Fostering Intercultural Communication Competencies through a CALL Global Citizenship Course, as Perceived by EFL Teachers

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ABSTRACT: *Global citizenship and competences certificate was a course provided by Education New Zealand to improve EFL teachers' understanding and awareness of intercultural communication competencies (ICC). The course was conducted and delivered online both asynchronously and synchronously with the support of platforms, computers, and the Internet. This present article aimed to investigate how that course could enhance or hinder EFL teachers' intercultural communication competences (ICC) from their perspectives. A total of 29 EFL teachers who came from four different countries (i.e., Vietnam, New Zealand, Thailand, and Japan) participated in the semi-structured interviews to share their perceptions regarding ICC. The interview data was analyzed thematically. As a result, the findings revealed that the teachers had unforgetable experience in terms of ICC. They had much better awareness and understanding of ICC and its components. Besides, they believed that what had been vague about ICC before was clarified when they had chances to read materials, watch videos, and more importantly discuss issues with the facilitators and the international and national peers. More interestingly, what they highly valued from the course was the informal discussions about different personal, academic, and professional issues among people from different cultures. Moreover, the EFL teachers confirmed that the CALL course was an effective way for them to learn cultures, connect with the world, and develop learning communities. Finally, those teachers hoped to integrate the content learnt from the course and the way the course was delivered into their own EFL teaching although they identified several challenges such as their learners' proficiency, the packed schedule from the curriculum, and the facilities.*

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and cultural diversity, effective cross-cultural communication is vital. Developing intercultural communication competencies (ICC) is crucial for individuals to respect diverse values and viewpoints. ICC entails recognizing and tolerating cultural differences among individuals, groups, and countries (Fantini, 2020; Fantini and Garrett-Rucks, 2016). Han (2013) emphasizes the importance of cultivating tolerance for cultural differences and acquiring skills for coping with them through mutual integration.

ICC is a transformative aspect of English education, shaping students into global citizens who excel not just in language but also in interpreting socio-cultural contexts and responding appropriately (Han, 2013). This shift in language education empowers teachers to incorporate cultural instruction, nurturing skills like creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

English teachers play a pivotal role as bridges, integrating intercultural communication into language curricula. It's time for educators to embrace modern pedagogical approaches, offering effective learning strategies, socio-cultural environments, and authentic language resources. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is a viable solution, harnessing

innovative technology for language and cross-cultural education (Nim Park and Son, 2009).

Education New Zealand (2022) introduced the Global Competence Certificate (GCC) course, initially for New Zealand-based international students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The course expanded to reach international partners in Vietnam, Thailand, and Japan. The online course aims to foster global citizenship, intercultural communication skills, and emotional resilience, with a primary focus on EFL teachers from diverse backgrounds. Participants engage in both synchronous and asynchronous sessions, utilizing computers and the internet for activities such as animated videos, quizzes, discussions, reading, assignments, and biweekly two-hour live sessions. Participants must pass platform tasks before joining live sessions, led by expert trainers from New Zealand institutions. Preferably, participants are grouped diversely to consolidate and discuss prepared points.

This article explores how the CALL course influences EFL teachers' ICC, from their perspectives.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of CALL

CALL, which stands for Computer Assisted Language Learning, is a method of teaching language that leverages computers to support the presentation, demonstration, reinforcement, and assessment of language in the learning process (Al-Jarf, 2005; Khoshsima and Mozakka, 2017). In a broader sense, CALL refers to the use of interactive media and internet applications to enhance the productivity and enjoyment of the classroom and learning experience (Kilickaya, 2009). Since the advent of computers as teaching aids in physical classrooms, CALL has rapidly evolved, transforming language classrooms into a globally connected space. It allows students to communicate with people worldwide without constraints of time and place (Friedman, 2005).

2.2. Benefits and Limitations of CALL in Language Teaching and Learning

Research has consistently shown significant improvements in language achievement and positive attitudes toward CALL in language teaching and learning (Al-Jarf, 2005). In terms of language achievement gains, CALL technologies promote exploratory learning, offer access to authentic materials, provide feedback, support pair or group work, facilitate interaction, customize instruction, motivate learners, and offer more exposure to diverse sources (Lee, 2000; Warschauer and Healey, 1998). A series of studies with EFL college students by Al-Jarf (2003, 2004, 2005) found higher language achievement among students who enrolled in online writing classes and those who shared their work online for feedback. These students also demonstrated better grammar skills and cultural awareness. CALL fosters connections among students worldwide, promoting mutual understanding, cultural diversity, and cultural awareness among English learners (Salomon, 1991).

Despite its advantages, the allure of technology does not guarantee the success of language teaching and learning. Khalid Ibrahim Al-Nafisah (2015) raised doubts about the reliability and validity of CALL as a tool to support language teachers and students in classrooms. Firstly, as CALL is inherently a supplementary tool, it is challenging to control all other variables in an empirical study to validate its effectiveness in language acquisition (Hassan Taj et al., 2017). Secondly, not all teachers feel confident using technology in their classrooms because they often lack adequate training in CALL application (El Omari, 2015). Lastly, without careful lesson planning, material selection, and student preparation for technology use, CALL may not deliver the expected benefits. Teachers play a pivotal role in effectively implementing CALL in classroom teaching (Zhang, 2021).

2.3. CALL Courses for Language Teachers

As previously mentioned, teachers are key to integrating CALL into language teaching and learning. They initiate the use of technology in classrooms and determine its success. Existing literature suggests that CALL courses can positively influence teachers' attitudes toward technology use and enhance their confidence

and competence with technology (Egbert et al., 2002; Kessler, 2006). A study in Turkey by Kilickaya (2009) found that pre-service English teachers benefited from a CALL course, which they subsequently applied by using CALL tools in their teaching. Another study by Kilickaya and Seferoglu (2013), also conducted in Turkey, demonstrated changes in teachers' attitudes and practices towards technology use in the classroom following the integration of CALL-based materials and tools in their lessons.

Conversely, the literature also highlights a gap between what is taught in CALL courses and what teachers can implement in their classrooms due to constraints within their teaching contexts (Chao, 2015; Egbert et al., 2002; Son, 2014). Son's (2014) study revealed that teachers who had taken a CALL course in Australia were reluctant to use CALL in their teaching due to limitations in time and facilities. A recent qualitative study by Nguyen (2019) reported that EFL tertiary teachers in Vietnam, despite attending a CALL course organized by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), did not fully integrate CALL into their teaching. They cited the lack of a link between CALL training and teaching practice, insufficient guidelines for CALL implementation, and limited access to facilities and internet connections as barriers to its use (Nguyen, 2019, p.140).

It's worth noting that previous research has focused on both positive and skeptical views of CALL courses' impact on teachers' attitudes and practices. Limited research has explored how CALL courses affect teachers' intercultural communicative competence (ICC), especially in the context of Vietnam.

2.4. ICC in Language Teaching and Learning

Researchers have provided various definitions of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Byram, 1997, 2012; Lo Bianco et al., 1999; Sercu, 2000). Byram (1997) defines ICC as the "ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries" (p.7). In language learning and teaching, ICC is further defined as the ability "to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language" (Byram, 1997,

p.71). This definition implies that developing ICC involves negotiating and mediating among multiple identities and cultures in various situations (Lam, 2018).

Byram's ICC model encompasses four language competences: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. Developing intercultural communicative competence requires five critical factors (savoirs) that represent aspects of ICC: attitude, self and other knowledge, interpreting and relating skills, discovery and interaction skills, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997, p.91). Byram describes these factors as follows:

Attitude: This factor involves considering one's own culture and values in relation to other cultures. It encompasses curiosity, openness, and a willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures while questioning one's own (p.91).

Self and Other Knowledge: This refers to the understanding of social interaction norms that individuals need. It includes knowledge about various social groups and their practices, including one's own.

Interpreting and Relating Skills: These skills enable individuals to interpret, explain, and relate events and documents from other cultures to their own.

Discovery and Interaction Skills: These skills allow individuals to acquire new cultural knowledge and practices while leveraging their existing cultural knowledge and interactions.

Critical Cultural Awareness: This factor involves the ability to make evaluations by combining perspectives, practices, and products of one's own culture and others.

Byram's ICC model illustrates that these five factors—attitude, self and other knowledge, interpreting and relating skills, discovery and interaction skills, and critical cultural awareness—are interrelated. Developing ICC necessitates acquiring all these factors concurrently. If language learners lack any of these factors, they may struggle to apply their knowledge effectively or engage appropriately in intercultural communication. Integrating all five factors maximizes linguistic functional abilities

(Byram, 2012). This comprehensive model of ICC served as the framework for measuring the improvement of EFL teachers in ICC in this study.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

This study aimed to assess how a GC (Global Competences) course affected the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers. To ensure the focus on these teachers, we collected their contact information, including email addresses and mobile numbers, from social networks like Zalo, WhatsApp, and Facebook. We contacted potential participants through email and phone calls, resulting in 29 EFL teachers confirming their participation. Participant confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms. Demographic information is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: The participants' demographics

No.	Name	Code	Gender	Origin	Years of experience	Level of teaching
1	Lan Anh	VN01	Female	Vietnam	17	University
2	Tram Anh	VN02	Female	Vietnam	11	University
3	Dat	VN03	Male	Vietnam	08	University
4	Duc	VN04	Male	Vietnam	09	Secondary
5	Dung	VN05	Female	Vietnam	12	Primary
6	Duong	VN06	Female	Vietnam	12	University
7	Hong	VN07	Female	Vietnam	18	Primary
8	Hue	VN08	Female	Vietnam	13	High school
9	Huong	VN09	Female	Vietnam	15	High school
10	Lan	VN10	Female	Vietnam	10	Primary
11	Long	VN11	Male	Vietnam	12	Secondary
12	Sang	VN12	Female	Vietnam	06	High school
13	Trang	VN13	Female	Vietnam	07	University
14	Kosi	TL01	Female	Thailand	15	Secondary
15	Nat	TL02	Male	Thailand	08	Secondary
16	Plot	TL03	Female	Thailand	07	University
17	Sun	TL04	Female	Thailand	11	Primary
18	Winny	TL05	Female	Thailand	05	High school
19	Koto	TL06	Female	Thailand	10	Primary
20	Nagaz	JP01	Male	Japan	27	Secondary
21	Suzu	JP02	Female	Japan	14	Primary
22	Hayo	JP03	Male	Japan	22	University
23	Kate	JP04	Female	Japan	13	High school
24	Kenny	JP05	Female	Japan	16	Primary
25	Suarez	NZ01	Female	New Zealand	10	Primary
26	Susan	NZ02	Female	New Zealand	28	Secondary
27	Toth	NZ03	Female	New Zealand	11	High school
28	Tom	NZ04	Male	New Zealand	08	Secondary
29	White	NZ05	Female	New Zealand	14	High school

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

To achieve the study's objectives, we adopted a qualitative approach with a constructivist worldview and a phenomenological design. The primary method employed was semi-structured interviews, as detailed in Creswell and Creswell (2018). The constructivist perspective allowed us to delve deeply into participants' perceptions of ICC within a CALL global competences course, examining it from multiple perspectives. Additionally, the phenomenological approach helped us understand how participants experienced and felt about ICC during the course. Employing semi-structured interviews provided valuable insights into participants' experiences.

The semi-structured interview asked the participants the following main questions.

(1) Why did you apply for the global competences course?

(2) In your opinion, what is ICC? Do you think that it is important?

(3) How did you experience ICC during the course?

(4) Which aspects of ICC, do you think you improved after the course?

(5) Do you think that a CALL course like this course was effective for you to develop ICC?

(6) Do you have difficulties in enhancing ICC in such a CALL course?

The English questions underwent a readability and understandability review by a New Zealand professor facilitating the course. Simultaneously, the questions were translated into Vietnamese using the back-translation method (Behr, 2017) to ensure full comprehension by Vietnamese interviewees.

Each interview, conducted by the second researcher, lasted approximately 30 minutes on average. The language used was Vietnamese for teachers from Vietnam and English for those from Thailand, Japan, and New Zealand. Zoom video conferencing was chosen for its convenience and to accommodate geographic distances. Interviews were recorded with participant consent, and scheduling took into account time differences and participants' availability.

Thematic analysis, a qualitative research strategy (Braun and Clarke, 2006), was employed to analyze the dataset of 29 transcripts. After data collection, transcription, and coding, which took nearly two months due to the large volume of data, interviews with Vietnamese teachers were back-translated into English with assistance from two Ph.D. holders in applied linguistics based in New Zealand.

The coding process followed three main steps: grouping, coding, and reduction. Four themes emerged from the code set, guided by the research question and main interview questions: (1) Initial ICC Understanding vs. Enlightenment; (2) Aspects of ICC Improvement; (3) The CALL Course for ICC: Pros and Cons; (4) Challenges to Consider. To effectively analyze the second theme, researchers applied Byram's (1997) ICC framework, resulting in four sub-themes within the second theme: (2.1) Intercultural Attitudes, (2.2) Intercultural Skills, (2.3) Intercultural Awareness, and (2.4) Intercultural Knowledge.

4. Findings

4.1. Inadequate Previous Understanding of ICC vs. Enlightenment

All the teachers admitted they had not received systematic ICC training nor engaged in ICC-related practices before. Their understanding of ICC was limited, viewing it as interactions with people from different countries and regions. For instance, VN03 stated, "ICC occurs when people of different nationalities discuss a topic together. I've heard of it but never paid much attention." TL06 confessed, "*I don't know much about ICC as I was never taught about it, but I believe it involves cultural sharing when people from diverse backgrounds meet.*" NZ05 added, "*New Zealand is multicultural, but I work with native students, so I've had no ICC practice due to my busy schedule.*"

However, the CALL global competences course was a turning point for them. It provided opportunities for intercultural practice with support from university facilitators. EFL teachers were grouped with peers from various countries to ensure diverse perspectives. They were encouraged to take turns discussing their cultures during online meetings and on forums

after reading assignments. Additionally, they applied course knowledge to real-life and hypothetical situations, sharing their experiences with international peers. Facilitators also asked for group summaries after each session.

JP01 expressed, "*The course clarified the concept of ICC for me. With readings and discussions, I learned a lot. It was intense, but I loved practicing ICC without leaving home. Despite my experience, I gained valuable ICC insights here.*"

4.2. Aspects of ICC Improvements

Intercultural Attitudes

Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed that the most appreciated aspect was the development of intercultural attitudes, as described by Byram (1997). All participants unanimously agreed that the CALL global citizenship course had a significant impact on their willingness to engage with and learn from people of different backgrounds. They expressed increased interest in exploring diverse cultures and perspectives within their groups, enhancing both their verbal and nonverbal communication skills. For instance, VN06 shared her experience: "*The course provided a unique opportunity for me to share my own cultural experiences and observations from daily life. I eagerly anticipated each meeting with friends from around the world to exchange ideas. It was genuinely exciting to interact with them and listen to their stories. Additionally, when participating in forum discussions, I felt comfortable sharing my thoughts to contribute to the community. I never imagined an online course could be this engaging*". JP04 added: "*Prior to the course, I had never encountered such an engaging platform where individuals from diverse backgrounds came together online to explore each other's cultural nuances and engage in stimulating discussions about the course content. Interacting with teachers from various regions, spanning from North to South, was a thrilling experience.*" Remarkably, the majority of participants (n = 25) shared a common sentiment: they highly valued informal discussions alongside the main course content discussions. These informal

conversations revolved around daily life and professional experiences shared by EFL teachers from four different countries. For instance, TL04 mentioned: "*I must emphasize that the post-main content discussions were the most engaging aspect of the course. In our group, everyone was enthusiastic and offered constructive ideas. We had lively and enjoyable debates on topics such as marriage, happiness, and customs from different countries. We shared laughter and a strong sense of camaraderie.*".

Intercultural Skills

The participants perceived their intercultural skills, especially skills of discovering and interacting as one of the most improved aspects of ICC. They felt confident that they were able to know and apply how to communicate with people from different cultures more effectively, acquire new cultural knowledge, and negotiate cultural misunderstandings. They believed that these skills would be very important for their path to becoming global citizens.

The following quote is an example. "*Each competence or skill in the course enabled me to know how to effectively work with people from diverse contexts, particularly when I learned cultural dimension. The skills helped me to avoid future cultural misunderstandings, and I highly appreciated the skills such as solving conflicts, communication strategies and styles, and showing empathy.* " (TL02)

Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural awareness was the component of ICC that most participants felt confident to mention when being asked. They shared that after the course, when they had any cultural concerns with other people, they were able to think about those issues critically and from different perspectives. It means that they could "put themselves [yourself] into someone's shoes to be aware of any life issues and avoid cultural conflicts" (NZ03). They believed that it could "facilitate mutual understandings among people from diverse backgrounds" (TL03) and "contribute to the culturally peaceful world" (JP04), which was "extremely important and useful if people [I] wish to travel, study, work, or live abroad" (VN12). Some illustrative quotes are

the following. NZ04 said: "*What I have learned from the course was really useful for me to shape my critical thinking of any cultural issues around me. It was fostered a lot during the course when I worked with a great facilitator, and colleagues from Vietnam, Thailand, and Japan. I became more aware of different viewpoints, perspectives, and situations. It will become more important if I go abroad for my exchange programs.*"

Intercultural Knowledge

The interviewees unanimously agreed that they gained valuable insights into cultural identities and practices from their international colleagues during and after the course. This newfound knowledge encompassed how teachers perceived and understood the world across diverse cultures, as well as specific aspects such as languages, customs, traditions, cuisine, music, history, and geography.

Firstly, a majority of interviewees (n = 24) asserted that their problem-solving skills significantly improved as a result of their course experiences. This enhancement allowed them to better comprehend the world around them. For instance, JP01 remarked, "I used to believe I possessed sufficient experience to reasonably understand and interpret everything around me. However, the course prompted me to reevaluate my previous mindset. It encouraged me to think critically about people from different cultures and their behaviors, making me realize the importance of exploring and learning about various cultures."

Secondly, all teacher participants shared a consensus on their expanded knowledge of cultural norms and practices in their colleagues' countries, which encompassed aspects such as marriages, wedding customs, attire, problem-solving approaches, cuisine, music, clothing, and geographical factors in Vietnam, Thailand, New Zealand, and Japan. VN10 enthusiastically expressed: "*I gained a wealth of knowledge from my classmates. They generously shared information about their countries and cultures. I was particularly impressed by the critical and creative problem-solving methods of my Japanese and New Zealand friends. Additionally, I learned about wedding customs and marriage*

perspectives in Thailand, Japan, and New Zealand. Each online session was a treasure trove of cultural insights that held my undivided attention."

4.3. CALL Course for ICC: Why Not?

All interviewed teachers unanimously agreed that a Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) course effectively fosters Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), even though they still valued face-to-face interactions. For instance, VN08 shared her perspective, saying, "*I used to believe that ICC required in-person communication and face-to-face meetings. However, the course I attended changed my perspective. I'm amazed by how this online course connected people worldwide, and it significantly improved my ICC.*"

Participants highlighted several advantages of using online platforms and computers/laptops for a global competences course. Firstly, it offered economic convenience as they no longer needed to travel abroad for intercultural experiences, leading to substantial cost savings, as expressed by JP05 and VN06. They also avoided expenses associated with airfares, accommodations, and other onsite fees, as noted by TL05.

Secondly, the online mode with computers/laptops was spatially convenient. Participants could attend meetings from the comfort of their homes or any suitable location, eliminating the need to choose meeting spots, as mentioned by VN11 and NZ04. This convenience was eagerly anticipated, according to JP03.

Thirdly, the online format offered diverse activities that surpassed what offline courses could provide. Participants had access to both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities, which included engaging multimedia elements like animated films to illustrate key points, as mentioned by VN02. These activities encompassed reading, listening, writing, speaking, discussing, comparing, contrasting, and self-reflecting on local cultural issues, all of which were consistently stimulating and exciting, as stated by TL06. These activities were considered unattainable in traditional offline classes, as highlighted by VN09.

Therefore, all interviewees concurred that online courses were fully compatible with the development of ICC among EFL teachers, leading them to ask, "Why not consider a CALL course for ICC?" (NZ04).

4.4. Challenges to Consider

When asked about integrating global competences into EFL teaching to promote ICC, the participants identified three main challenges including learners' language proficiency, prescribed schedules and syllabi, and institutional facilities. First, the interviewees from Vietnam, Thailand and Japan were concerned about low and uneven levels of English proficiency. For example, VN03 expressed his thoughts: "*I really want to include the global competences content into my language classes, but the biggest problem comes from my students' poor language proficiency. They sometimes do not understand simple texts in the course books, they find listening to English challenging, or they hardly produce an English speech, so I do not think they can absorb such content.*" Standing from the same pole, JP04 shared: "*English is a difficult subject for most of my students and they learn English for their exams and graduation only, so they focus on the points in the tests. They can do multiple-choice exams very well with techniques, but they have difficulty listening comprehension, speaking and writing. They do not like presentations and teamwork. Therefore, integrating global citizenship education into English lessons needs special consideration, especially low language competence.*"

Second, the participants from non-native English-speaking countries (i.e., Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam) faced the challenge regarding the prescribed syllabi and schedules of English language courses. Those courses were "*designed to fulfill the framework's requirements in the curriculum and focus on the benchmark so that the students can do well in final exams*" (VN13) so it was "difficult to design more creative and interactive activities, not mention to adding content such as global competences because the syllabus was already heavy" (JP03). The New Zealanders in this study stated that their language program had already included global citizenship because the authorities focused a lot on it.

Third, another concern came from limited facilities. All the participants from Vietnam, Thailand and Japan believed that their institutions' facilities became a factor that discouraged the integration of global competences into language lessons as they were aware that "*the Internet connection is neither stable enough nor available everywhere*" (VN02), "*there are very few rooms with computers at schools and many students do not have electronic devices at home*" (TL01), "*students cannot access the platform via their smartphones*" (JP02), and "*the platforms are too expensive for schools to afford so some important activities such as reflection, discussion, and essential reading cannot be implemented*" (VN09). However, the interviewees from New Zealand thought that they could easily get their students to approach the content of global competences because it was developed in their home country.

Notably, the Vietnamese, Thai, and Japanese EFL teachers suggested that if the governments had partnerships with each other so that "*more learning opportunities like this can be provided*" (JP04), "*the technology and learning content can be transformed*" (TL06), and "*more ICC-promoting events through global competences with scholarships and sponsorships can be organized, not only for teachers but also students in different levels*" (VN11).

5. Discussion and Implications

In response to the research questions, this section explores the impact of the CALL course on EFL teachers' perception of ICC and its connection with CALL courses. It underscores the significance of global competences and ICC course content in EFL teachers' professional development. Finally, it highlights the study's contributions and suggests implications for research and practice.

Findings revealed that the CALL course on Global Competences transformed EFL teachers' perception of ICC. Prior to the course, they had an incomplete understanding, equating ICC solely with cross-cultural interactions. This limitation

stemmed from their lack of comprehensive ICC education and real-world ICC experiences. However, the CALL course in global competences enabled these EFL teachers to engage in practical intercultural competence exercises with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Combining theoretical and practical approaches, the course allowed these EFL teachers to put theories into practice, altering their perception of ICC in real-life situations. Consequently, the CALL course had a positive impact on EFL teachers' ICC perception, a significant contribution not previously explored in the literature, which mainly focused on the effectiveness of CALL courses in language classrooms (Egbert et al., 2002; Kessler, 2006) and the application of CALL in language skills teaching (Kilickaya, 2009; Kilickaya and Seferoglu, 2013).

Another important finding is that the CALL course on global competences also reshaped EFL lecturers' perception of the connection between CALL courses and ICC. Initially, they believed that immersion in an English-speaking environment was essential for acquiring ICC. However, the Global Competence course provided them with hands-on ICC experience by enabling them to learn and practice intercultural communication with partners from different cultural backgrounds in a virtual multicultural learning environment. Regardless of their location, be it Vietnam, New Zealand, Thailand, or elsewhere, these EFL lecturers could communicate with people worldwide through computers and the internet. This finding aligns with Friedman's (2005) notion of a "flattened world" where communication transcends time and space constraints. It allows EFL lecturers to bridge the gap between "digital immigrants" and "digital natives" (coined by Prensky, 2001). In this era of information and technology, the development of CALL courses further levels the world, making it more accessible and interconnected.

The study also highlights improvements in EFL teachers' ICC knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness. They became more willing to engage and share about cultures, daily life, and professional issues within their group. These improvements were reflected in their increased confidence in communicating and negotiating cultural misunderstandings, as well as their acquisition of cultural knowledge throughout the course. Additionally, the teachers reported heightened intercultural awareness, indicating their ability to tolerate cultural differences and accept behaviors and beliefs different from their own, even if they didn't necessarily agree with them. The study also showed enhanced intercultural knowledge, as teachers gained insights into cultural identities, practices, languages, norms, cuisines, music, geography, and more from their international colleagues. The course effectively achieved its objectives of enhancing EFL teachers' global competences and ICC. The content of the course, focusing on global competences and ICC, is thus crucial for EFL teachers and significantly impacts their professional development. This finding reinforces the benefits of CALL courses in language learning and teaching, aligning with existing research (Al-Jarf, 2005; Lee, 2000; Nejati et al., 2018; Warschauer & Healey, 1998). However, it distinguishes itself by emphasizing the enhancement of EFL teachers' global competences and ICC (Salomon, 1991).

Finally, the study identified challenges in implementing global competences in language classes, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries like Vietnam and Thailand. These challenges stem from learners' language proficiency, rigid schedules, prescribed syllabi, and limited institutional resources. These obstacles may hinder EFL teachers from integrating ICC into their teaching practices. This finding aligns with previous studies on the application of ICC in English classrooms (Chao, 2015; Egbert et al., 2002; Son, 2014) and strongly supports the findings of a qualitative study by Nguyen (2019), wherein EFL tertiary teachers in Vietnam reported challenges in implementing CALL due to time and facility shortages. It's worth noting that this challenge may not be as prevalent among EFL teachers from English-speaking countries.

The present study has several implications for ICC enhancement in language education:

At macro level, it is advisable to promote partnerships between governments and ministries of education to increase the availability of ICC-focused CALL courses through scholarships and sponsorships. This would ensure that teachers and students from diverse backgrounds can access these valuable learning opportunities. Additionally, consider selecting course participants from both native and non-native English-speaking countries to create an engaging learning environment that fosters intercultural communication and language competencies.

At meso level, it is recommended to facilitate the adoption of ICC in language education, focus on improving institutional infrastructure. Enhance learning conditions by providing necessary equipment such as projectors, speakers, and computers with stable internet connectivity to support the seamless implementation of computer-assisted learning activities. Furthermore, offer technical training to teachers and students to boost their confidence and proficiency in utilizing CALL course platforms (as suggested by Nguyen et al., 2020).

At micro level, teachers, as the bridge to introduce global competencies into language education, should employ innovative approaches to enhance their students' ICC. While challenging, integrating intercultural communication into the curriculum is a noteworthy suggestion. Teachers should allocate teaching resources with ICC content to class activities. Leveraging technological advancements, consider implementing Skype-based projects to facilitate borderless language classes, allowing students to connect with the world, engage in cultural exchange, and develop 21st-century skills (as proposed by Nguyen et al., 2020). Lastly, teachers should establish strong connections with local and international teaching communities to promote the exchange and discussion of intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

6. Conclusion

The study has sketched a comprehensive picture of teachers' perspectives of a CALL course on ICC. The course successfully achieved its objectives of enhancing teachers' ICC in various aspects including knowledge, skills and attitudes. According to the results, such courses are crucial for language teachers' professional development. Moreover, the findings align with previous research on the impact of computer-assisted courses on ICC and language competency improvement. However, further investigation into the correlation between computer-assisted learning and ICC needs to involve more teachers and students to ensure generalizable outcomes. Ultimately, the results of this study can surely used as references for researchers and teachers regarding ICC in language education.

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