) how much the TL they spoke, and (c) the relationship between these variables and students' attitudes toward the TL and the speakers of the TL at the end of the project. The data were collected from 35 college students out of two second-year Spanish classes. Overall, the findings showed a tendency that the more time students' spent with their interviewees, the more benefit they received from the project. However, some students indicated their difficulties to prolong the interviews because their interviewees were not talkative enough to give them much in-depth information. In addition, commonly mentioned comments made by the students after listening to in-class presentations were categorized as follows: (a) many Hispanic cultures have similar values and beliefs, (b) Hispanic people tend to be more family-oriented than Americans, (c) gender roles in Hispanic countries differ from those in the United States, (d) many Hispanic people have similar perceptions of American culture, (e) Hispanics, like Americans, are all different. It was noted by Bateman that these sorted comments, such as gender roles or families, showed generalizations after listening to the presentations; however, the author has argued that generalization is a normal part of cultural studies, which does not always consist of stereotypes. These generalizations will gradually be modified after several contacts

with people from the culture. His argument is supported by the students' comments, "I always had a stereotyping image, because of [our textbook], that all Spanish-speaking people were very religious, and that isn't true." and "I learned things not in books. Hispanic people, just like Americans, are all different."

More recently, Su (2008) incorporated intercultural contact into her English Listening Course in the EFL context, Taiwan. Twenty-six college students were grouped and each group worked to find a native speaker of English in their neighborhood and arrange at least two interviews with him or her within three weeks. Five teams interviewed Americans, four interviewed Canadians, and five interviewed British people. After the interview task, each group carried their intercultural experience to class by preparing an oral report and then delivering to the class. The data indicated that the task helped facilitate the development of cross-cultural awareness, and communication skills in ways that it provides opportunities for EFL learners to look into the values of the target language countries, learn new ways to view their own culture, increase confidence in using English to communicate, and regard being able to conduct authentic communication as the ultimate EFL learning goal.

In short, this whole section has covered previous studies that laid stress on the importance of intercultural contact to language-and-culture learning. As indicated, intercultural contact benefits language and cultural learning in many ways. First, the interaction can possibly increase learners' knowledge of the foreign cultures in ways that learners, as communicators and observers, talk about topics chosen by learners themselves; cultural topics can be further extended. The cultural knowledge obtained through this give-and-take negotiation is high-quality cultural knowledge in that the knowledge is conveyed through speakers from the foreign cultures, suitable for doing comparison with learners' preconception. As for language learning, learners have



gained communicative confidence, communicative competence, and understanding of the importance of authentic communication in language learning.

In addition to culture or language knowledge, it also has been indicated that the intercultural, interpersonal exchange influences deep learning, such as attitude change, world-view change with respect to the relation between self and others, and the reality of the multicultural world.

Even the prior studies have proved intercultural contact benefits language or cultural learning in numerous ways. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that most of the research was done on the condition that learners had intercultural interaction with native speakers. In fact, language is spreading, especially English, for it is an auxiliary language across the globe. As early as the late-1990s, the number of English speakers, both native and nonnative speakers, was approximately around 1.2 billion to 1.5 billion (Crystal, 1997). EFL learners were more likely to have intercultural communication with nonnative speakers of English nowadays. Consequently, the present study aims to investigate how the intercultural contact with nonnative speakers of English can possibly influence EFL learners' language or cultural learning. Also as seeing the high traveling cost of traveling abroad, the present study followed the studies (Bateman, 2002; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996; Su, 2008) that encouraged intercultural contact in learners' self country. The results can possibly be more applicable to most EFL learners and provide an alternative to the enrichment of language learners' intercultural learning.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHOD

The present study attempts to investigate four college freshmen's reflection on their experience of communicating with nonnative speakers of English, specifically concerning their intercultural competence development, perceived communication difficulties and their perception of the intercultural task. Taiwanese students' written self-reflection reports on this intercultural communication experience and post-interviews transcripts were collected for further analysis.

In this chapter, the organization is structured under five subheadings: procedure of selecting participants, description of participants, procedure of implementing the study, data collection and data analysis. Details in each part are given below:

#### **Procedure of Selecting Participants**

Participants in this study contain two types: Taiwanese college freshmen and international students in Taiwan. The procedure of recruiting these two types of participants is presented respectively as follows.

##### **Selecting Taiwanese College Freshmen**

Four Taiwanese freshmen studying in a public university in northern Taiwan were invited to participate in this study. They were recruited via a popular Bulletin Board System (BBS) (telnet://ptt.cc), a digital bulletin board where many college students from this university sign in to procure information relevant to school affairs or social interaction. The researcher then posted a message on the BBS about three weeks before the intercultural communication task was implemented, stating that the researcher was looking for potential participants who would be willing to interact with

international students on campus (Appendix 1). Specific criteria for potential participants posted on the BBS were (1) freshman, (2) no overseas traveling experience, and (3) Mandarin as first language. Reasons for these criteria were that the present study attempts to help EFL learners who have fewer chances to do overseas traveling develop intercultural awareness in their own country. To achieve the goal, the researcher planned to recruit participants who had not been abroad and examine how the experience of communicating with nonnative speakers of English in their own country could facilitate their intercultural awareness.

After posting the advertisement for participants, 22 responses had been received within three days. In order to inform the email respondents of the procedure of this study in detail, the researcher emailed all the 22 respondents, inviting them to have an individual, face to face meeting. However, only six email respondents (3 male and 3 female) managed to have the meeting with the researcher. The reasons why the email respondents had not arranged to have the meeting were mostly that the respondents were too busy to arrange the meeting, or no subsequent reply emails were received after the invitation letter of the meeting.

After having individual meetings with the six candidates, the researcher discovered that only one candidate had never been abroad, but the rest had actually been to other countries in their early age, despite the fact that the requirement of non-overseas-traveling experience was indicated in the posting for participation recruitment. The participants explained that they did not purposely leave out the truth about their past travel experiences. The reasons were that they went abroad for the purpose of sightseeing. Traveling with a tour group, they did not have many chances to interact with people in the foreign countries. The researcher then decided to make a detailed investigation on their traveling experiences to know how the six candidates interacted with the locals when abroad and on their intercultural experiences in

Taiwan. The details of their respective intercultural experiences overseas and in Taiwan are listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 *Intercultural Experiences outside and in One's Own Country of the Six*

*Potential Participants*

Potential Taiwanese Participants	Intercultural Experiences Overseas	Intercultural Experiences in Taiwan
Mandy	Hong Kong at the age of 12(4 days)	Conversation class in high school was instructed by a foreign instructor.
Elliot	No overseas traveling experiences	Conversation class in high school was instructed by a foreign instructor.
Nina	Australia at the age of eight (9 days); Thailand at the age of ten (5 days); Germany at the age of twelve (14 days); and Palau at the age of 16 (5 days).	Conversation class in high school was instructed by a foreign instructor.
Thomas	Hong Kong in elementary-school age (3 days)	He was taught by American teachers in elementary school for four years.
Betty	the United States (1 month) at the age of eight	She was educated in a bilingual preschool and elementary school in which most of her teachers were native speakers of English.
John	the United States (2 months), and U.K. (4 days) in elementary-school age	He attended a preschool in which one American taught him English.

Note: All of the names are pseudonyms.

After the intercultural experience investigation on the six potential participants, the researcher made a concession to the original no-overseas-traveling experience criterion—that is, it is acceptable that their traveling experience was only for touring, and it only lasted less than two weeks, during which they had little interaction with the people in the foreign country.

Later, four candidates—Mandy, Elliot, Nina, and Thomas (pseudonyms) were selected after the consideration of their intercultural experiences and earnestness to

participate in the study. The four showed their greatest enthusiasm toward this intercultural communication study and the least intercultural contact from their past traveling experiences.

After the four participants were chosen, they were paired into two groups. Criteria for grouping were based upon gender and their English scores used for college admission. The researcher hoped that gender could be balanced in the intercultural communication, and that Taiwanese participants with higher English language proficiency could cooperate with the students with lower English proficiency to deal with the intercultural task.

In order to evaluate their English proficiency, English scores used from university admission were adopted. It is noted that two kinds of English tests could be taken for college admission in Taiwan. One was General Scholastic Ability English Test (GSAET), and the English proficiency was leveled from 1 to 15. The other was the Department Required English Test (DRET), and the English proficiency was ranged from 0 to 100.

After the consideration of gender and English proficiency, each group contained one female and one male and one of those is more proficient than the other in terms of English proficiency. In addition to gender and English proficiency, Table 3.2 presents more background information on the four participants.

Table 3.2 *Background Information of Taiwanese Participants*

Taiwanese Participants	Age	Gender	Major	English Proficiency (more/less proficient)
<b>Group 1:</b>				
Mandy	18	F	Electrical Control Engineering	More Proficient GSAET: 15
Elliot	18	M	Electrical Control Engineering	Less Proficient DRET:60
<b>Group 2:</b>				
Nina	18	F	Foreign Languages and Literatures	More Proficient GSAET: 15
Thomas	18	M	Electrical Control Engineering	Less Proficient DRET: 58

Note: All of the names are pseudonyms.

### **Selecting International Students**

Two international students (one female and one male) studying in the same university as the four Taiwanese students participated in this study. They were recruited via the help of the International Service Center (ISC) of the university. The email (Appendix 2), stating the purpose of the present study, was first written by the researcher and then sent by the ISC to international students of the university. A week after the mail was sent, the researcher received reply emails from six respondents, and their respective demographic information is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 *Demographic Information of Six Responding International Students*

Name	Nationality	Age	Gender	Length of Stay (months)	Major	Academic Status
Oscar	Guatemala	18	M	19	Computer Science	Undergraduate: 1 <sup>st</sup> year
Romiro	Bolivia	29	M	19	GMBA	Master: 1 <sup>st</sup> year
Daniel	Guatemala	19	M	19	Computer Science	Undergraduate: 1 <sup>st</sup> year
Rolly	Guatemala	26	F	7	Environmental Engineering	Master: 1 <sup>st</sup> year
Far	Vietnam	26	M	7	Computer Science	Master: 1 <sup>st</sup> year
Ericson	the Philippines	20	M	7	Electronic Engineering	Master: 1 <sup>st</sup> year

Notes: All of the names are pseudonyms.

GMBA stands for Global Master of Business Administration.

After an individual meeting with all the six email respondents, two international students, Rolly and Far, were finally selected. The selecting process of the two international students is depicted below.

Table 3.2 shows that with respect to time of stay, Ericson, Far and Rolly had stayed in Taiwan relatively shorter than all the other respondents had. It was assumed that the international students with shorter time of stay in Taiwan could be much aware of the new experience in the host culture. They could be able to come up with more intercultural issues than others. As a result, the three international students were then chosen after considering their time of stay: Rolly, Ericson and Far.

Furthermore, after considering the personality trait of the three international students, Far and Rolly were eventually selected in that they were more extroverted and eloquent than Ericson. Ericson was unconfident and reticent to self-initiate questions during the first meeting with the researcher.

### **Grouping Taiwanese Students with International Students**

Each pair of Taiwanese students was randomly assigned to one of the international students participating in the task. The grouping is listed in Table 3.4. Soon after the grouping, the researcher emailed every one of the four Taiwanese students the contact information of his or her Taiwanese partner, along with background information of the international student he or she was about to talk with. It is noted that the Taiwanese students and international student had not met each other until the first intercultural talk.

Table 3.4 *Grouping of Taiwanese Students and International Students*

	Taiwanese Students	International Students
Group 1	Mandy Elliot	Rolly (F)
Group 2	Nina Thomas	Far (M)

Notes: 1. All of the names are pseudonyms.  
2. F refers to female; M refers to male.

### **Description of Participants**

Detailed information of the participants is described below, mainly concerning their personality, previous experiences in English learning and intercultural contact, and knowledge about the culture of their respective foreign interlocutor. It is noted that the description of participants was derived from the meeting in which the researcher and the participants first met each other (see appendix 5 for questions) and the following description was sent to the participants via email for further confirmation.

#### **Group One**



### ***Taiwanese student 1: Mandy***

Mandy (aged 18, female) is studying in the department of Electrical Control Engineering. She described herself as outgoing, optimistic, and quite generous. She had received most of her English knowledge in Taiwan through her formal school education. Her first English class started at the third grade of elementary school. Since then, she had not been given enough chances of speaking English in any English class. Regarding her English competence, her English performance had been above average based upon her self-report, and her score of General Scholastic Ability English Test, level 15, the highest level of the test.

Her intercultural communication experience was not much aside from traveling to Hong Kong for four days right after elementary school graduation. Her knowledge of Guatemalan culture prior to this study was so limited that she only knew Guatemala is a country in Central America.

Mandy's motivation to join in this study was strong. After entering university, she remained very enthusiastic about English learning. When she saw international students on campus, she always wanted to talk to them; however, she felt awkward when she said hello or initiated a conversation with them. Her concern was that her intrusive behavior might be considered rude or bothersome. Consequently, she was very willing to attend the present study, hoping she could make friends with an international student, and have a friend to whom she can use English to talk.

### ***Taiwanese student 2: Elliot***

Also majoring in Electrical Control Engineering, Elliot (aged 18, male) is introverted and unconfident in himself. Elliot and Mandy knew each other before this study from having taken the same courses in the university.

Most Elliot's English learning was through the formal school system. His

previous English learning experiences were full of ups and downs. He was first exposed to English in the fifth grade, and since then, English had been a difficult subject for him. Reflecting upon his English class in elementary school, he reported that he was placed in a class in which most of his classmates were much ahead of him. At that time, the majority of his classmates had already learned basic English in other informal English learning centers, but his English ability still stayed at “ground zero.” This disadvantage of learning English relatively late caused him much agony and frustration in the following years.

Nevertheless, this situation changed, and his English improved. His impetus for change was that he no longer wanted to be an under-average student in English classes for good; he then endeavored to study English during senior high school. His arduous efforts paid off by his improved English performance in written tests at school. His score in Department Required English Test was 60 out of 100. The mean score of the test in that year was 42.62 (SD= 25.68, Population = 100117). The data were obtained from the website of College Entrance Examination Center (<http://www.ceec.edu.tw>). It is noted that according to the statistics, Elliot’s English score was above the average students. But in this study, he was placed in the category of less proficient English learner. It was because the university he attended was one of leading universities in Taiwan. Academic performances of the students in this university were generally higher than those of the students in other universities. Here, I considered Elliot a less proficient learner was based upon his relatively lower English proficiency than Mandy’s.

As for Elliot’s previous intercultural experience, he had never been overseas, and Rolly, the international student, was the second foreign friend with whom he ever talked. When asked about what he knew about the culture of Guatemala prior to the intercultural communication task, he mentioned that he knew the official language

was Spanish, and his knowledge of the culture was limited to the knowledge taught in high-school Geography class.

Continually gaining momentum in English learning, Elliot had sought ways to improve his English after stepping into university. Sometimes he spoke to himself in English, but his roommates ridiculed his faltering English. Sometimes he participated in English learning activities during lunchtime. He was drawn by the advertisement of this study, hoping this study could serve as a way to increase his English speaking skill.

### ***International student 1: Rolly***

Coming from Guatemala, Rolly (aged 26, female), was a first-year graduate student in the department of Environmental Engineering. Having been staying in Taiwan for seven months, she depicted that she found ways to adapt to this new environment very quickly. She enjoyed her time living in Taiwan because she did not have much to worry while staying here. All she needed to do was take good care of her academic performance. She had been to Mexico, Salvador, and Honduras for short visits before coming to Taiwan, but Taiwan was the first Asian country in which she had resided. She described herself as outgoing, humorous, trustful, and talkative.

Given that English was taught in formal education system in Guatemala, she started learning English since junior high school. She had not had many opportunities to use English back home until she came to Taiwan. Her score of TOEFL-ibt taken in 2007 was 70. She commented on her own English ability, “I think my English proficiency.. it’s ok, at least I can understand, and I can express my ideas, and people who I used to talk with, are able to understand me, and I think it’s the most important thing in foreign language, to have a good communication.”

## Group Two

### *Taiwanese student 3: Nina*

Nina, aged 18, female, majored in Foreign Languages and Literatures. She described herself as optimist, easygoing, and amiable. She had started learning English since preschool age in a language center owned by her aunt, and her aunt was her English teacher. As such, Nina learned English prior to formal English education in school, which usually started at the third grade of elementary school.

When Nina reached elementary-school age, her aunt continued teaching her English in addition to the English instruction at school. However, arriving at high school age, she only attended English classes in school. In the eleventh grade, she was placed in a special class in which math and English were given more hours than other subjects were.

Overall, Nina had a relatively early start in English learning and was given extra hours of English lessons in her past English learning experiences. Nevertheless, she said these additional English classes did not significantly help develop her English speaking competence. As a matter of fact, a private tutor improved her English oral ability.

To enter a good university, her family hired a private Taiwanese tutor in her twelfth grade to enhance her English speaking competence. The teacher spoke English for most of the class to teach Nina. This way of teaching provided her with more chances of real English use. Her score of General Scholastic Ability English Test was level 15, the highest level.

She traveled to a few countries for short vacation, including Australia at the age of eight (9 days), Thailand at the age of ten (5 days), Germany at the age of twelve (14 days), and Palau at the age of 16 (5 days). Other than these overseas traveling experiences, Nina had very few chances to speak with foreign visitors/residents in

Taiwan. Prior to this study, her knowledge of Vietnamese culture mostly came from textbooks used in high school and from media, such as Vietnam was a tributary to China and a great number of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan.

Nina's motivation for participating in this study was to make new friends and practice English. She said although most courses taken in university were lectured in English, there were scant chances of speaking English. "More practice, better English," said Nina.

#### ***Taiwanese student 4: Thomas***

Majoring in the department of Electrical Control Engineering, Thomas, aged 18, male, considered himself affable and optimistic. While being in a group, he depicted that he was a bit passive speaker.

Thomas started learning English at the age of seven in an informal language center in which Taiwanese teachers, together with native speakers of English, taught him English. Reverting to the time, he said limited time was allotted to each student for oral practice even though native speakers of English were the instructors. Later, due to the reason that formal English education started in grade three, he attended English classes both in elementary school and in an informal language institute.

After elementary school, English learning became progressively harder for him. Senior high school was the most difficult period because of the overwhelming number of words in textbooks. His score in Department Required English Test was 58 out of 100. The mean score of the test in that year was 42.62 (SD= 25.68, Population = 100117). The data was obtained from the website of College Entrance Examination Center (<http://www.ceec.edu.tw>).

Thomas's previous intercultural experience was limited. He only had visited Hong Kong for three days during his elementary-school age. Moreover, in Taiwan, he

only talked to the native English teachers when young. Similar to Nina, Thomas did not know much about Vietnam other than geographic information gained from high school before this study.

Thomas joined this study with the intent of obtaining high-scoring TOEFL-ibt test. He wanted to study abroad after graduation from the university. To apply for master programs overseas, he was required to have a good TOEFL-ibt score. Since abilities of speaking English were involved in the test, he regarded this study as a chance to test his English proficiency.

### ***International student 2: Far***

Far, aged 26, male, was a first-year graduate student in the department of Computer Science. Having always stayed in Vietnam for most of his life, he decided to pursue his master degree overseas. As the university in Taiwan offered him a full scholarship, he came to Taiwan in September 2008. He described himself ambitious but lazy. He said, “I want to do many things, but I hope people can bring things to me.” In the eyes of his friends, he said he is outgoing and helpful.

Far started learning English at the age of eleven through formal education system in Vietnam. His English, however, improved because he worked with American colleagues after college graduation. His score of TOEFL-ibt taken in 2007 was 88. Having been in Taiwan for only seven months, Far did not know too much about Taiwanese culture and neither did he make friends with local Taiwanese people. He expected that the present study could help him make more Taiwanese friends. He could then explore more of Taiwanese culture.

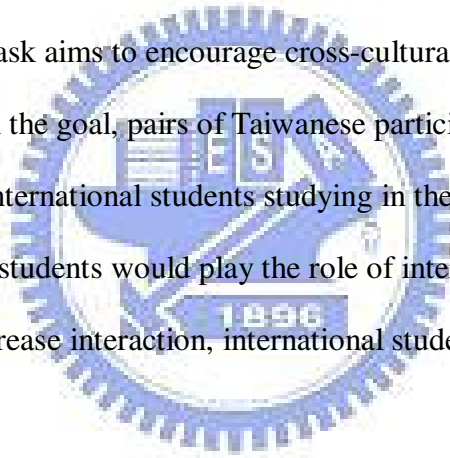
### **Procedure of Implementing the Study**

As evidenced in previous intercultural research (Bateman, 2002; Hickey, 1980;

Robinson-Stuart, 1996; Su, 2008), procedure of these studies was generally divided into three subsequent steps—preparation, intercultural contact, and retrospective stages. Procedure of the present study, as a result, followed the three steps, which are described in three respective subsections: orientation session, intercultural interaction, and post-interviews.

### **Orientation Session**

When the researcher first had an individual, face to face meeting with the participants, orientation session also took place. At the meeting, guidelines of the intercultural task (Appendix 3), and consent forms (Appendix 4) were distributed. It was mentioned that the task aims to encourage cross-cultural learning and real-time English use, and to reach the goal, pairs of Taiwanese participants would conduct face to face interviews with international students studying in the university. It was added that although Taiwanese students would play the role of interviewers during conversation, still, to increase interaction, international students were encouraged to initiate questions.



### **Intercultural Interaction**

Around two weeks after the orientation session, the two pairs of Taiwanese participants started their respective task. Following the design of past relevant intercultural research (Bateman, 2002; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon 1996; Su, 2008), the presets study informed the Taiwanese students that they interview the same international student three times within three weeks. As for time span of each talk, the researcher suggested to the participants that each intercultural contact should last at least 30 min with a reference to the study of Bateman (2002).

Table 3.4 shows the location and time duration of each intercultural talk

conducted by the two groups. Location of the first intercultural talk of both groups was arranged by the researcher. This arrangement was due to the reason that the Taiwanese and international students had not met each other prior to the first talk. Later, location of the other talks was determined by the participants themselves in that the participants could be less constrained in a way they could determine the most appropriate location in which they could have the maximum intercultural experience.

Table 3.5 *Location and Time Duration of the Intercultural Interaction*

		First	Second	Third
Group 1	Location	International Student Center	International Student Center	International Student Center
	Time Duration	37:44	46:34	54:00
Group 2	Location	Outdoor Café on Campus	Graduate Students' Research Room	International Student Center
	Time Duration	1:12:00	1:34:00	1:10:00

As shown in Table 3.5, though the researcher predetermined the minimum time of a talk, every talk lasted more than 30 min, and particularly, Group Two chatted more than one hour every time.

Regarding elapsed time of each talk, Group One might be less enthusiastic in comparison to Group Two. However, this comparatively less time was due to the fact that the international student, Rolly, in Group One, was scheduled for a Bible-study right after each talk. If the intercultural talk was extended to over an hour, she would not be able to be punctual for the Bible-study meeting. By contrast, the other international student in Group Two, Far, was not constrained around the talks, and members of Group Two could extend their talk if necessary.

### **Post-interviews**



Post-interviews with the four Taiwanese participants were conducted individually in the week after they had finished the third intercultural talk. Each post-interview lasted about 30 minutes.

### **Data Collection**

Collected data of the present study consist of (a) twelve written self-reflection reports, (b) recording of the six intercultural talks and (c) recording of four post-interviews. Procedure for collecting the data is listed in Table 3.6, and the details are given as follows.

*Table 3.6 Procedure of Data Collection*

Periods	Activities	Data collected
During Intercultural Interaction	1. Two pairs of Taiwanese students interviewed their respective international student three times within three weeks. 2. After every talk, each Taiwanese student wrote his or her self-reflection upon the experience.	(b) Recording of six intercultural talks  (a) Twelve written self-reflection reports
Post-Interviews	Four Taiwanese participants were asked to reflect upon the intercultural task in an oral form.	(c) Recording of post-interviews

### **Recording of Intercultural Conversation**

A digital recorder was utilized to record the dialogues between Taiwanese students and their interlocutors. This recording device was managed by the Taiwanese students. The researcher was not present in order not to intervene the communication process. Recording of six intercultural dialogues was collected.

### **Written Self-reflection Reports**

Every time when a group finished the intercultural conversation, every Taiwanese participant was required to reflect in a written form (Appendix 6) with nine open-ended questions. The questions are involved with a general description of the talk (Q1), preparation for the talk (Q2), attitude toward the international student (Q3), perceived communication difficulties (Q4), knowledge of other and one's own cultures gained from this talk (Q5 to Q6), impact upon English learning after the talk (Q7), and plans for the next talk and etc.(Q8 to Q9).

After filling in the form, the participants needed to send the completed report back to the researcher via email within two days right after each talk. A total of twelve written self-reflection reports were collected.

### **Recording of Post-interviews**

Semi-structured interviews with the four Taiwanese students were conducted in Chinese one week after the third intercultural talk was completed. Each interview lasted about 20 to 30 minutes and seven open-ended questions (refer to Appendix 6) were designed for the interview. The questions can be divided into three parts. The first part is to ask the increasing or decreasing difficulties in conducting the three intercultural talks (Q1). The second part is to elicit participants' most significant insights regarding knowledge of other culture and one's own culture gained from the task, and to elicit most difficult perceived communication difficulties (Q2 to Q4). The third part is to ask the value of the intercultural task in their English learning and further to invite suggestions on the task (Q5 to Q7). Recording of the four post-interviews was collected.

## Data Analysis

The data—including recording of six intercultural talks, recording of four post-interviews and twelve written self-reflection reports, were collected from the period of February 2009 to April 2009.

Before the process of analyzing the data, two types of recording—recording of six intercultural talks and recording of four post-interviews— were first transcribed verbatim. The recording of six intercultural talks was transcribed into 81 pages of transcripts in Microsoft Office Word file, Times New Roman, 12 pts, single space; the four post-interviews recordings, 14 pages, Chinese Character font, 12 pts, single space.

The data analysis of this study consists of two types—analysis of written self-reflection reports and analysis of post-interview transcripts. These data were analyzed by the approach of content analysis. Content analysis is defined as, “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to defined content the context of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18). Furthermore, the transcripts of intercultural talks were utilized to triangulate the resulting data after the analysis of those two types mentioned above. The process of data analysis is described as follows.

### **Analysis of Written Self-reflection Reports**

To answer RQ 1, “how can the intercultural task influence EFL learners’ intercultural competence development” and RQ2, “what communication difficulties do Taiwanese students perceive during the intercultural talk”, the collected data of twelve written self-reflection reports were content-analyzed. To conduct content analysis, written self-reflection reports were first broken down into two types based upon the research questions, intercultural competence development and perceived

communication difficulties.

In terms of intercultural competence development, the written self-reflection reports were coded by Liaw's (2006) classification of accessing intercultural competence. Liaw's model was derived from Byram's (2000) guidelines of assessment of intercultural experience. The classification of Byram's guidelines includes five categories:

- A. Interest in other people's way of life,
- B. Ability to change perspective,
- C. Ability to cope with living in a different culture,
- D. Knowledge about another country and culture, and
- E. Knowledge about intercultural communication.

Liaw then modified the category "Interest in other people's way of life" to "Interest in knowing other people's way of life and introducing one's own culture to others"; the category "Knowledge about another country and culture" to "Knowledge about one's own and other culture for intercultural communication." The present study adopted Liaw's modified classifications, for Liaw's study was also implemented in Taiwan, whose context is much akin to this study. The modified model is presumably applicable to this study. Moreover, the category of others was added to the coding scheme to include excerpts that could not fit into the five categories.

It is worth noting that within the five types of intercultural competence development, only category C, the ability to cope with living in a different culture, did not show in Liaw's findings. Similar to Liaw's research context that was placed in the participants' native country, the present study would be less likely to help the learners foresee cultural conflicts and then less able to foster the development of the abilities to cope with living in a different culture. It was expected that category C would not

possibly show in the data collected in the present study.

The categories of intercultural competence and their respective definition, together with example of the categories are given in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 *Classification of Intercultural Competence*

Category	Definition	Example from the Written Self-reflection Reports
A. Interest in knowing other people's way of life and in introducing one's own culture	<p>- I am interested in other people's experience of daily life, particularly those things not usually presented to outsiders through the media.</p> <p>- I am also interested in the daily experience of a variety of social groups within a society and not only the dominant culture.</p> <p>- I am interested in introducing my own culture to others.</p>	<p><i>"Far has introduced Tan-long Bay and the origin of Hanoi. I would like to get on the internet and search for more information."</i></p>
B. Ability to change perspective	<p>- I have realized that I can understand other cultures by seeing things from a different point of view and by looking at my culture from their perspective.</p>	<p><i>"Their society is also classified by socio-economic class. For example, in Taiwan, every household can afford piano class but there, only wealthy families can afford piano lessons. However, the opportunity for education is quite equal. All of these are contradictory to my preconception of Vietnam –it is a poor country."</i></p>
C. Ability to cope with living in a different culture	<p>- I am able to cope with a range of reactions I have to living in a different culture (euphoria, homesickness, physical and mental discomfort, etc.)</p>	N.A.
D. Knowledge about one's own and other culture for intercultural	<p>- I know some important facts about living in the other culture and about the country, state and people.</p>	<p><i>"Tainan or Taipei is likely to be the place that foreigners like to visit. Taipei is the capital. As for Tainan, many historical sites are there. As a result,</i></p>

communication	-I know some important facts about my own country, state and people. - I know how to engage in conversation with people of the other culture and maintain a conversation.	<i>they would like to go visit there.”</i>
E. Knowledge about intercultural communication process	-I know how to resolve misunderstandings which arise from people's lack of awareness of the view point of another culture. -I know how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for myself.	<i>“And last time I heard that Rolly disliked stinky tofu, and therefore she didn't eat anything made of tofu. It's very pitiful [that she did not try the food]. Then I thought we could introduce tofu pudding, an exclusive Taiwanese food. The food introduction turned out to be successful. She likes the food and wants to introduce the food to her friends. I am really happy about it.”</i>

*Notes: The definitions were cited from Liaw's study (2006), p. 58-59.*

*The examples were derived from the data of the present study.*

In terms of perceived communication difficulties, the collected written self-reflection reports were content-analyzed based upon Barna's (1994) six stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. The six leading hurdles in intercultural communication include:

- A. assumption of similarities,
- B. language differences,
- C. nonverbal interpretations,
- D. preconceptions and stereotypes, and
- E. tendency to evaluate, and
- F. high anxiety.

In addition to the six categories, another category of others was added in case to include the excerpts that could not be fit in the six categories.

### **Analysis of Post-interview Transcripts**

To answer RQ 3, “how do students perceive the intercultural task with nonnative speakers of English”, the researcher first read through the transcripts of all the post-interviews with care, and wrote down ideas that had come into mind in the margin. Next, the researcher listed all the written ideas and clustered these ideas into topics. The clustering process was repeating until a few major themes discovered. Students’ perception of the intercultural task was demonstrated based upon these discovered themes.

In the process of data analysis, each excerpt was noted by its data type, which includes four elements: the number of RQ, the category type (the number of the excerpt), the respondent, and data source. The first element, the number of RQ, was coded by 1, 2 or 3, meaning that this excerpt was utilized to answer RQ1, RQ2 or RQ3. As for the second element, the first alphabet was to note the type based upon the coding scheme. The experts used to answer RQ1 were marked from A to F; RQ2, from A to G. The number in the parenthesis was the number of the excerpt in the category, which was coded by cardinal number starting from 1, which was used to count the number of excerpts included in the category. The respondent was coded by pseudonyms of the Taiwanese students— Mandy, Elliot, Nina, and Thomas. The fourth element, the data source was coded by W1, W2, W3, or PI, referring to written self-reflection report1, report 2, report 3, or the transcripts of post-interview, respectively.

### **Triangulation with the Transcripts of Intercultural Conversation**

After the process of analysis of written self-reflection reports and transcript of post-interviews were completed, the transcripts of intercultural talks were utilized to

triangulate the resulting data.

### **Trustworthiness**

The research data were collected from three-pronged data types, including written self-reflection reports, recording of post-interviews, and recording of intercultural communication. Different types of data triangulated each other and reduced possible biases inherent in particular one type of data.

Secondly, the transcripts of post-interviews and intercultural talk, together with description of the participants written were sent to the participants via Email to verify the authenticity.

Furthermore, in order to evaluate the validity of coding categories, written self-reflection reports and transcription of post-interviews were coded by two coders. In addition to the researcher herself, a second analyst, a TESOL major graduate student, was also involved during the coding process of RQ1 and RQ2.

In the coding process, the two analysts, initially, classified the data independently. When it comes to the case that an excerpt could be coded across categories, the excerpt was read again and classified into the most prominent and salient category. After the individual classification was completed, the resulting classifications of the two analysts were compared, and eighty-three percent of coding was identical in analyzing RQ1 and eight-nine percent, RQ2. Discussion was carried out over items which were coded differently until a consensus was reached.

The disagreement in analyzing RQ1 fell mostly on determining the classification of “Ability to change perspective” or “Knowledge about one’s own and other culture for intercultural communication.” For instance, one of the excerpts goes,



*Their [Vietnamese]society is also classified by socio-economic class. For example, in Taiwan, every household can afford piano class but there only wealthy families can afford piano lessons. However, the opportunity for education is quite equal. All of which is contradictory to my preconception of Vietnam—it is a very poor country.*

(1-B(5)-Nina-W1)

Knowledge about another country and culture

Ability to change perspective

In this excerpt, both categories of “Knowledge about one’s own and other culture and culture for intercultural communication” and “Ability to change perspective” are involved. To solve this ambiguity, the two analysts came up with a solution. That is, when the excerpts contain keywords such as “unlike what I used to think/和我之前想的不一樣”, “a big gap between my previous and present thoughts/和我之前想的落差很大”, “the reality is not like this/事實上好像並不是如此” and “stereotypes are completely shattered/我的刻板印象徹底的打破”, these excerpts were classified into the category of Ability to change perspective. Whichever did not contain the keywords fell into the category of knowledge about one’s own and other culture.

Fourth, translation of the excerpts was further checked by another analyst, the same one in the analysis process of RQ1 and RQ2.

In conclusion, adopting the approach of content analysis, this study attempts to investigate the collected data of the Taiwanese students’ written self-reflection reports, and the transcripts of post-interviews and the intercultural talks. By the data analysis, the students’ intercultural competence development, perceived communication difficulties and their perception of intercultural communication experiences were further explored. The results of these three foci are presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study is to explore EFL learners' intercultural competence development and their perceived communication difficulties generated from the task of having them communicate with nonnative speakers of English whose native language is different from their own, as well as to examine the learners' perception on the intercultural task. The data of written self-reflection reports was content-analyzed, and the transcripts of the intercultural communication dialogues between the learners and their interlocutors was used to triangulate with the written reports so as to answer research questions one and two. Moreover, post-interviews conducted soon after the learners finished the intercultural task were recorded, transcribed, and content-analyzed in order to answer research question three. In this chapter, the results are presented, following the sequence of the three research questions.

#### **Research Question 1: What Types of Intercultural Competence**

##### **Development Did the Intercultural Task Bring on the EFL Learners?**

The present study adopted the classification of intercultural competence used in Liaw's study (2006), including five categories—(A) interest in knowing other people's way of life and in introducing one's own culture, (B) ability to change perspective, (C) ability to cope with living in a different culture, (D) knowledge about one's own and other culture for intercultural communication, and (E) knowledge about intercultural communication process. A content-analysis of Taiwanese students' written self-reflection reports revealed four types of intercultural competence development: (A) interest in other people's way of life and introducing one's own culture to others, (B) ability to change perspective, (D) knowledge about one's own and others' culture

for intercultural communication, and (E) knowledge about intercultural communication; however, type (C), ability to cope with living in a different culture, did not show from the data. Table 4.1 provides the frequency and percentage of the four types discovered.

Table 4.1 *Frequencies and Percentages of Four Types of Intercultural Competence*

*Development Discovered*

Category	Frequency				Percentage
	W1	W2	W3	Total Number of Excerpts	
Interest in other people's way of life and introducing one's own culture to others	2	0	0	2	3%
Ability to change perspective	6	2	1	9	13%
Knowledge about one's own and others' culture for intercultural communication	22	18	15	55	80%
Knowledge about intercultural communication	1	2	0	3	4%

Notes: W1 refers to the learners' written reflection report after the first intercultural talk.  
 W2 refers to the learners' written reflection report after the second intercultural talk.  
 W3 refers to the learners' written reflection report after the third intercultural talk.

Table 4.1 presents that the majority of the excerpts fell in the category of knowledge about one's own and others' culture for intercultural communication (80%), followed by ability to change perspective (13%), knowledge about intercultural communication (4%), and interest in other people's way of life and introducing one's own culture to others (3%). The elaboration of the four types of intercultural competence development discovered is presented respectively in the following, ordered from the most to the least frequent.

### **Development of Knowledge about One's Own and Others' Culture**

As indicated in Table 4.1, most of the excerpts fell into the category of knowledge of one's own and others' culture for intercultural communication. Excerpts in this category were further classified into three types—increased knowledge of others' culture, comparison of one's culture and other culture, and increased knowledge of one's own culture. The three subsets are illustrated below.

#### ***Increased knowledge of others' culture***

The written reports demonstrated that the task helped the Taiwanese students increase knowledge of others' culture. The knowledge of others' culture gained from the task included several topics, and the topics cover three aspects:

- Factual knowledge: (1) food, (2) the official language, (3) national emblems: the meaning of the national flag and origin of the national bird, (4) festivals and custom, (5) religion, (6) tourist sites, (7) arts and literature, and (8) leisure activities
- Sociocultural realities: (1) lifestyles, e.g., public transportation, (2) public safety, (3) education, e.g., education opportunities and teacher-student relationship, and (4) social values, e.g., social status of different jobs and the influence of Confucianism in the society
- Cultural images built upon the impression of the interlocutor: culturally influenced traits of the interlocutor, e.g., sociable, independent, and adventurous

#### ***Comparison of one's own culture and other culture***

The written self-reflection reports also demonstrated that the Taiwanese students constantly compared and contrasted their own culture with other culture and therefore,

identified differences or similarities between the two cultures. Examples of the discovery of cultural differences are listed in Table 4.2, and Table 4.3 shows cultural similarities reported by the two groups respectively, and please refer to Appendix 8 and Appendix 9 for related transcription of the conversation.

Table 4.2 *Examples of Cultural Differences Discovered*

<b>Excerpts from Written Reports</b>	
Group One	<p><i>I think international students are very nice and conversational. This impression of them was intensified after we bumped into Rolly's friend, Sulin. After Sulin and Rolly talking for a while, Sulin then introduced herself and asked my name as well as Elliot's. This way [of meeting new friends] differs from Taiwanese greeting contentions. In general, if we bump into a friend being with his friends, we won't introduce ourselves or ask the names of his friends. It is much easier to make friends with international students.</i></p> <p>我覺得外籍生真的很親切也很健談，因為這次巧遇 Rolly 的朋友，就更加這麼認為。她們聊沒幾句之後，Sulin (Rolly 的朋友)就先自我介紹，然後還問我跟 Elliot 的名字，光這點就跟台灣人差很多，因為平常如果遇到朋友的朋友，基本上是不會自我介紹甚至問對方名字的；跟外籍生真的很容易就能做朋友。(1-D (49)-Mandy-W3)</p>
Group Two	<p><i>There are Confucius temples in both of our countries, but he does not respect Confucius as much as we do. He only regarded Confucius as a politician in a dynasty and thought that Confucius was created for the purpose of controlling people. However, to us, Confucius is our greatest sage and mentor.</i></p> <p>我們都有孔廟，但是他對孔子就沒有我們對孔子如此崇敬，他只把孔子當作是某個朝代政治人物為了控制人民而興起的宗教而已，但對我們來說孔子可是至聖先師啊! (1-D (52)-Nina-W2)</p>

Table 4.3 *Examples of Cultural Similarities Discovered*

<b>Excerpts from Written Reports</b>	
Group One	N.A.
Group Two	<p><i>Just before we ended the conversation, Far showed us the aboriginal people in his country. Some of them are so similar to our aborigines, which marveled me very much.</i></p> <p>在結束前是 Far 給我們看他們的原住民， 有些跟我們的原住民超像的!! 讓我覺得超神奇的!</p> <p>(1-D (51)-Nina-W2)</p>

It is noted that when two cultures are placed together, cultural differences could be so conspicuous that they are easy to be identified by the communicators (Robinson, 1996). Echoing what Robinson has indicated, the results showed that both Group One and Group Two identified and addressed how the foreign culture differed from their native culture. In addition to cultural differences, Group Two also indentified cultural similarities between Taiwanese and Vietnamese culture, but cultural similarities between Taiwanese and Guatemalan culture were not mentioned by the members of Group One.

As indicated in Table 4.2 and Appendix 8, Mandy discovered that the different social convention of greeting between Taiwanese and Guatemalan culture. Due to the reason that the third intercultural talk took place in the international student center, Rolly bumped into one of her friends, Sulin, who was with a Taiwanese student, Lee, there. Taiwanese students in Group One were introduced to Sulin by Rolly, and Lee was also introduced by Sulin. Mandy wrote this intricate social event she noticed that Sulin was self-introduced and was interested in knowing Elliot's name and hers, and

then Mandy realized that how Taiwanese students differed from the international students in terms of friend-making.

As for Group Two, in talking about the Confucius temple, Nina discovered that Far's attitude toward Confucius differed from hers despite the fact that Confucius temples were found in both Taiwan and Vietnam. Far described that worshipping Confucius and adhering to his philosophy were a conspiracy of controlling people's thinking. His attitude toward Confucius contradicted Nina's, for in Taiwan Confucius was highly honored and respected.

Table 4.3 and Appendix 9 show that only Group Two discovered cultural similarities. After being introduced the aboriginal of Vietnam, Nina realized that Taiwan and Vietnam, as a matter of fact, share some commonalities. Nina addressed later in the post interview that the prominent differences in political social systems—Taiwan is democracy whereas communism is implemented in Vietnam, had made her think the relation between Taiwan and Vietnam is likened to two parallels. Eventually, without painstaking intervention, the task helped her preconception on Vietnam altered by the discovery of the resemblance of the aborigines in the two countries. Besides aboriginal people, Nina and Thomas also mentioned Taiwan and Vietnam indeed shared many common features, such as language, arts and traditions.

As opposed to Group Two, Group One did not mention cultural similarities between Taiwan and Guatemala. This is partly because the cultural distance between Taiwan and Vietnam was much closer than the distance between Taiwan and Guatemala. Vietnam was a tributary country of China, and it is also located in East Asian. On the other hand, Guatemala differs from Taiwan in terms of its race, religion, and continent. It is more likely that Group Two could easily discover cultural similarities within this relatively short time of intercultural contact.

### *Increased knowledge of one's own culture*

All of the four Taiwanese students reported that the task assisted them to know more about their own culture. Reasons for this enhanced awareness and understanding of native culture are two-fold.

On one hand, in order to present information about Taiwan's culture to the international students, the Taiwanese students utilized the Internet, a useful tool to ascertain some facts about Taiwan's culture before each talk. On the other hand, the awareness and knowledge of Taiwan's culture were gained through the interactive conversation with the foreign international student. Often, a conversation topic led to a discussion or disclosure of one's value. As a result, when the interlocutor talked about their living in Taiwan, Taiwanese students listened to how the interlocutor viewed Taiwan's culture, by which Taiwanese students seemed to depart from their point of view, standing in the third position (Kramsch, 1993) to reexamine Taiwan's culture. To put it concisely, with the standpoint of neither one's own culture nor the foreign culture, the Taiwanese reexamined the value system of their own and how it differed from that of the international student. Through the eyes of the international student, the Taiwanese students were likely to discover how their value system was influenced by Taiwan's society, and new interpretation of Taiwanese culture could possibly formed afterwards with a decentralized point of view. The Taiwanese reflection and relevant transcription about how the Taiwanese students had gained new insights into Taiwan's culture through the eyes of the foreign residents in Taiwan were shown in Table 4.4 (refer to Appendix 10 for the relevant conversation transcription).



Table 4.4 *Examples of the Knowledge Development of One's Own Culture via the Eyes of the International Student*

<b>Excerpts from Written Reports</b>	
Group One	<p><i>In the eyes of foreigners, the price shown in wholesale stores [in Taiwan] may be confusing. Even Taiwanese can be baffled by the number game. The price in these wholesale stores is not clear. Sometimes it is measured by quantity, and sometimes, by grams. If someone pays little attention to these details, they will be cheated by the price shown.</i></p> <p>在外國人眼中，大賣場的價錢標示對他們來說可能會造成許多的誤會，連台灣人自己也會被賣場所玩弄的數字遊戲所騙，賣場價格標示可以說非常得不清楚，有時以數量為單位，有時以公克為單位，不注意一點就會表面所寫的數字所騙。(1-D (11)-Elliot-W2)</p>
Group Two	<p><i>Taiwanese will not travel 200 km by scooter. But he [Far] will. Taiwanese might think it is too exhausted to ride a scooter for an entire day.</i></p> <p>…台灣人不會騎機車騎兩百公里，但是他會想去做。台灣人可能會覺得要騎一整天累死了。</p> <p>(1-D (23)-Thomas-W1)</p>

Table 4.4 together with Appendix 10 show two examples in which Taiwanese students gained insights into Taiwan's culture. The first one shows that from being told Rolly's adventurous journey to a supermarket in Taiwan, Elliot realized that prices marked in the market could confuse foreign visitors because of various measurement units used in Taiwan. The second one reveals that Thomas expressed his amazement at Far's intent to travel around Taiwan by motor-scooter. According to Thomas, riding a scooter around Taiwan seemed to be out of sanity, but his viewpoint was challenged by Far, saying that riding a motor-scooter for 200 km a day was quite common in Vietnam. By the discussion of the appropriate vehicle for traveling around Taiwan, Thomas was able to know that Far prized the accessibility to nature when it comes to traveling. By contrast, the exhaustion resulting from riding a scooter for an

entire day might overwhelm Thomas. Reverting to this discussion of appropriate ways to travel around Taiwan in the post-interview, Thomas said that in general, Taiwanese would take buses or other public transportation to travel around Taiwan. Having not ever thought about the daring action of riding a scooter to tour around Taiwan, he was aware of how his thinking differed from Far's and further realized that how himself was influenced by the value system of his country.

To conclude this subset of knowledge development of one's own culture and others' culture, the results showed that the EFL learners had noted and acquired facts about other culture after the intercultural task. Moreover, the learners constantly compared and contrasted the two cultures. All of the Taiwanese participants had discovered cultural differences whereas cultural similarities were only identified by the group talking with the Vietnamese international student. Albeit the disparate discovery, by this juxtaposition of one's own culture and the foreign culture, EFL learners examined how they were influenced by their own culture and gained a clearer understanding of the culture of their own. Moreover, it is worth noting that some concepts that the learners derived from the intercultural task were only their personal opinions or perception on the foreign or their native culture. Whether or not the cultural concepts acquired are representative, we can see the cultural knowledge was conceptualized by the learners themselves. They were not told by textbooks or others. Robinson (1991) has mentioned that learning culture is never objective. In other words, the cultural learning requires learners to contact the target culture and self interpret, make meaning of the culture, by discovering the relation between self and others or native culture and other culture. Each time when intercultural contact occurs, the learners will form a new interpretation of the foreign culture as well as their native culture. The just formed, temporary cultural concept will change with the frequency of intercultural experiences with other representatives of the foreign culture.

Therefore, here, I was not concerned with whether the learners could find the most truth of the foreign culture or even their native country. Instead, whether the task could raise the learners' awareness on native culture and the foreign culture was the focus of this study.

### *Abilities to Change Perspective*

The second largest category was “ability to change perspective.” It is notable that a few preconceptions which Taiwanese learners harbored toward the interlocutor's culture were adjusted after the close, face to face interaction with one of the representatives of the foreign culture. For example, Elliot in Group One had kept a false sense that international students would tend to congregate and were less likely to make friends with the local. Yet this stereotype was brushed off after Elliot truly experienced the communication with an international student. Rolly's proneness to understand Taiwan's culture and her approachable personality changed Elliot's preconceived idea. The stereotype adjustment also occurred in Group Two.

Just as the Taiwanese students in Group One realized their erroneous thoughts on other culture, so too Group Two Taiwanese participants were aware that Vietnamese were not as indigent as they used to think. According to Thomas, after the task, he had adjusted his preconception on Vietnam.

*“Ho Chi Minh City is very similar to Taipei, this concept of which was very different from my preconception of the country, Vietnam, and I used to think Vietnam and poverty were synonyms.”*

之前我對越南的印象是和貧窮連結在一起，但是他說其實胡志明市就和台北沒有什麼兩樣，所以和我之前想的落差很大。(1-B (4) –Thomas-W1).

As demonstrated above, it is inevitable for the learners to hold preconception toward the foreign culture out of unfamiliarity; however, these opinions were not always correct or sometimes biased to some degree. In fact, these distorted thoughts

would hardly be recognized by the learners themselves unless they self confess that their thinking might be well-grounded. The task seemingly offered a chance for Elliot to reflect upon and examine his preconception toward international students and enabled Thomas to break down his stereotypes on Vietnam's culture by discovering the fact that their preconception did not match the reality of the foreign culture presented by the international student respectively. However correct the learners' newly formed cultural image of the foreign culture was, the task appeared to help the learners see things from different point of view and reexamine their cultural stereotypes. By which, a new perspective on one's own culture might be formed as shown in Thomas's case that his new interpretation of the degree of modernity of Taipei City was refreshed after the task.

### **Spurred Interest in the Foreign Culture**

The data revealed that after the intercultural task, Taiwanese' interest in people of other culture was spurred. In Nina's case, after having been aware that her limited knowledge of the culture of her Vietnamese interlocutor negatively affected the proceeding of the intercultural talk, Nina wrote that she wanted to know not only Vietnamese culture, but culture of other countries in East Asian. She was also aware of her overemphasis on Western culture to an extent that she apparently disregarded other culture such as countries in East Asia or South America, as shown in the following excerpt.

*I think I am not familiar with East Asian courtiers. From now on, I would like to know more about them. I think my interpretation of the concept of international perspective is not well grounded. It seems that the term only involved [the relation] between Taiwan's culture and Western culture or Japanese culture. It seems that internationalization is synonymous with Americanization. 我覺得自己對東南亞的國家並不熟悉，以後會多想認識了解一下，還是自己覺得自己對於國際觀這個概念並不很成熟，好像還是停*

留在一個台灣的概念，和另一個西方文化，或是日本，好像國際化變成了美國化。  
(1-A (2)-Nina-W1)

Moreover, Elliot's interest in others' culture was shown in his active action to approach international students after the task. According to Elliot, he was inseminated with courage after the task. He said he now would initiate a conversation with international students on campus, introducing Taiwan's culture or learning more about other culture. For instance, he mentioned that a few days prior to the post interview, he planned to talk to an international student living with his friend in the same dormitory, so he strategically brought some Tainan's local snacks, egg rolls, to visit his Taiwanese friend in the room. By the chance, he also treated the international student the food since the international student was there and therefore, made friends with him. Additionally, from this anecdote, we can see that the task influenced Elliot, who was less confident in himself and in his English ability, encouraging him to seek chances to make friends with international students. His interest in foreign culture drove him to be open to other culture regardless of his limited English competence.

In Nina's case, as seen in her reflection, the task of communicating with a nonnative speaker of English could not only motivate her to know the culture of her interlocutor, but also assisted her to realize today's multinational world. By this realization, Nina became interested in knowing the countries they had paid little attention to and in understanding how these countries relate to Taiwan.

### **Development of Knowledge about Intercultural Communication through Resolving Cultural Misunderstandings**

By the original definition of the this category, counting the development of knowledge about intercultural communication is determined by whether or not learners (1) know how to resolve misunderstanding which arise from people's lack of

awareness of the view point of another culture and (2) how to discover new information and new aspects of the other culture for myself. The results only revealed that the Taiwanese students tried to resolve misunderstandings that international students held toward Taiwan's culture during the task. This action of resolving the misunderstanding took place in the interaction among Group One members. The episode of how the Taiwanese students in Group One helped Rolly resolve her misunderstanding toward Taiwan's food is described below.

In the first talk, Rolly told Mandy and Elliot her opinions about Taiwanese food, within which Rolly revealed she disliked any food made of tofu because of her horrible first-time experience in tasting stinky tofu soon after her arrival in Taiwan. The reeks of the food really discomforted her. Amazed at her negative feelings toward tofu, the Taiwanese students attempted to show her food made of tofu, as a matter of fact, tastes remarkably delicious and tried to help her distinguish stinky tofu from other tofu products. To deal with this problem, during the second talk, the two Taiwanese students brought two Taiwanese local delicacies: tofu puddings and sugared sweet potatoes and treated Rolly. Besides, the two Taiwanese students patiently, elaborately explained the process of making these two types of food as well as the differences between stinky tofu and other tofu products.

In the end, Rolly showed her attitude change toward tofu products by asking the Taiwanese students where she could purchase tofu puddings on campus, and she claimed that she would also introduce this food to her Latin American friends. Seeing the nice result of their "tofu feast" strategy, the Taiwanese students reported that they felt ecstatic and honored to be an ambassador, introducing Taiwan's culture to the world and that it was not easy to persuade people, foreign friends in particular. However hard it was, they said the key was to observe and listen to the interlocutor with care. They observed how Rolly's facial expression and body language to

understand her feelings while introducing the Taiwanese food. Most importantly, they said, “Never force Rolly to do anything she was hesitant to do.” At last, they claimed the success to Rolly’s friendliness and kindness.

To summarize the results of research question one, the task could significantly foster the development of knowledge of others’ culture and one’s own. Moreover, some preconceptions of others’ culture or cultural stereotypes that the learners held were prone to change after the opportunity of talking with one of the representatives of the foreign culture. Added to that, due to the experience of having conversation with a foreign interlocutor, the learners’ interest in knowing more about the culture of the interlocutor or generally, other foreign culture, was found heightened. Last but not least, it was discovered that the learners tried to resolve cultural misunderstandings that the international student held toward Taiwan’s culture, by which the Taiwanese students had experienced the art of resolving misunderstandings by introducing something new to the foreign resident in order to correct or clarify the new comer’s misconception on Taiwan or Taiwan’s culture.

Nevertheless, the ability to cope with living in a different culture was not shown in the data, which matches my previous hypothesis. Supposedly, the task, though it encouraged intercultural communication, was less likely to help the learners foresee cultural conflicts or challenges when living in a foreign country. After all, the context of the present intercultural task was in the learners’ own country. It seems that it is hard for the learners to apply the intercultural contact experience to a situation in which the learners become the minority groups of a foreign country and confidently claim they have sufficient abilities to live in the foreign country.

## **Research Question 2: What Communication Difficulties Did the EFL Learners Encounter during the Intercultural Talk?**

The present study adopted Barna's (1996) six intercultural communication stumbling blocks to discover primary communication difficulties the EFL learners encountered during the task, and the six communication obstacles include (A) language differences, (B) assumption of similarities, (C) nonverbal interpretations, (D) preconceptions and stereotypes, (E) tendency to evaluate, and (F) high anxiety. An analysis of the collected written self-reflection reports showed that the Taiwanese students' difficulties reported were related to the categories of (A) language differences and (F) high anxiety. It was also found that some reported difficulties could not fit into Barna's model. These difficulties were related to (G) insufficient abilities in employing communication strategies, (H) limited knowledge of others' culture, one's own, and intercultural interaction, and finally, (I) a situational variable, rate of speech.

Furthermore, due to different language competence of the two groups of Taiwanese students, the present study also compared and contrasted the more proficient students with the less proficient students considering their respective communication difficulties, and the results are shown in Table 4.5.



Table 4.5 *Communication Difficulties Reported by More/Less proficient Learners*

Communication Difficulties	Less proficient: (Elliot & Thomas)	More proficient: (Mandy & Nina)
<b><i>Language Differences</i></b>		
Vocabulary: Limited repertoire of words	v	v
Vocabulary: Preposition usage		v
Vocabulary: Cultural word translation		v
Syntax: Complete sentences fabrication	v	
Phonology: Confusion of the pronunciation of similar words	v	
Grammar: Over-consciousness of English grammar	v	v
<b><i>High Anxiety</i></b>		
	v	
<b><i>Limited Competence of Communication Strategies</i></b>		
Stalling or Time Gaining Strategy	v	
Circumlocution	v	v
<b><i>Limited Knowledge of Other Culture, One's Own, and Intercultural Interaction</i></b>		
Lack of knowledge one's own	v	v
Lack knowledge of other culture	v	v
Lack knowledge of interaction		v
<b><i>Fast Delivery Rate</i></b>		
	v	

As indicated in Table 4.5, common difficulties that the less and more proficient learners perceived during the communication encompass (1) limited repertoire of words, (2) over-consciousness of English grammar, (3) limited competence in the employment of circumlocution communication strategy, and (4) lack of knowledge of one's own and other culture. Added to that, when asked what the paramount communication difficulty was, the four Taiwanese students all addressed limited vocabulary repertoire was the most significant communication difficulty.

Nevertheless, a few differences were discovered between the two groups in terms of the perceived communication difficulties. In view of the difficulties caused by language differences, though both suffering from limited vocabulary inventory and

grammar monitoring, the two groups showed different opinions about how preposition, syntax, phonology and culture influenced their conversation. Difficulties in syntax and phonology were addressed by the less proficient learners while the more proficient learners were susceptible to cultural word translation. Moreover, the less proficient learners reported their proclivity for tension and their inability to strategically gain time during the rapid turn-takings in the conversation and addressed their less likely to be accustomed to fast delivery rate of the interlocutor. On the other hand, better managing language anxiety, employing communication strategies, and adjusting to fast speech, the more proficient learners reported their particular problem in artfully ending an intercultural communication.

As shown in Table 4.5, the difficulties that the learners encountered were categorized into five major types— (1) language differences, (2) high anxiety, limited competence of communication strategies, (3) limited knowledge of other culture, (4) one's culture, and intercultural interaction , and (5) fast delivery rate. In the following is the elaboration of the five types, presented sequentially. Under each subsection, the similarities and differences between the two groups with different English competence are discussed.

### **Language Differences**

The difficulties subcategorized under the category of language differences that Elliot and Thomas mentioned cover phonology, syntax, limited repertoire of L2 vocabulary, and grammar. On the other hand, the more proficient learners reported the following: limited L2 vocabulary repertoire, translation of words with cultural connotation, over-consciousness on English grammar and finally, the correct usage of prepositions as shown in Table 4.5. Similar to the less proficient learners, insufficient L2 vocabulary repertoire and over-consciousness on L2 grammar were mentioned to

negatively influence the communication, by the more proficient learners. In addition to these communication hurdles, the more proficient learners further pointed out their difficulties in translating words heavily inherent with cultural association and in correctly using preposition while conversing. The respective description of the two groups is presented in the following, first starting with less proficient learners, followed by more proficient learners.

### *Less proficient learners*

The difficulties subcategorized under the category of language differences that Elliot and Thomas mentioned include phonology, syntax, limited repertoire of L2 vocabulary, and grammar. Below is the elaboration of the four aspects.

Regarding the difficulty in phonology, Elliot mentioned he had trouble in clearly and correctly pronouncing the words he intended to speak during the conversation. Please see Elliot's reflection taken from his written report and the transcription of the interaction indicating Elliot's mistaken pronunciation, as listed in Table 4.6 and see Appendix 11 for the transcription of the relevant conversation.

Table 4.6 *Elliot's Slip of Tongue*

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#### **Excerpt from the Written Report**

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*"Sometimes similar words confused me or the entire sentence I said did not match my meaning. For example, I mistakenly spoke floor to flower. If you ask me to write, I have no problem with it. Because I do not often speak [English], I then discovered that I had made a mistake. How I came out with the word flower."*

有時會把相似的單字搞錯，或是整句的意思表達錯誤。像剛才 Floor 我唸成 flower，我寫出來我都會，但是不常說，說出來我就發現我說錯了，我也覺得我自己怎麼說成花了呢。(2-B(11)-Elliot-W1)

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As indicated in Table 4.6 and Appendix 11, instead of saying “floor”, the word Elliot intended to speak, he mixed up the word with another similar word, “flower.” Because of the mistake in pronunciation, his meaning failed to be transmitted to the interlocutor. Rolly did not respond to his question of the requirement of paying money to go up to the top floor, and in turn, Mandy was taking the turn, posing her question of how fast the elevator was. Similar mistakes were found in another episode in which Elliot wanted to speak the word, “scale.” However, “schedule” was the word actually coming out of his mouth. He reflected upon these experiences of “slips of tongue”, saying that “schedule” as opposed to “scale”, or “flower” to “floor”, the first word of each set was the word he had frequently used and spoken. As a result, upon expressing himself in a very brief second, he spoke the words that his tongue or mouth was much inured to, not the ones that he cognitively attempted to speak.

Additionally, the other less proficient Taiwanese learner, Thomas, mentioned his communication difficulties lay in limited L2 vocabulary inventory, constrained competence in the syntactic structure of English language, and over-consciousness of grammar usage.

According to Thomas, limited vocabulary was one of the primary deterrents to communication. Limited vocabulary led to his difficulties in processing listening comprehension and in expressing himself, making communication became less efficient. Listening comprehension was blocked when Thomas did not know some words in Far’s speech. Incapable of having Thomas understood, Far might paraphrase the words to enable the meaning across, prolonging the conversation. Thomas further said this process of the negotiation of meaning with Far, though time-consuming, benefited his vocabulary development. For example, he did not know the word, dummy, prior to the task. After Far’s explanation, he said the word could hardly be forgotten from then on. In addition to the trouble in listening comprehension,

Thomas's oral speech was also deterred by not knowing specific words. To compensate for his vocabulary limitation and make his meaning across, the communication strategy "circumlocution" was inevitably employed. That is to say, limited repertoire of vocabulary led to difficulties in listening and speaking for Thomas. However, not being able to know some words, Thomas, by the chance, could increase his vocabulary and become more adept at employing the circumlocution communication strategy.

In addition to difficulties caused by limited vocabulary, Thomas mentioned his syntactic problem. Incompetent in framing complete English sentences automatically, Thomas felt that he might leave his interlocutor a bad impression of faltering speaking behavior. He worried that his "chunky English" might show he has an evasive or undetermined personality.

The other difficulty related to language differences mentioned by Thomas was his constant grammar monitoring. He would drop a communication topic, provided that it contained complex grammar. However, this awareness of grammar correctness only took place in the first talk. Thomas had shifted his communication focus to meaning rather than grammar, soon after he discovered Far also made some grammatical mistakes in the following talks.

### ***More proficient learners***

On the other hand, the more proficient learners reported the following difficulties related to the category of language differences: limited L2 vocabulary repertoire, translation of words with cultural connotation, over-consciousness on English grammar and finally, the usage of prepositions. With respect to the particular difficulties the more proficient learners encountered as opposed to the less proficient learners, speaking words that contain cultural meanings and well using proposition

were challenging.

In terms of speaking words containing cultural meaning, Mandy reported that her difficulty was beyond constrained L2 vocabulary. In fact, this intercultural contact challenged her, for it required translating words cross-culturally. Mandy stated that what made the translation of cultural words difficult was that the interlocutor did not have the same concept in his or her culture; even dictionaries could hardly help the translation. Mandy's difficulty indicated that intercultural communication requires not only the linguistic knowledge, but also the skill of interpreting and relating (Byram, 1997). Namely, L2 learners are required of knowledge of their own culture and foreign culture and abilities of finding any common ground of the two cultures, in order to transmit culture-based words to the interlocutor. Added to that, the problem in using preposition was mentioned by Mandy. Among all the elements in grammar usages, she reported that the preposition usage confused her, particularly in choosing "of", "in", or "on" to form grammatically or semantically correct sentences.

### **High Anxiety**

All of the four Taiwanese students felt the first talk was the most uncomfortable, and the degree of anxiety was progressively reduced throughout the task. The anxiety was reported to be the result of lack of experiences of real time language use or unfamiliarity of group members—including their Taiwanese or international student partner. Interestingly, psychological anxiety had more salient impact on the two less proficient Taiwanese learners in terms of their language performance; the two less proficient Taiwanese participants reported their anxiety affected their willingness to interact during the first talk. More specifically, the anxiety was more likely to lead to the passivity in interrupting an ongoing conversation and in clarifying the incomprehensible words or concept spoken by the interlocutor. See below for the

description of how the less proficient learners were influenced by their psychological state.

### ***Less proficient learners***

The results showed that the less proficient learners were affected by tension particularly. The degree of tension was paramount at the first intercultural talk in which the Taiwanese students and the international student had met for the first time, but the tension was progressively decreasing during the task. Due to the high degree of anxiety at the first meeting, the two less proficient learners forewent chances of using language to clarify or express their opinions on the condition that the other more proficient partner seemed to have no problems in understanding the international student or even seemed to dominate the whole conversation. Table 4.7 shows Thomas's written reflection in which his passivity to interrupt the ongoing conversation was demonstrated (see Appendix 12 for the relevant conversation transcription).

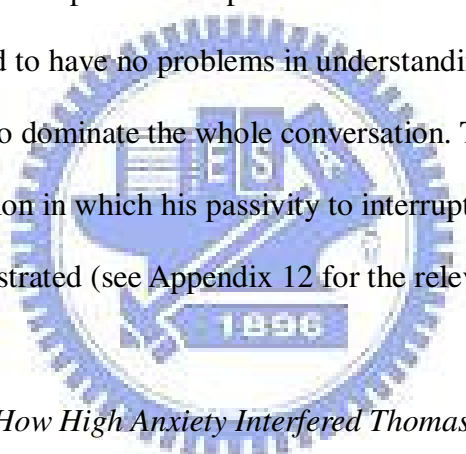


Table 4.7 *An Excerpt of How High Anxiety Interfered Thomas's Willingness to Talk*

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#### **Excerpt from the Written Report**

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*as Far was introducing spices, I was about to ask. But because they spoke too fast, I was embarrassed to interrupt. Especially, we were less familiar with each other, and I couldn't ask, so I did not clearly hear some spices. Sometimes I was about to ask something that they had talked about, but when I was about to ask, I 'd realized that I could not repeat the word. Then I thought it was too troublesome so I dropped the chance to ask. For example, when I said, I want to ask that thing, and then, Far replied, what thing, I did not want to make troubles and then let him continue talking...*

其實在 Far 介紹他們的香料時，我想問清楚一些，但是因為他們說太快，我不好意思打斷他，尤其是在一開始時，比較不熟，我就沒有辦法去問，所以有些香料我也聽不清楚，有時想對他所說的東西問他一些問題，但是要問的時候又發現自己說不出之前的那個字，所以就想算了，太麻煩了，所以我就不要問了，例如我說 I want to ask that thing, Far 回說 what thing? 又不想造成混亂，所以就讓他繼續說。(2-F (4)-Thomas- W1)

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However, this passive attitude in interaction was soon changed in the second talk.

In Thomas's second written reflection report, he wrote,

*“At the first time, I did not want to interrupt the interaction and ask, though I encountered some unknown vocabulary or sentences. By contrast, at the second time, if I heard something unclear, I would ask Far to explain it, even ask him to write down the word so that I could guess the meaning.”*

相較於第一次，由於不太想打斷訪談的程序，即使遇到不太了解的生字、句子也不會去問。第二次訪談時，若有聽不懂或是不清楚的部分，我會問一下 Far 再解釋一次，甚至寫下單字也可以，大致上可以抓到意思…

(2-F (5)-Thomas-W2)

Likewise, the degree of language anxiety was gradually decreasing for Elliot during the task. He reported in his third written self-reflection report,

*“I have gradually dealt with the psychological pressure that the task brought. Because this was the last time for the talk, I was less stressed. I was therefore able to start a short conversation with Rolly to greet her prior to the recording [of the conversation], but I am still overcoming the tense during interactive conversing.”*

已經習慣面談所帶來的心理壓力了，而且知道這是最後一次面談，心理的壓力更是減輕很多，所以在錄音的前後可以獨自和 Rolly 來個簡單的問候，對話的部分仍在克服當中。(2-F (3)-Elliot-W3)

### ***More proficient learners***

On the contrary to the less proficient learners, the more proficient learners though addressed the first meeting was a bit tense for them but the anxiety did not have too much impact upon them. They seemed to have better control over their affection, less likely allowing their emotion to negatively influence their performance.

### **Limited Competence of Communication Strategies**

In addition to difficulties involving language differences and high anxiety, the findings revealed the factor of limited competence in the employment of communication strategies was reported to be one of the primary communication



blocks. For the less proficient learners, two types of communication strategies were reported— (1) stalling or time gaining and (2) circumlocution strategies; however, the more proficient learners showed they were more susceptible to inability to employment of the circumlocution strategy. See below for details.

### *Less proficient learners*

For the less proficient learners, two types of communication strategies were reported— (1) stalling or time gaining and (2) circumlocution strategies. Limited in employing stalling or time gaining strategies, the less proficient learner, Elliot, felt the give-and-take interaction of the intercultural talk painstaking. The awareness of his constrained abilities of gaining time was induced from the observation on the interaction between his Taiwanese partner and the international student. Elliot reported that in comparison to Mandy, he did not know how to “steal” time by saying short phrases such as “well”, “in fact”, etc. in order that he could gain some response time to better structure his subsequent words or sentences in English. He added that although he knew some expressions, he could not apply these “fillers” or “hesitation devices” as naturally as Mandy. He attributed his maladroit application of stalling or gaining time strategies to his lack of experiences of real time communication.

With respect to circumlocution strategies, Thomas reckoned that he could not paraphrase abstract concepts, for example, the term “international perspective” during the talk. The transcription of the relevant dialogue is shown in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8 *Transcription of the Confusion of “International Perspective”*

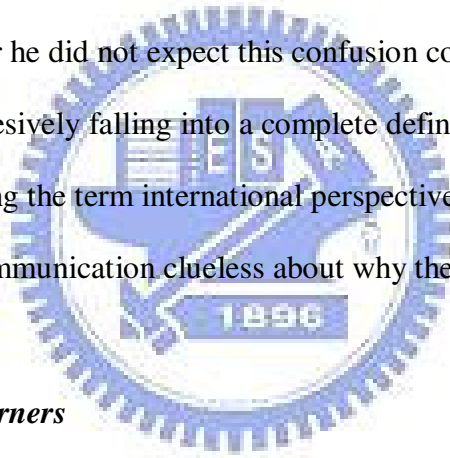
319	Thomas: The international perspective. Because you want to go aboard to study	}	The term international perspective was brought out without elaboration.
320	computer science so you must have a lot of thoughts about the international		
321	perspectives.	}	Far was confused about the term and asked for explanation.
322	Far: I don't know what you mean about the international perspective?		
323	Nina: Because I think students come..go aboard to study is more independent		
324	and maybe their international perspective is stronger than the students stay in		
325	their country.		
326	Far: Oh you mean international perspective means that I.. how to define ? how to	}	Thomas tried to explain, but the explanation was not cohesively falling into a complete definition.
327	put it? my view to globalization, is it right?		
328	Thomas: not really.	}	
329	Far: The globalization my part of view about uh. It's quite abstract.		
330	Thomas: How to define international perspective?.um..maybe the		
331	transportation has made our more closer so u.. we live in the same planet and		
332	we are not separated by the ocean by the river ....and....	}	
333	Far: You mean myself is less Vietnamese feature..I think I am quite adaptive to a		
334	new environment.. easily get to adaptive to the new environment... It's quite		
335	abstract haha and I don't know how to answer..		

*(Data derived from the 1st intercultural talk transcript of Group Two)*

Reverting to this confusion, Thomas addressed that he did not understand why the international student was confused with the meaning of the phrase “international perspective”, for he had searched the equivalent translation online, and the international student should have understood him. However, if taken the whole dialogue in Table 4.8 into consideration, the episode of this confusion involved two levels. The first level was that Thomas thought the equivalent translation given by dictionaries was correct or comprehensible enough to convey his meaning. According to Thomas, he could not understand why this translation derived from dictionaries was unintelligible to Far. Thomas’s effort of making meaning across was impeded by the possible reason that Thomas neglected culture is the underlying or primary factor to the meaning of words. In Thomas’s opinion, the term international perspective in

Mandarin Chinese might be so transparent for most Taiwanese to understand, which apparently can be transferrable across cultures by the aid of checking its equivalent translation in Chinese-English dictionaries. However, the term might be understandable for most Taiwanese; the meaning of the term might not be so straight-forward in Vietnamese culture so that Far needed some contextual information to process the term despite the fact that the phrase international perspective did not contain new vocabulary for Far.

On the other end of interaction, upon receiving the term international perspective, the international student, Far, was baffled, asking Thomas for further elaboration. Here arrived the second level. Incapable of elaboration or exemplification, Thomas was caught off guard, for he did not expect this confusion could happen. His explanation was not cohesively falling into a complete definition. In the end, the conversation of discussing the term international perspective, then, could not but end, and left both sides of communication clueless about why the meaning could not cross.



### ***More proficient learners***

Like Thomas, Nina also mentioned her short of the strategy of circumlocution. She reverted to the same episode of the term international perspective elaboration, and wrote that she could hardly explain the term at that moment since term was very abstract in nature. Appalled by the situation that Far asked for the definition of the term, she also became speechless, not knowing how to explain it.

### ***Limited Knowledge of Other Culture, One's Own and Intercultural Interaction***

Topic apparently is one of influential factors in carrying out a successful conversation. The more proficient learners mentioned sometimes not knowing much about their own culture and the culture of the interlocutor could possibly lead to the

termination of the talk. Likewise, the more proficient learners also suffered from the distress when knowing little about native culture and other culture so that they could not develop conversation topics; moreover, they also reported that lack knowledge of intercultural communication made the task more challenging.

### ***Less proficient learners***

Lack of knowledge of one's own and other culture was reported to be one of the deterrents to intercultural communication. According to Thomas, when being asked by Far to recommend tourist places in Taiwan, Thomas could not suggest some, and then this conversation topic was dropped. Thomas reckoned the situation at that time and wrote,

*“I have found I haven't been to many places in Taiwan, whereby I didn't know how to introduce Taiwan to him. I don't know where to go for fun in Taiwan, and even I can't name all the places from north to south in Taiwan.”*

我發現其實自己沒有去過台灣多地方，所以也不知道如何和他介紹台灣，不知台灣有什麼好玩的地方，我甚至連台灣從北到南的地名我都不會。(2-G (4)-Thomas-W1)

Added to that, according to Elliot, because of the unfamiliarity with the topic, the religion Catholicism, and because of his less proficient English ability, he chose to listen, trying to grasp the meaning of unknown words or concepts. He played a passive role and said not a word during the discussion of the religion.

### ***More proficient learners***

Knowledge of culture of the interlocutor, knowledge of one's own culture, knowledge of intercultural interaction—lack of these three types of knowledge led to intercultural communication crisis, reported by the more proficient students. To begin with, similar to the less proficient learners, the more proficient learners also experienced that lack of knowledge of one's own and other cultures were detrimental

to intercultural communication. However, the two levels of students dealt with the situation of having insufficient knowledge of the communication topics in different ways. I will refer to the aforementioned situation, in which Elliot became speechless when encountering an unfamiliar topic, Catholicism, and elaborate on how Elliot and Nina reacted differently as encountering similar situations, shown in Table 4.9 and Appendix 13.

Table 4.9 *Examples of How Nina and Elliot Reacted Differently to an Unfamiliar Topic*

<b>Excerpts from Written Reports</b>	
Nina's reaction	<p><i>Talking about the things relating to Far and Thomas's [expertise], I, a layman, of course, did not understand anything. However, with the aid of pantomime and elaboration, the problem was resolved.</i></p> <p>談到 Far 和 Thomas 的東西時，我這個門外漢當然就聽不懂囉！可是比手畫腳加上一些解之釋後，其實問題也就可以迎刃而解啦！(2-G (3)-Nina-W3)</p>
Elliot's reaction	<p><i>Perhaps the topic of the last talk was related to religion, which was so familiar so that I did not know how to describe.</i></p> <p>可能上次聊的主題是宗教，主題既陌生又不知如何描述。(2-G (7)-Elliot-W2)</p>

Table 4.9 and Appendix 13 show that the more proficient learner, Nina, employed the strategy of asking for elaboration to compensate for her limited understanding in jargons relating to hard science disciplines. By the gesticulation or question-posing, Nina could still be engaged in the conversation. In other words, as discussing less unfamiliar topics, Nina was less likely to be left behind. By contrast, partly because of the unfamiliarity with the religion, Catholicism, and partly because of his less proficient English ability, he chose to listen, trying to grasp meaning of unknown words or concept out of context, said Elliot reflecting upon the situation in

the post interview. His complete focus on the conversation seemed to let him play a less active role in producing output. Different from Nina's strategies, Elliot did not say a word when encountering a similar situation.

In addition to the limited knowledge of others' culture and one's own, a particular perceived problem for the more proficient learners was constrained knowledge of intercultural interaction. Mandy wrote that ending a conversation was not easy for her. She continued that her problem lay in how to end a conversation artfully. In Mandarin, she could end a conversation in an unobtrusive way; however, she did not know the adequate way in English, particularly when speaking with a person, also a nonnative speaker of English, whose culture was foreign to her.

### **Fast Delivery Rate**

The problem of the fast delivery rate of the interlocutor was only exclusive to the less proficient learners, and they only mentioned they were overwhelmed by the speed at the first intercultural talk.



### ***Less proficient learners***

Since the task involved face to face communication, the interlocutor's rate of speech influenced the Taiwanese students' listening comprehension. Both Elliot and Thomas mentioned that they were bewildered by fleeting speech delivered by their respective interlocutor, especially at the first meeting. However, they were gradually inured to the speed in the later talks. Very interestingly, Thomas though reported he once was affected Far's delivery rate, later in the post interview he addressed that in comparison to native speakers of English, his interlocutor spoke relatively slower, assisting his development in the listening skill.

### *More proficient learners*

By contrast, the more proficient learners did not react to the delivery rate of their respective foreign interlocutor.

To conclude the results of research question two, regarding communication difficulties subcategorized under the category of language differences, the learners, both more proficient and less proficient, particularly suffered from their insufficiency of L2 vocabulary and over-consciousness on L2 grammar. In addition to these two common difficulties, the likely spontaneous nature of spoken language had had the less proficient learners feel difficult in speaking words that they were not constantly used or in framing a well-structured, meaningful English sentences. On the other hand, the usage of preposition and the expression of culture-specific words were noted to be an arduous task by the more proficient learners.

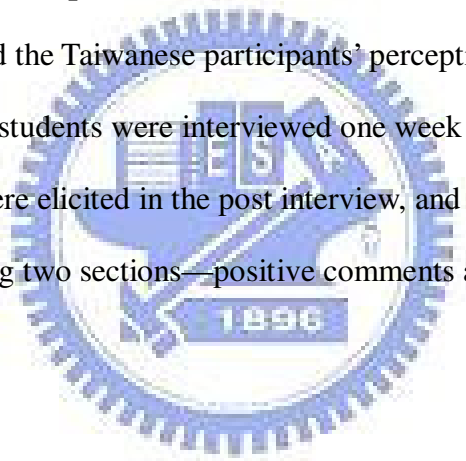
In terms of high anxiety, the less proficient learners, in comparison to the more proficient learners, were more likely to be susceptible to the affective variable, but the degree of anxiety had gradually decreased with the frequency of the intercultural talk. Furthermore, lack of the skill, “circumlocution” communication strategy, was both reported by the two different language proficiency groups, and the skill was regarded as vital to intercultural communication. In addition to the strategy, the less proficient group showed their need in learning the communication skill of time-gaining.

Very interestingly, the need of knowledge of one’s culture and other culture and knowledge of intercultural communication was brought up by the learners, and the finding echoed what Byram (1997) has emphasized that intercultural speakers require the three types of knowledge to carry out successful intercultural communication. As seen in the report of how cultural knowledge bore on the intercultural communication, language practitioners cannot overlook the cultural learning in the language education.

The cultural studies are advised to involve not only knowledge about other culture but also knowledge about native culture, and above all, the study of how to make a polite, appropriate ending in an intercultural conversation, mostly universally fitted in all cultures, is another virgin territory that the language professionals could work on. Lastly, the fast rate of speech delivered by the international student was mentioned by the less proficient learners, and this problem was the most severe in the first intercultural talk of the task.

### **Research Question 3: From the Students' Perspective, What Were the Positive/Negative Aspects of the Task?**

To better understand the Taiwanese participants' perception on the intercultural task, the four Taiwanese students were interviewed one week after the task. Their oral comments on the task were elicited in the post interview, and the results were presented in the following two sections—positive comments and negative comments on the task.



#### **Positive Comments on the Task**

The data showed that the Taiwanese students prized the task, for it (1) provided opportunities for language practice, reducing the anxiety of using English, (2) led to improved speaking and listening skills, (3) altered their English learning attitude to English serving as a communicative mediator rather than a test subject, increasing motivation in English learning or in constant English use, and (4) helped make new friends and meanwhile develop knowledge of one's own culture and other culture.

First, Elliot reported that the task increased his opportunities of English practice, reducing his anxiety in using the foreign language.



*“[If] talking with a foreigner, I will be less nervous. And strategically, I will know how to respond to him/her during the interaction. The give-and-take interaction could be much fluent.”*

我跟外國人聊天的話，就心態上不會那麼緊張，然後技巧上知道要接什麼句子接什麼句子，就對答，互動會比較流利一點…(Elliot, post-interview)

Second, listening and speaking skills were reported to be improved by the help of this intercultural task. Thomas especially elaborated that as speaking with the nonnative speakers of English, he was benefited from his less rapid rate of speech, which was compatible with his English proficiency. Because of their less rapid delivery rate, he would be able to understand him better.

*“Listening and speaking were improved. Speaking and listening are both improved by constant practice. Because his [Far] spoke less rapidly than native speakers of English, I could understand his better. Sometimes native speakers of English speak too fast to understand.”*

聽的、口說也有進步，口說和聽力都是練習來幫助的，因為他說話的速度沒有像老外那麼的快，老外的速度有時候太快，有時候會聽不太清楚，但他的速度比較符合我的能力，所以我聽的比較懂他在講什麼…(Thomas, post-interview)

Third, the task helped the learners see that the purpose of learning English is not only to pass English tests, but to communicate with people. It is indicated that the students would be motivated to learn English after the task, by realizing that English is a primary helping tool used for connecting to foreign culture, to the world.

*“I used to think learning English was only for the purpose of passing tests. But now in addition to test-passing, I have realized that I might use English in the future and learning English became more acceptable to me. As a result, my motivation to English learning became stronger; I am less likely to reject English learning.”*

…因為以前是為了考試而學英文，現在是除了應付考試之外，我又多了我以後會有機會用到它，就會比較接受它…所以學習的動機就會比較強，學英文就不會那麼排

斥。(Elliot, post-interview)

Fourth, the task could help the participants make new friends, and through the interaction with the foreign friend, knowledge of one's culture and others culture was gained.

*“This experiment is very good. It helped me make one new friend, know some culture of Guatemala, as well as Taiwan's culture. I really learned a lot from it. I am very happy to participate in this task.”*

這個實驗很好，讓我多認識一個朋友，又知道一點瓜地馬拉的文化，也順便對台灣的文化有進一步的了解，真是獲益很多，真的很高興能參與這個實驗。

*(Mandy, post-interview)*

### **Negative Comments and Suggestions**

Although the Taiwanese participants gave positive comments on the task, they still addressed some limitations and suggestions for the intercultural task: (1) the foreign interlocutor was less likely to correct their spoken grammar and to help them expand their language competence, and (2) the task can extend to four or five times and the number of the international students can increase to two.

To begin with, two of the students mentioned that the interlocutor played a role of introducing his or her culture, not an English teacher who can teach new vocabulary or other linguistic aspects. In this way, they did not feel they had added something new to their language competence, but only exercised what they had already known.

*“The downside of the activity is that the interlocutor plays a role of explaining things rather than teaching English. Therefore, you are practicing [something you have known], not learning something new. If you are at a certain level, after the task, you can only improve your proficiency in employing words. That is, I exercise something I have known, not gain new abilities in a certain way.”*

活動的缺點是對方跟你講，他是一個解釋的人，他不會去擔任一個教英文的角色，

所以等於你在練習不是在新增，假如你能力到這樣，你講完只是會提升我句子使用字彙的能力，熟練度，應用我之前所學習到的東西，並不會去增加那一方面的能力。(Thomas, post-interview)

Additionally, regarding the frequency of the task, one student suggested that the intercultural talks extend to four or five times for they can only discover superficial cultural difference within three times. If the task is extended to four or five times, he can possibly better know the interlocutor.

*“The number of the talks could be more [than three times]. The first time was unfamiliar with each other, but second time became more familiar. Talking for four or five times could be much familiar, and then we could become buddies. I think talking for three times can only see the superficial, mostly cultural differences, but it can't help me know the person.*

次數可以再多一點，一回生二回熟，四次或五次可以會更熟，會變成麻吉，我覺得三次可能接觸到表面而已沒有辦法接觸到他的人，頂多看到文化上的差異。

(Elliot, post-interview)

Besides the suggestion of the frequency of the intercultural contact, Nina gave a suggestion on the number of interlocutors. She said two interlocutors can allow her to compare the two representatives of the same culture, to better know the target culture. She can conceptualize the target culture more “correctly” after the two, not only one representative talked about the target culture.

*“Two to two will be not bad. He is only one individual, so I can't be sure whether this data could be representative or not on the condition of two to one. If there are two interlocutors, then I can compare the two to see if this is only subjective viewpoint or it is a fact.”*

二對二不錯，對一個話，他是一個的個體，我不能確定這個 data 是不是完整的 data 還是不完整的，如果有兩個的話，我就可以相比。比如說這個認知是我的認知，還是真的。(Nina, post-interview)

To summarize the results of research question three, the findings revealed that the

Taiwanese participants showed their positive attitude toward the task in that it increased their English use, and in turn, their language anxiety was possibly reduced. After the task, the students perceived their improvement in listening and speaking skills, and development of knowledge of Taiwan's culture and other culture. Moreover, the task seemed to motivate the students to learn English, for it facilitated them to see the communicative purpose of the study of English. Above all, the task helped them make a new friend, a friend who had them realize the significant power of English in connecting self to the world as well as the importance of becoming a successful intercultural speaker. Nevertheless, the students indicated that compared to the formal English learning activity in class, the task could not provide them with new grammar knowledge, for the interlocutor was not a language teacher, but merely a communicator. And, some students suggested that the frequency of the talks in the task can be increased to four or five times, and the interlocutors can be increased to two international students.

This chapter addressed the three research questions based on the qualitative results. The results will be further summarized and discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

In this chapter, summary of the findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research are provided. The findings are further concluded under three perspectives: intercultural competence development, perceived intercultural communication difficulties, and perception of the intercultural task.

#### Summary of the Findings

##### *Intercultural Competence Development*

The results of the study have indicated that the intercultural task helped the L2 students exercise intercultural competence in knowledge about one's own and others' culture, ability to change perspective, interest in other people's way of life and introducing one's own culture to others, and knowledge about intercultural communication. That is to say, by the help of this intercultural task, the L2 learners had gained insights into their own as well as the foreign culture, and they further explored similarities and differences between the two cultures. Their knowledge of native culture and foreign culture were both gained after this task. And, in terms of abilities to change perspective, the results showed that the L2 learners' preconceptions or skewed opinions on another culture were adjusted by the real contact with one of the representatives of the foreign culture. This finding likely tell that the intercultural task helped the L2 learners develop an "openness attitude" (Bateman, 2002; Byram, 1997) to see others or otherness. The attitude was claimed to be important but less likely to be naturally acquired in a traditional language education where linguistic elements are main foci (Robinson & Nocon, 1996). Moreover, the results presented that the L2 learners were aroused to deal with cultural misunderstanding after they

had been aware of the foreign interlocutor's misunderstanding about Taiwan's food, and they patiently and strategically explained Taiwan's culture to help their interlocutor better know Taiwan. This could possibly help the learners experience the intricate interaction process of how to clarify cultural misunderstanding without causing any offences and also, provide opportunities for the learners to engage in real-time intercultural communication and practice authentic English use. Added to that, the learners reported their increased interest in introducing Taiwan's culture to others and in exploring other culture and people's life that they had paid little attention to. The raised interest is a very promising start. This curiosity is likely to prompt the learners to access another culture in the future.

In the aforementioned findings, a few points are worth noting:

Firstly, in view of the cultural development of others' culture, instead of learning foreign culture through a list of cultural facts, the L2 learners talked about cultural themes, naturally emerging during the interaction, and that enabled the learners to explore particular parts of the foreign culture very likely relevant or meaningful to themselves or their lives. The learners' written reflection reports revealed that the foreign culture gained through the task covered a broad range, including aspects of factual knowledge (e.g., food, tourist sites, festivals and custom, etc.), sociocultural realities (e.g., different social statuses of jobs), and cultural images based upon the impression of the interlocutor. As shown above, the topics involved not only "lowbrow information" (Thanasoulas, 2001), e.g., tourist sites, festivals and custom, and official language, but also covert cultural information of the society, e.g., social values. Besides, very interestingly, the learners formed general cultural images of the foreign culture based upon their impression of the interlocutor they interacted with. For example, Elliot regarded his Guatemalan interlocutor, Rolly, as independent and adventurous, for Rolly addressed she had been almost everywhere in her country.

Elliot afterwards assumed that the Guatemalan are more independent than Taiwanese. It seemed that the L2 learners could possibly form not very sound generalizations or even false stereotypes of the foreign culture after the task. Bateman (2002) also discovered similar results and contended that generalization is a normal part of cultural studies, which does not always consist of stereotypes. After several contacts with people from the culture, these generalizations will be gradually modified as the learners learn to consider situational factors and understand how these situational factors could significantly influence the cultural phenomenon they perceive. After all, culture is not static, stored in sets of cultural artifacts or forms; culture is dynamic and active in the lives of people. In this regard, the major concern for the study is whether the task could raise L2 learners' awareness of one's own culture and other culture, as well as the relation between self and others.

Secondly, the task has proven to possibly foster cultural knowledge of one's own. The results showed that Elliot was aware that the variety of measurement units used in Taiwan might confuse foreign visitors. So was Thomas. Noticing that Far placed a high value on the accessibility to nature when it comes to touring (refer to Table 4.4), Thomas had realized how he was affected by Taiwan's culture. In fact, the awareness of one's own culture rises when one's own culture is marked different in comparison to another culture. It seems that the present study could raise learners' awareness on native culture by facilitating them to constantly compare and contrast native culture with another culture. Byram and Fleming (1998) indicated that an intercultural speaker is required of having "reflexive impact." That is to say, intercultural speakers will experience in taking the risk that one's native culture could be judged by people from other culture, departing from their native culture, considering the other point of view provided by the foreign interlocutor and finally, arriving at a shared meaning about the native culture. As mentioned above, the learners, by the intercultural task,

were under the reflexive impact—trying to understand how one’s own culture is viewed by others and then to magnify native culture of which they usually are not consciously aware. Having had the reflexive impact was significant for L2 learners in that they learned how to move away from their ethnocentric perspective, or “decentre” (Kohlberg et al., 1983) and to internalize other’s perspectives into their own.

Thirdly, the data showed that cultural similarities were reported to be noticed only by Group Two (refer to Table 4.2 & Table 4.3). Group two’s members were aware of the fact that Vietnam, as a matter of fact, shared many commonalities with Taiwan, e.g., the city like Ho Chi Ming City or Hanoi is just as busy as the big city, Taipei. This discovery of the shared grounds appeared to help L2 learners shorten the imaginary distance between the two cultures, or much more concisely, it helped change their false cultural stereotypes. Robinson (1991) proposed that actively looking for similarities between cultures is a key strategy to counter perceptual biases, and the present study also showed the similar finding that the discovery of cultural similarities helped dispel of cultural stereotypes. However, it is notable that only one of the groups discovered cultural similarities. It will be worth probing the reason why the construct of Group Two could more easily help discover cultural similarities.

Lastly, with respect to the learners’ spurred interest in others’ culture, unlike intercultural contact studies emphasizing the interaction with native speakers of English, the learners in this study showed their interest in not only the culture of the foreign interlocutor but culture of other countries, countries that had been paid less attention to. The task of having students talk with nonnative speakers of English, in which English was used as a common language between the two parties of communication, avoided possible consequences of over-prioritizing culture of native speakers of English. Having the learners talk with nonnative speakers of English



might be less likely to help them access relatively correct English. Nevertheless, without the promotion of the monolithic native speakers of English' culture, the present research seemed to foster L2 learners' development of an interest in exploring countries other than just the foreign country of which their interlocutor is from and lead them to see today' multicultural, multiethnic world.

### **Perceived Intercultural Communication Difficulties**

The findings revealed language differences, high anxiety, limited competence in employing communication strategies, constrained sociocultural knowledge, particularly in appropriate ways to end the conversation, and limited knowledge of one's own culture and others, were reported to vex the L2 learners.

As seen, the difficulties involved aspects of linguistics, affection, communication strategies, and sociocultural knowledge. In the heyday of the theory of communicative competence, communicative language ability in real use is said to involve factors such as linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), and psychophysiological mechanisms (Bachman, 1990). These key components of communicative competence were found and still remained pivotal to the intercultural communication. However, echoing the claim of the need of modifying the model of communicative competence made by Byram (1997), the researcher discovered that culture has proven to be a significant factor, so indispensable that the factor, culture, was found to stand in its own right and also to influence the key factors of communicative competence, particularly on factors of linguistic competence, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic competence.

To be more specific, it was shown that L2 learners' lack of knowledge of one's culture and others' culture could hardly sustain the intercultural communication.

Culture is such an influential factor that it becomes essential in intercultural

communication. Furthermore, the power of culture spreads onto key components of communicative competence. Regarding the key element, “linguistic competence,” in communicative competence, the learners with linguistic competence could not completely handle the talk in that it involved the skill of translating words across culture. Though strategic competence was still found primary in the results, circumlocution strategy was shown to be especially crucial in a successful intercultural conversation. The learners may learn how to well utilize the circumlocution skill to compensate for insufficient linguistic competence, but not only that. In the intercultural interaction, the learners mostly depend on the strategy to make meaning cross cultures, since some cultural concepts in one’s country are quite unique. And, superb sociolinguistic competence seemed to be less likely to deal with the interaction with people other than native speakers of English. What an intercultural speaker needs is sociolinguistic competence that could enable him or her to interact with people all around the world, not only with a small population of so-called native speakers of English.

It is noted that the difficulties reported could only fit partly in Barna’s (1996) classification of six intercultural communication hurdles. Assumption of similarities, nonverbal misinterpretation, preconception and stereotypes, and tendency to evaluate, were not shown in the written self-reflection reports. The possible reason is that the unrevealing communication difficulty categories—assumption of similarities, preconception and stereotypes, and tendency to evaluate— are less likely to be elicited through the method of self report. To be more specific, these intercultural communication difficulties often are hidden factors, the factors that even L2 learners could not always be aware of. Often, as intercultural communication breakdown occurs, L2 learners cannot even realize the communication crash is the result of their biased or racist physical or verbal behavior. Lastly, as for no responses in the

difficulties caused by nonverbal misunderstanding, it may suggest that nonverbal misunderstanding perhaps could not be observed or discovered through this type of intercultural communication design.

### **Perception of the Intercultural Task**

The results indicated that all the four Taiwanese participants showed positive attitudes toward the intercultural task, for it increased English practice opportunities in real time, reduced tension in language use, helped develop listening and speaking skills as well as knowledge of one's own and others' culture, motivated them to study English, and finally provided them with a chance of making new friends.

On the other hand, when asked about limitations of the study, the L2 learner indicated as follows. First of all, both less proficient learners addressed that the task was less likely to facilitate linguistic knowledge because the foreign interlocutor was unable to help them correct grammatical or other linguistic mistakes they made. It is understandable that most L2 learners aimed for improving their English grammar, but it is intriguing that only the less proficient learners claimed their preference for grammar correction. Does the preference correlate with language competence or other factors? Whatever the answer is, this limitation of the study can possibly be fixed when the task is attached to a formal language learning program. Whoever the interlocutor is—a native speaker or a nonnative speaker of English, it seems to be hard for him or her to correct grammatical mistakes since the main purpose of communication is to exchange meaning. After all, it is not a proper communication protocol to pick on one's interlocutor's English grammar during interaction in any case.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The task of having L2 learners talk to nonnative speaker of English could be

assigned as an assignment outside the classroom. Sometimes, finding native speakers of English in EFL countries could be difficult. The results of the present study showed that speaking with nonnative speakers of English provides a great opportunity to learn about native culture and others' culture, and reexamine one's cultural biases on others. Also, through this real intercultural interaction, L2 learners can be led to discover the purpose of English learning, not merely for passing exams, but making new foreign friends, understanding other culture and other rewarding benefits. This realization of the multiple functions of English could have the potential of raising their motivation to English learning. Most importantly, the task could help L2 learners be aware of foreign culture other than the culture of their interlocutor, reflect upon the relation between self and others, self and the world, and further realize today's multiethnic world. This awareness is less easily to be aroused by talking with native speakers of English.

The two groups of Taiwanese students pointed out some of the communication difficulties were related to not only linguistics but culture. Apart from encouraging L2 learners to broaden their vocabulary repertoire in order to attain successful intercultural interaction, they are advised to work on pronouncing easily confused words, such as differentiate minimal pairs to have a lax tongue. Moreover, it is suggested that L2 learners should know that constantly watching grammar during conversation may sometimes backfire. Once too much attention is given to grammar or sentence structure in the real-time conversation, L2 learners could possibly trap themselves as adhering to the myth that successful intercultural communication requires perfect grammar. TESL/TEFL professionals can lead L2 learners to see how differently they speak when they shift their full attention from grammar to meaning of their articulation.

On the other hand, many difficulties were involved with culture. Limited

knowledge of one's own culture and others' culture and lack of skills of translating cross-culturally were reported to be primary deterrents to the communication.

Therefore, it is essential for language professionals to stress on the influential factor, culture, particularly in doing intercultural contact. It is suggested that activities such as helping L2 learners discover some representative cultural concepts of their native country and practicing interpreting or paraphrasing these cultural concepts through the stand of people of another culture perhaps could be held in the language class. That is to say, it is very important for L2 learners to be adept in the skill of interpreting and relating, and the skill of discovering and interacting (Byram, 1997). Both of the skills enable L2 learners to interpret a document or an event cross-culturally and to acquire necessary knowledge of a culture and cultural practices under the constraints of real-time intercultural communication.

In addition, it is suggested that too much tension or anxiety can vary L2 learners' language performance, especially at the beginning of the intercultural talk. Sometimes the tension is aroused due to lack of social skills, rather than language skills. Some social advices could be given and practiced, such as common communication topics used to break the ice prior to intercultural contact, reducing possible a state of nerves when talking with new friends.

In consideration of less opportunities of grammar correction given during the interaction, the TESL/TEFL practitioners can design activities of listening to the recording of the intercultural talk to detect grammar problems or other activities that enable learners to carry their grammar problems to the class.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the study are listed in the following. First of all, without carrying out on-site observation, the participants' facial expressions or spatial distances

between them could not be observed simply by listening to the recordings. The intercultural interaction was only recorded because the room equipped with one-way mirror was not easily available. Moreover, in order to reduce interference effect, the researcher chose not to be present in the interaction and only to audio-tape the interaction. It is suggested that the learners' nonverbal interaction is worth probing.

Secondly, the results are under the influence of the learners' past intercultural experiences. The present study focused on how the intercultural contact exerted the impact on L2 learners. Ideally, participants with the least intercultural experiences could make the learners' intercultural learning much clearer. Considering the inference of the learners' past intercultural experience on the results, the study tried to recruit participants with little intercultural contact as possible. However, it seems very unlikely to choose participants whose previous intercultural contact experiences are as a clear slate, especially in the present day in which the use of mass media is so prevalent.

Lastly, the present study is only one shot research, and the influence of the task on the learners is not possible to be completely discovered. Longitudinal studies on the learners' intercultural competence development and their attitude toward other culture should have been carried out.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

While one of the main foci in this study is to compare and contrast communication difficulties that L2 learners of two levels of language competence perceive during real-time intercultural interaction, future studies can extend this emphasis to two contrastive academic fields, such as exploring communication difficulties perceived by students in hard science and in soft science. Moreover, it will be very interesting to discover how L2 learners' intercultural competence

development or perceived communication difficulties differ in interacting with people with different ethnicities, such as comparing L2 learners' intercultural competence development as interacting with a person from Europe and with a person from East Asia.

Also, in consideration of the suggestion given by the participants, future studies can explore how the number of foreign interlocutors influences L2 learners' perspectives on the intercultural task. Finally, it is also suggested that future studies could investigate foreign international students' perspectives on the intercultural task or further focus on the comparison of the viewpoint of the two parties of the interaction.



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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1 Posting on BBS for the Recruitment of Taiwanese Students

#### 練習英文和結交國際學生的大好機會

你好，我是○○大學英語教學所的研究生曾湘茹，因為論文研究的關係，希望邀請幾位想要練習英文和結交國際學生、了解他們的文化的學生，也因研究的需求，參加者需符合以下條件：

1. 大一學生
2. 從未出過國
3. 台灣人

#### 研究的過程簡述於下：

1. 你將會和另一個亦是大一學生的同學一組，去訪問一位交通大學的國際學生，此國際學生並非來自英語系的國家，換句話說，他們會來自像巴拿馬、菲律賓等國家。
2. 此研究是在鼓勵台灣學生和國際學生之間的互動，討論的主題並無限制，你可以自定。
3. 訪問的時間大約是三十分鐘一次，共要訪談三次，過程中基本上是以英語為溝通的語言。
4. 每次訪談後，你要寫下你對此次的心得感想（共三次），在整個活動結束後，我會安排一次和你面對面訪談，訪問你整個活動下來的想法。
5. 為了感謝你的參與，我會在活動結束後，提供二張電影票，感謝你的參與。

**如果你對此活動有興趣，請回信至 [karenhtseng@hotmail.com](mailto:karenhtseng@hotmail.com)**

並附上你的以下的基本資料

1. 姓名
2. 學校/科系/年級
3. 性別
4. Email：

## Appendix 2 Email for the Recruitment of International Students

### A Nonnative English Speaker Wanted

Do you want to make some local Taiwanese friends, let them know more about your country, and receive 2 free movie tickets?

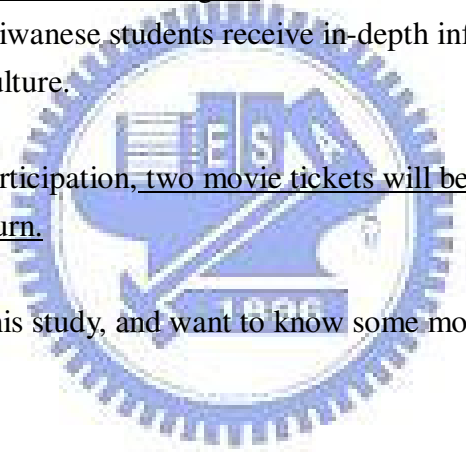
Here is a chance for you.

My name is Karen Tseng, a graduate student in NCTU. Interested in intercultural communication, I am here to invite some of the international students on campus to participate in my study. Because of the focus of my study, nonnative speakers of English are expected. If you speak English as second or foreign language, and are willing to make some new friends, you are the right person for me.

Is this study troublesome? Not at all. All you have to do is to chat with 2 local Taiwanese students for 30 minutes in English for three times. It is hoped that the conversation can help Taiwanese students receive in-depth information about you, your country and your culture.

To thank you for your participation, two movie tickets will be provided or something of the same values in return.

If you are interested in this study, and want to know some more details, please email me or phone me directly.



## Appendix 3 Guidelines of the Interview Task

### Guidelines Given to Taiwanese participants

很高興您對本跨文化溝通研究的參與。本研究的旨在鼓勵大學校園裡，台灣學生與國際學生之間的互動溝通，以及藉此達成台灣學生與國際學生雙方，跨文化的相互了解。

本研究基本上是使用英語為中介語言，面對面訪談同一位國際學生三次，每次訪談的時間大約三十分鐘。這位來自和台灣文化背景不同的國際學生，英文亦是他(她)的第二語言。訪談活動的敘述如下：

你將和另一位台灣學生合作進行此訪談活動，你們兩位會負責訪談過程中的問題。談話主題並沒有所限制，但希望這些問題能幫助你們了解受訪者他(她)的國家或文化，例如他(她)的國家地理形勢、食物、教育體制或是其它你有興趣的話題。每次訪談的地點和時間會由本研究者來幫你們協調與安排，而訪談的過程需要全程錄音。

每次訪談後，研究者會寄給你一張訪談後心得單，請盡可能在訪談後 2 天內寫好，並寄回。這個心得並不是考試，只是讓你能回想自己對於本次訪談的感覺及想法，所以想寫什麼就寫什麼。

最後，在進行完三次訪談後，研究者會另外和你約時間做一次面對面的面談，面談當中也是問一些你對於此活動的看法。在面談結束後，為感激你對本研究的參與，兩張電影票將贈送給你做為回饋。所有過程中收集的資料都會做為研究之用，你的名字也將會保密。

I am so pleased that you are willing to participate in this intercultural study. Purpose of the present study is to encourage face to face communication between Taiwanese college students and international students on campus and to bring forth intercultural understanding between Taiwanese and international students.

The study is mainly about conducting a face-to-face interview with an international student for three times in English (Each interview will last about 30 min). The international student will be a fluent nonnative English speaker who has different cultural background from yours. The interview task procedure is illustrated in the following.

You will be paired up with another Taiwanese college student. Both of you ought to plan what questions you would like to ask about your interviewee each time. Topics are not strictly confined, but these questions are advised to help your understanding of your interviewee's country or culture, such as geographic information of his or her country, food, education system or others that interest you. Time and venue of each interview will be arranged by the researcher, and the whole process will be recorded.

After each interview, an interview reflection sheet needs to be filled out. The form will be sent by email to you, and it is suggested that the reflection for each

interview be sent back within 2 days after the interview. The reflection sheet is not like a test, but it is hoped that you can express your feelings or thoughts fully about the interview you have just finished. Just forthrightly say what is in your mind.

Finally, after the three interviews with the international student, the researcher will conduct a face to face interview with you in which questions such as your attitude toward the interview task will be posed. In addition, two movie tickets will be given to show the researcher's gratitude for your participation. All the data is only used for research. Your name will not be revealed.

#### Guidelines Given to international Students

I am so pleased that you are willing to participate in this intercultural study. Purpose of the present study is to encourage face to face communication between Taiwanese college students and international students on campus and bring forth intercultural understanding between the two parties.

You will be grouped with two Taiwanese freshman college students and discuss topics that help better understand each other or each other's culture. You three will meet three times on campus and each meeting is advised to be around 30 min. The conversation will be recorded only for use of research. Your name will not be revealed in any case. After three time meetings with the Taiwanese students, one time face to face with the researcher will be carried out in order to know your reflection upon the entire activity, and your attitude toward the activity. On the same day of the interview, two movies tickets will be given to show the researcher's gratitude for your participation.



#### **Appendix 4 Questions for Taiwanese Students during the First Meeting**

1. Would you mind telling me something about you, including your full name, first language, nationality, age and major?
2. Can you brief us what kind of person you are (e.g., your characteristics, personality, etc.)? What do your friends think of you?
3. Can you describe your English learning experience? When did you start learning English?
4. How was your English learning experience at different stages (e.g., elementary, high school, college or graduate school?)
5. What kind of English courses have you taken so far?
6. Do you think it is necessary for you to learn English? Why?
7. What role does English play in your daily life?
8. In your opinion, how good is your English? How good was your English test score of the college entrance examination?
9. Have you ever tried to use English to communicate with others? How was it?
10. Have you ever talked to people from different cultural backgrounds? How was it?
11. Have you ever taken any courses related to cultural learning?
12. What is your attitude toward people from different cultural background residing in Taiwan?

#### **Questions for International Students in the First Meeting**

1. Would you mind telling me some information about yourself, including your full name, first language, nationality, age and major?
2. Do you speak Chinese?
3. When did you learn English? How was the education?
4. Can you talk about what kind of person you are (e.g., your characteristics,



personality, etc.)? What do your friends think of you?

5. How long have you been staying in Taiwan?
6. What motivated you to come to study in Taiwan?
7. How do you like Taiwan? Or your current life in Taiwan?
8. Besides Taiwan, what other countries have you been to? Can you please elaborate on your intercultural experiences?



## Appendix 5 Written Self-reflection Reports for Taiwanese Students

姓名：\_\_\_\_\_ 日期：\_\_\_\_\_

地點：\_\_\_\_\_ 訪談對象：\_\_\_\_\_

第\_\_\_\_\_次面談

\*請儘可能地寫下自己對此次訪談的感想

1. 你認為這次的訪談過程大致上進行如何?
2. 爲了此次訪談你做了那些準備?
3. 此次訪談後，你對此國際學生的印象和看法爲何?
4. 此次訪談中，你在溝通上有遇到那些困難?
5. 從此次的訪談後，你對國際學生當地的文化有何了解?
6. 在此次訪談後，你對台灣文化有何進一步的認識?
7. 此次訪談對你在英語學習方面有任何的影響?
8. 對於下次的訪談，你計畫想問對方什麼問題?
9. 你還有什麼想說的嗎?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

The \_\_\_\_\_<sup>th</sup> Interview

\*Please write down your reflection upon the interview as much as you can.

1. How was the interview process?
2. What preparation did you do for the interview?
3. After the interview, what do you think of this international student?
4. During the interview, do you encounter any difficulties in communication?
5. What foreign culture do you learn from the interview?
6. What Taiwan's culture do you learn from the interview?
7. How does the interview influence your English learning?
8. What do you plan to ask for the next interview?
9. What else would you like to say?

## **Appendix 6 Questions Designed for Post-Interview**

1. Is it easier or more difficult for you to talk with the interviewee? Why?
2. Can you address the most significant insights about other culture gained from the three talks?
3. Can you address the most significant insights about your own culture gained from the three talks?
4. What was the most salient difficulty did you encounter during the intercultural communication?
5. How do you value the importance of the intercultural communication experience to your English learning?
6. How do you like the interview task? Any suggestions?
7. What other comments do you have about these three interviews?



## **Appendix 7 Intercultural Communication Interview Consent Form**

### For International Students

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

**The purposes** of this project are:

- 1) to encourage face-to-face intercultural communication
- 2) to gain insight in intercultural communication

**The methods** to be used to collect information for this study are explained below. You will be arranged with another Taiwanese college student to interview an international student for three times. After each interview, you will be invited to have an interview with the researcher, talking about your reflective thoughts on the interview. From this information, I will write about your intercultural communication experiences.

- 1) You are encouraged to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods that I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me. Please contact with at any time at the address/ phone listed.  
Email: [karenhtseng@hotmail.com](mailto:karenhtseng@hotmail.com)  
Cell phone #: 0989695877
- 2) I will use the information from this study to write a report about your intercultural communication experiences, used in my thesis. This report will be read by you, my advisor, committee members, and other people involved in this study. The report will not be available to any other person to be read without your permission.

**I guarantee that the following conditions will be met:**

- 1) Your real name will not be used at any point of information collection, or in the written case report; instead, you and any other person and place names involved in your case will be given pseudonyms that will be used in all verbal and written records and reports.
- 2) If you grant permission for audio taping, no audio tapes will be used for any purpose other than to do this study, and will not be played for any reason other than to do this study.

Do you grant permission to be quoted directly?    Yes \_\_\_\_\_    No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you grant permission to be audiotaped?    Yes \_\_\_\_\_    No \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to the terms

Respondent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### For Taiwanese Students

您好

我是 曾湘茹，是交通大學英語教學研究所三年級的學生。目前正在撰寫碩士論文。我研究的題目是「文化接觸：台灣大學生與非英文母語外籍生的跨文化溝通與文化學習」，內容主要是探討大學生與外籍生文化交流。因為研究的目的是在於了解博大學生在此文化溝通經歷的過程，因此我想要邀請您成為我的研究對象。我會收集而且分析您和外籍生溝通的對話錄音，以及您與外籍生交談後的書面心得感想。此外，在此活動結束後，我還會進一步跟您做深度的訪談。訪談的內容將會進行錄音及謄寫。

參與這項研究沒有任何風險。除了研究者之外，沒有其他人會接觸到您與外籍生的對話內容、書面心得感想以及訪談內容，資料也會在研究分析後立即銷毀。對於您提供的各項資料只提供本研究使用，不做其他用途。您的個人資料將不會公開在研究報告中，而以匿名方式處理。

如果您有任何問題，歡迎與我討論。如果您之後有任何問題、考量，也可以透過電話099695877或email: [karenhtseng@hotmail.com](mailto:karenhtseng@hotmail.com)與我聯繫。

我誠摯地邀請您參與這次的研究。您的參與將能幫助英語教學工作者進一步了解非母語士與外籍生溝通時所遇到的困難，以便能提供更適切的協助。您可以決定是否參與這項研究。研究期間，如果您不願意繼續參與，您可以隨時退出，而您的資料將會歸還給您本人或是逕行銷毀。

最後，如果您已閱讀以上說明，並同意參與本研究，請在下列參加者的欄位中簽名。非常感謝您撥冗閱讀此說明。

參加者簽名：\_\_\_\_\_ 日期：\_\_\_\_\_

研究者簽名：\_\_\_\_\_ 日期：\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 8 Transcription of Cultural Differences Discovered**

### Data derived from the 3rd intercultural talk transcript of Group One

- 181 Rolly: and we see the fireworks.
- 182 Mandy: So you stay home or go to see the fireworks?
- 183 Rolly: See the fireworks and then we used to .. hey Sulin, how are you? (Sulin  
184 And Lee came in)
- 185 Rolly: Let me introduce you. This is Sulin. (Sulin: Hello. Elliot & Mandy: Hello)
- 186 She is from Panama. And this is Lee. He is from (Lee: From Costa Rica) (everyone  
187 laughs)
- 188 Mandy: really? You look like a Chinese. (Rolly: Taiwanese) I mean ..
- 189 Sulin: He doesn't look like a LBC, Latin-born-Chinese. (Rolly: Nonono ) (Everyone laughs) and  
you?
- 190 Mandy: Mandy
- 191 Elliot: Elliot
- 192 Sulin: Oh nice to meet you. Where are you from?
- 193 Mandy: Taiwan, haha. We are doing an experiment.
- 194 Sulin: I think your accent is quite accurate.
- 195 Mandy: Really? I am happy.
- 196 Sulin: So you are doing the experiment right now.
- 197 Rolly: Yeah we just talk and talk and talk.
- (Data derived from)

### Data derived from the 2nd intercultural talk transcript of Group Two

- 189 Nina: Have you ever heard about Kong-zi (Confucius)?
- 190 Thomas: In your country, you have his temple?
- 191 Far: It's not popular. But we know that. A long time ago, initially, right. Our country, they..their religion  
192 is to worship ancestors. or they worship a lot of things. So after that period of time, they stop for I the  
193 Buddhism because in some dynasty, they chose Buddhism as national religion. There, I think..they start  
194 to chose Kong-zi. Kong-Jiao..I think it is a religion right?
- 195 Nina: no I don't think so
- 196 Far: so some dynasty ..they start choosing Kon-Ji.as national philosophy.. I think it serves their intention.
- 181 They want.. I think Kong-zi teach that Teach you you must be loyal to your king, to your teacher, to your  
182 father , right? Yeah. It's political..King is the best right?
- 183 Nina: it's a tric... tricky.I think ..
- 184 Far: tricky? Yeah. The dynasty chose it as a tool.
- 185 Nina: But it is not actually what Kong-Zi thinking about. I think
- 186 Far: Is it right? what do you mean?
- 204 Nina: he ..one of..let me think ..he just wanna..he is not saying that king is the best. This is not his point.

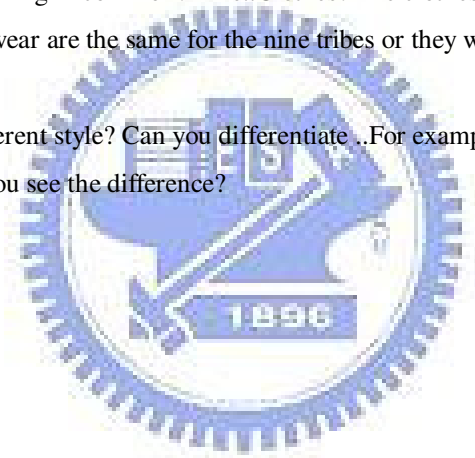
- 205 Thomas: He teaches the poor people. For people who want to learn something.
- 206 Nina: Maybe he mentioned that but it's not the point.
- 207 Far: Actually I don't know Kong-zi.
- 208 Nina: Maybe political..political.. do that kind of things.
- 187 Far: Yeah all politicians all lie..



## Appendix 9 Transcription of Cultural Similarities Discovered

### *Data derived from the 2nd intercultural talk transcript of Group Two*

- 297 Far: the last question I ask you..I show you the picture about..is this look familiar to you? this clothes?
- 298 Thomas: Yeah..Maybe.
- 299 Far: How come maybe..
- 300 Nina: The aboriginal people
- 301 Far: Does it look familiar to you? We have tribes of nine.
- 302 Nina: Yeah
- 303 Far: How many tribes in Taiwan?
- 304 Nina: thirteen. It increases every year.. I think.
- 305 Far: Increase? why? It can't increase every year?
- 306 Nina: They identify themselves as a different tribe..at first only nine tribes, but later on...(Far: the
- 307 separate) yeah.. they separate or languages a little bit different or something.
- 308 Far: Do they have anything in common? Like..Clothes? The clothes they wear? (Thomas: Yeah)
- 309 Far: The clothes they wear are the same for the nine tribes or they wear different style?
- 310 Thomas: Of course
- 311 Far: Every tribe..a different style? Can you differentiate ..For example, I give you the two tribes of
- 312 clothes and can you see the difference?





## Appendix 10 Transcription of Knowledge Development of One's Own Culture

### *Data derived from the 2nd intercultural talk transcript of Group One*

- 259 Mandy: Maybe next time I will try. The new way to have.. to eat it..and..
- 260 Rolly: I don't know the differences. I am not sure if I tell you last time about the fruit..
- 261 here is very expensive. I don't know if it's because here you don't have the land
- 262 to produce apples. Last time I went to A-mar.. yesterday.. I remember. I want to
- 263 buy 5 apples and when the guy gives me the price. It was three hundred NT. And
- 264 I went like ..what? (Mandy: three hundred?).yeah. I went like.. you are
- 265 crazy? (Elliot:三百 (san- bai, meaning three hundred) so expensive)
- 266 Rolly: yeah 三百 (san-bai) so today I went to the Kmarket.. and
- 267 I bought some.. they are cheaper..one apple for 22 NT I think they are ok.. but the
- 268 guy.. I don't know... I just put them back..
- 269 Mandy: So you mean you see the price it's 22 NT for an apple. Or you see that's
- 270 22 NT per hundred grams.
- 271 Rolly: Maybe..I don't know..I just put them back..
- 272 Mandy: so you mean you see the apple is 22 NT?
- 273 Rolly: I guess
- 274 Mandy: so Maybe you see that 22 NT per 600 grams
- 275 Rolly: Maybe it will be.. when we are going to buy stuff, the guy said one..
- 276 balala.. I always confuse about the price.
- 277 Mandy: Because there are some apples, especially in A-mar, they come from
- 278 Japan.so it's really really expensive. But it looks much bigger and much more
- 279 beautiful you know. Yeah it's really expensive
- 280 Rolly: Normal apples..haha
- 281 Mandy: So you also have apples in your country?
- 282 Rolly: Yeah..we have little kind of food.. when I came, everything was so
- 283 expensive.. one apple for me..it's like ( Mandy: ten dollars?) less than 10
- 284 dollars (Mandy: less than ten? So cheap) because we produce this kind of food.
- 285 So. When I came here..wow..
- 286 Mandy: Our fruit come from Japan. I mean the better one. Maybe some in the
- 287 middle? Taiwan is tiny and a little long.. We have too many mountains. So the
- 288 land you can.. We have no enough land to produce the apples.. we are all mountains
- 289 and they are not high..

*Data derived from the 1st intercultural talk transcript of Group Two*

- 423 Nina: Oh I think Hualien, the east of Taiwan is really cool..
- 424 Far: yeah. The Vietnamese..This month there's a trip to Hualien. It's the east of  
425 the island right? (Nina: yes)
- 426 Far: I think I can get there by a scooter..(Nina: really?)
- 427 Thomas: uuuuuh, it's not a good idea.
- 428 Far: How far is it away from here?
- 429 Nina: Because it is not because of the distance. It's because the mountains.
- 430 Far: It's all right.(Nina: really?)
- 431 Far: But how far is it away from here to that city?
- 432 Thomas: By motorcycle (Far: 200 kilometers?) no no.(Far: less than 200?)  
433 200? Less than 200.
- 434 Nina: All island it's about 300 km from here to Hualien. (Far: 300 km from here  
435 to Hualien?)
- 436 Nina: no no no no. the whole island from Taipei to Kenting is only about 300 km.  
437 So it's very small.
- 438 Far: It's all right. It's no problem.
- 439 Thomas: I ever drive the motorcycle to Taoyuan.um. international airport.  
440 almost two hours from Hsinchu to Taoyuan...My ass is very pain (Far: It's all right)  
441 I spend all the time errrrrrrr (onomatopoeia of a scooter) and 100 km..
- 442 Far: In my country, right, I use.. I I can ride a bike 2 hundred kilo a day (Nina:  
443 What?) yeah I ride to the mountains for 100 km and I go to the sea for another  
444 100 km. So it's all right.
- 445 Thomas: But your motorcycle will broken (Far: No)
- 446 Nina: But the road to east. There's a lot of 大卡車(Da-Ka-Che, meaning trucks) trucks.. So it's dangerous.  
447 So I don't think I don't suggest...
- 448 Far: Ok I will think about it..
- 449 Thomas: You need to take a train or a bus
- 450 Far: But if you travel by a scooter, you can stop any where you want and take a  
451 photo.
- 452 Nina: That's true.
- 453 Far: So it's dangerous.

## Appendix 11 Transcription of Elliot's Slip of Tongue

*Data derived from the 1st intercultural talk transcript of Group One*

109 Mandy: So you been to Taipei 101?

110 Rolly: Yeah

111 Mandy: So how do you feel about it?

112 Rolly: It's really high.

113 Mandy: So have you ever take the elevator to the top?

114 Rolly: Yeah we went to the top.

115 Mandy: It's so expensive, right?

116 Rolly: But I already came here so I was excited..so I wouldn't do it again. it's

117 Rolly: expensive.

118 Mandy: Yeah but I haven't do it yet.

119 Rolly:No ?

120 Mandy: Nonono..because it's expensive..

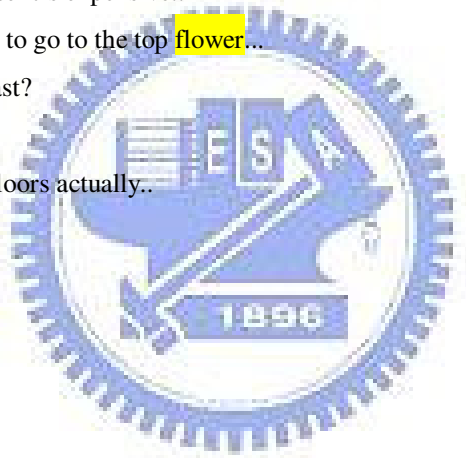
121 Elliot: You need money to go to the top flower...

122 Mandy: So is it really fast?

123 Rolly: 37 seconds.

124 Mandy: So how many floors actually..

125 Rolly: 101?



## **Appendix 12 Transcription of How High Anxiety Interfered Thomas's Willingness to Talk**

### Data derived from the 1st intercultural talk transcript of Group Two

119 Far: What do you mean.. stab my lip

120 Nina: Oh he said he didn't try so hot food so he wanted to know .. How does it

121 feel if you..if you..

122 Far: It feels great.(Nina and Thomas are laughing)

123 Thomas: ok. I will try it.

124 Nina: He think it'll like needles..um...in the tougue.. or..

125 Far: When you when you say spice, right? um..I don't know what you mean

126 spice..it includes pepper, sugar..can we say sugar spice? Sugar, salt,um..

127 ginger,um garlic or something..yeah.

128 Thomas: what?

129 Nina: garlic?garlic?

130 Far: Spice.we define it includes a lot of things. (Nina: yeah) but some people

131 when they talk about spice.. they think of pepper, chili or something..yeah.. I

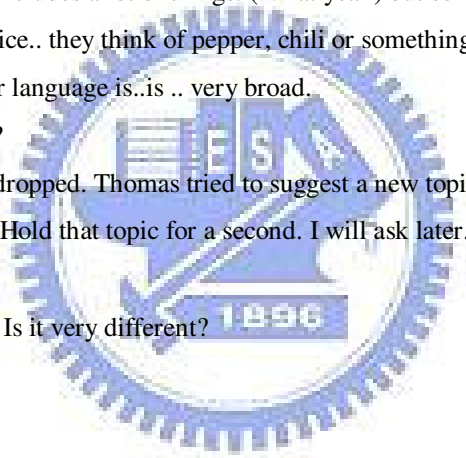
132 consider the spice in our language is..is .. very broad.

133 Thomas: entertainment?

(Note: the topic of spice was dropped. Thomas tried to suggest a new topic, entertainment)

134 Nina:等一下我問一下(Hold that topic for a second. I will ask later.) I think your country is a communist country. right?

135 Far: yeah..communism. Is it very different?



## Appendix 13 Transcription of How Nina and Elliot Reacted Differently to an Unfamiliar Topic

Nina's Case:

*Data derived from the 3rd intercultural talk transcript of Group Two*

- 51 Far: what did you study? Geometric?  
52 Nina: I don't know the English name.  
53 Far: Have you studied this operation in high school? (Writing a Mathematic symbol)  
54 Thomas: integrate?  
55 Far: You know this sign? A long S  
56 Nina: A long s, what's that?  
57 Far: yeah, something fan, right.  
58 Thomas: 積分啊. Integrate..(Far: T means multiply right?)  
59 Thomas: integrate and differentiate..  
60 Far: I don't know.. 積分.. I know the term in my language. But I don't know  
61 how it called in English. In my language. It's called. Di-fan.  
62 Nina: Di-Fan  
63 Far: Di means multiply and fan means part, right? (Thomas: right) it's the same  
64 here right? You call it 積分? And we have ..(Thomas: differentiate) yeah, in my  
65 language, we call it , lau. How do you call it in Chinese?  
66 Thomas: 微分  
67 Far: wai-fang, wai means small right?(Thomas: yes) so maybe it's another name  
68 called vi-fang, vi means small, tiny, there's a lot.. (Thomas: another one is ?)  
69 Far: Di-fan, to accumulate, right? and vi means tiny(Thomas: small)  
70 Thomas: it's created by Albert Einstein?  
71 Far: no no no no, not at all, it exists long time before..Albert Einstein.. I think so ..

Elliot's Case

*Data derived from the 1st intercultural talk transcript of Group One*

- 200 Mandy: What's your religion?  
201 Rolly: Christian  
202 Mandy: So you go to the church  
203 Rolly: Yeah, there is a church behind the night market  
204 Mandy: Shen-li-tan, right? Do you know the Chinese name? the victory? nonono..  
205 Rolly: We go to the church on Sunday.  
206 Mandy: So you go only on Sunday?  
207 Rolly: And we have a group meeting on Friday in the night.

208 Mandy: Berkeley right? Do you know there's a group of persons and they call it  
209 Berkeley 團契 which means just..the group in the church...  
210 Rolly: But there's some just for Latin people. For Spanish  
211 Mandy: Oh in Spanish?  
212 Mandy: So you Spanish are all Christians?  
213 Rolly: The most of Latin people  
214 Mandy: So you believe in God? yeah  
215 Mandy: Don't you ever doubt that the bible is true or not?  
216 Rolly: The bible? Yeah  
217 Mandy: You trust?  
218 Rolly: yeah, You don't?  
219 Mandy: Not really actually although my mother and my father are Christians. Ah  
220 actually I am not really a Christian but I have 受洗 (baptize) um.. I have already um..put  
221 it in the..in the pond ..by a man 牧師怎麼說( how to say priest?)?  
(Note: This religion topic lasted for quite a few minutes; however, Elliot did not say a word throughout the whole time.)

