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Using e-learning to develop intercultural awareness in ELT: a critical evaluation in a Thai higher education setting

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Abstract

E-learning offers many new pedagogic opportunities as well as challenges but while it has grown in prominence, it is still far from a 'normalised' part of English Language Teaching (ELT). Similarly, the significance of the cultural dimension in ELT has also gained in importance. However, the use of English as a global lingua franca, going beyond the traditional 'native speaker' English countries, has resulted in a need for a more intercultural approach to ELT that recognises this role for English. This study investigated the development of an online course in intercultural communication and intercultural awareness for a group of English language learners in a setting in which English predominantly functions as a lingua franca. A 15 hour independent study online course was developed and delivered to 31 students and six teachers from a higher education institute in Thailand. The interactive online materials for the course are presented and discussed in this paper as well as student and teacher opinion. The findings demonstrate generally positive responses to both the course contents and the course delivery through e-learning. However, while most of the participants gave the course positive ratings, many still felt they would have preferred a face-to-face course. In relation to the course content the participants had very favourable attitudes and responses to learning about intercultural communication and global Englishes.

1

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of a research project which aimed to investigate how the intercultural dimension of ELT can be incorporated into an e-learning framework in an online independent study based course. The paper begins by giving a brief overview of the place and relevance of culture and intercultural communication in ELT. This is accompanied by a short summary of the role of e-learning, or as it is sometimes referred to CALL (computer aided language learning), in ELT and its relationship to developing intercultural communication skills and knowledge. The methodology used for the study is then explained including the setting and participants. This is followed by a presentation of the findings in terms of development of the course, participants' evaluation of the course and the influence the course had on the participants' approaches to intercultural communication through English. Materials from the course are also presented in the appendices. Finally, the implications of the study are presented in relation to e-learning, intercultural communication and global Englishes.

2

Theoretical background, contextualisation of the study and research questions

Culture, intercultural communication and ELT

While culture has always been part of language teaching (see Risager 2007 for an overview), it has gained in prominence over the last few decades as influential monographs and studies such as those by Byram (1997; 2008) and Kramsch (1993; 1998) demonstrate. These writers suggest that L2 use should be treated as intercultural communication with an emphasis on the importance of the cultural background of participants and context of communication. This involves examinations of the language learners' culture and its influence on communication, knowledge of other cultures, the ability to compare and contrast cultures, to predict areas of miscommunication, to mediate and negotiate between cultures and an awareness of the relative nature of cultural norms. This is combined with a more 'critical' understanding of languages and cultures in intercultural communication as existing in 'third places' (Kramsch, 1993), which are neither part of users' L1 or a target language.

However, the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) for global communication has problematised a view of the English language as tied to any specific context or culture. In 'expanding circle' (Kachru, 2005) contexts, where English is used as a contact language or lingua franca, such as the setting of this study (Thailand), 'native speakers' of English are outnumbered by 'non-native speakers' by as much as four to one (Crystal, 2008). For English used in such international contexts more fluid notions of language and culture need to be adopted (Canagarajah, 2007; Pennycook, 2007; Baker, 2009b). Many approaches to culture and language teaching have been based on the assumption that there is a defined relationship between the language being taught and a target culture with which it is associated, even if it is acknowledged that learners may not conform to the norms of that culture. However, given the multiplicity and fluidity of cultural contexts and participants in English communication today, learners could never be prepared with knowledge of all the 'cultures' they are likely to encounter through English. This has resulted in a call for ELT which reflects the reality of global Englishes and lingua franca communication and moves away for native English speaker model domination (Baker, 2009a; 2012 Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2004). The appropriateness of focusing on a single variety of English with a specified grammar, vocabulary and phonology in the face of the plurality of Englishes is becoming hard to sustain. Instead there is a need to negotiate the diversity of Englishes through developing the skills and knowledge associated with multilingual, intercultural communication such as accommodation, code-switching, negotiation and mediation. Intercultural awareness (ICA) (Baker, 2009a; 2012) is an attempt to specify what some of these skills and knowledge might be.

ICA builds on the earlier approaches to intercultural communicative competence (for example Byram, 1997) in viewing successful intercultural communication as a process which goes beyond vocabulary, grammar and phonology. However, whereas cultural awareness has tended to deal in cultures as definable entities, ICA recognises the intercultural nature of the socio-cultural context of lingua franca communication through English. This involves an understanding of cultures as fluid, hybrid and emergent in intercultural communication, and the relationship between a language and its cultural context and references as being created in each instance of communication, based both on pre-existing resources and those that emerge in-situ. ICA is defined as follows:

> *[Intercultural awareness] is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real-time communication. (Baker, 2012)*

The types of skills, knowledge and attitudes ICA entails moves from basic awareness of the role of cultural contexts in communication and meaning making in particular reference to one's own culture, to the ability to compare one's own and other cultures, to an understanding of the complexity of cultures and finally an awareness of the fluidity of cultural frames of reference in which the line between 'own' and 'other' cultures is broken down. This involves an ability to negotiate between different frames of reference and to move quickly beyond cultural generalisations to manage the emergent and dynamic cultural contexts of intercultural communication. How ICA is developed is still a matter of investigation but we may expect learners of English to have developed different degrees of ICA depending on their proficiency as intercultural communicators.

The types of skills, knowledge and attitudes[i] ICA entails moves from basic awareness of the role of cultural contexts in communication and meaning making in particular reference to one's own culture, to the ability to compare one's own and other cultures, to an understanding of the complexity of cultures and finally an awareness of the fluidity of cultural frames of reference in which the line between 'own' and 'other' cultures is broken down. This involves an ability to negotiate between different frames of reference and to move quickly beyond cultural generalisations to manage the emergent and dynamic cultural contexts of intercultural communication. How ICA is developed is still a matter of investigation but we may expect learners of English to have developed different degrees of ICA depending on their proficiency as intercultural communicators.

The relevance of ICA to classroom practice has been discussed with a number of suggestions made such as:

- exploring the complexity of local cultures which should lead to an awareness of the multi-voiced nature of cultural characterisations
- critically exploring images cultural representations in language learning materials
- exploring the traditional media and arts through English to critically evaluate the images of local and other cultures
- exploring IT/electronic media through English to investigate cultural representations
- using cultural informants including non-local English-speaking teachers and local English teachers with experience of intercultural communication and other cultures
- and engaging in face-to-face and online intercultural communication (Baker, 2008; 2011).

These offer opportunities to develop and put ICA into practice, and provide materials and experiences to reflect on in the classroom that can aid in the development of ICA. However, as of yet the discussion has been exploratory and further empirical investigation is needed. This is the first focus of this project.

New technologies, e-learning and intercultural communication

The use of new technologies and particularly the internet is one possible means of bringing a greater cultural dimension into the classroom in a manner that reflects the complexity of English use in global contexts. There has been much discussion concerning the potential for technology to aid in the process of language learning particularly through offering learners access to a wide range of resources (Chapelle, 2009). Furthermore, Laurillard (2002) highlights technology's and e-learning's role as integral parts of teaching and learning in higher education contexts. Despite this potential at the present time technology has not been integrated fully into language teaching within higher education and is far from being a 'normalised' part of the education process, fitting seamlessly with other learning and teaching techniques (Chambers and Bax, 2006; Chapelle, 2009). Both Laurillard (2002) and Chapelle (2009) have highlighted the need for more critical and qualitative studies of technology in language learning which go beyond development and deal in a substantive way with the learners' experiences and course evaluation.

Nevertheless, Laurillard's 'conversational framework' (2002: 87) has been influential in e-learning at the University of Southampton (www.elanguages.soton.ac.uk), and this influence is seen in the development of e-learning materials, which attempt to incorporate key elements of the framework such as 'discussion', 'interaction', 'adaptation' and 'reflection' into 'learning objects' (Watson, 2010). While there are many definitions of learning objects (LOs), the definition that will be followed here is 'activity-driven LO in which a pedagogic task or tasks forms the basis for the learning. A single asset or combination of assets support the task(s), and might include video, audio, graphic or textual assets' (Watson, 2010: 42). It is this model for learning object development and delivery, grounded in Laurillard's framework, which formed the basis of the materials used in the intercultural communication course in this project.

[i] Awareness in this definition, following previous definitions of cultural awareness, has been extended to include skills, knowledge and attitudes.

Of particular relevance to the aims of this research is the potential of these new technologies to enable intercultural exchanges through access to authentic texts from a range of cultures and perhaps most significantly allowing intercultural communication with members of other cultures through the internet. In practice the most popular applications have involved the notions of telecollaboration and tandem learning (for example Belz and Thorne, 2006; O'Dowd, 2007a;b) in which language learners in different settings and cultures communicate via the internet using tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat, discussion forums, and social networking sites 'in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange' (Belz, 2003:2). Most of these studies have focused on the development of intercultural competence through engaging in intercultural communication. However, they have not utilised e-learning to teach about the relationships between language and culture and the processes of intercultural communication, i.e. to develop linguistic and intercultural awareness and reflection. Other studies have to a lesser extent examined the possibilities of e-learning for such teaching (for example Furstenburg et al, 2001; Rogerson-Revell, 2003, Liaw, 2006) with generally positive results. As yet though this is a relatively under explored area and there are no studies explicitly examining the delivery of a course focused on intercultural communication, ICA and global Englishes or using the e-learning LO framework detailed previously. This forms the second focus of this project.

These two foci of the project: e-learning and intercultural communication through English can be formalised through the following research question and sub questions:

To what extent can an online course in intercultural communication influence English language learners' perception of intercultural communication and aid in the development of intercultural awareness in an expanding circle university setting?

- Is it possible to translate the conceptions of successful intercultural communication envisaged in intercultural awareness theory/research into teaching materials?
- Is an online course an effective manner of delivering such intercultural training?
- What are participants' attitudes towards and evaluations of such a course?

3

Research Methodology

The context chosen for the study was a higher education institute in Thailand for a number of reasons. Firstly, Thailand provides a setting typical of increasing numbers of expanding circle countries, where English is used in a wide variety of contexts both for communication with native speakers and non-native speakers (Wongsothorn et al, 2003). Although English does not have official status, it is the de facto second language, used as a lingua franca to communicate in the region (for example as the official language of ASEAN) and globally (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Therefore, Thailand is a site where we might expect the cultural references English is used to express to be dynamic and multifarious (Baker, 2009a; 2009b), making the relevance of intercultural awareness high. Furthermore, the use of new technologies is seen as going hand-in-hand with English in Thailand's development (Wongsothorn et al., 2003). E-learning is also recognised as an important part of education, in both education policy and practice (Suktrisal, 2004). Additionally, a higher education context was chosen due to the use of English as the lingua franca of academia (Jenkins, 2007), the increasing internationalisation of higher education and the growth in online e-learning in higher education.

The research participants were a group of volunteer English major students at a Thai university. These formed the most suitable participants since given their higher level of English and experiences of intercultural communication they were most likely to see the relevance of, be receptive to and engage with a course in intercultural communication. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the course could be adapted to other levels of proficiency. In total 31 participants undertook the course. Six of the participants were male and 25 female, which reflects the gender balance of their classes. They were aged between 20 and 23. The average length of time for which they had studied English was 14 years. The majority of participants reported using English outside of their class and using English online. The majority also reported using English with both non-native speakers of English (including other Thais) and with native speakers. All the participants took part in the research voluntarily and ethical protocol for the University of Southampton and Silpakorn University were followed. The principal researcher was from the University of Southampton but had previous experience of teaching and researching in this setting hence making access and gaining 'insider' perspectives easier. He was supported by two research partners from Silpakorn University.

The research participants were asked to take part in an online course in intercultural communication which involved around 15 hours of independent study over the course of a semester at their university, which is described in detail below. The initial data gathering phase involved a paper based questionnaire to collect background data about the participants including their experiences of and attitudes to learning English and importantly their attitudes to intercultural communication through English (appendix 2). This questionnaire was adapted from one employed successfully in a previous study (Baker, 2009a). During the course data was collected through tracking activity in the online course to monitor students' participation in the course. Data was also collected from the students' contributions to the discussion tasks and chat sessions. At the end of the course a questionnaire was given to the participants regarding their experiences of and evaluation of the course (appendix 3). The participants also completed a questionnaire containing the same questions as the initial questionnaire in relation to intercultural communication to determine if any changes in their attitudes had occurred. Both questionnaires were offered either electronically using Survey Gizmo or in paper-based form dependent on the participants' preferences. The participants were allowed to complete the final questionnaires anonymously to ensure they would not feel pressured to report overly positive responses. Although this meant it was not possible to compare the initial and final intercultural communication questionnaire on an individual level, it was still possible to do so at the group level; a compromise that was necessary to ensure anonymity.

Interviews were conducted with 17 of the participants at the end of the course. This was to gain further information about their experiences of the course and their attitudes towards e-learning, intercultural communication and global Englishes. Semi-structured interviews were used in which all interviewees received questions about the same topics but the wording and order of the questions was adapted to suit the 'flow' of each interview. The researcher was also free to ask follow-up questions depending on the participants' responses. This yielded qualitative data which was used to triangulate the quantitative data from the questionnaires.

Data was collected from six of the English teachers at Silpakorn University. Four of the teachers were Thai L1 speakers and two were English L1 speakers. Four were female and two male. Their teaching experience ranged for two years to over ten. They were given access to the course and asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating the course and reflecting on its relevance to their teaching (appendix 4). The format to this questionnaire was similar to that administered to the student participants and yielded predominantly quantitative data. Four of the teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview to gain further qualitative data on their impressions of the course, intercultural communication and global Englishes.

Data analysis of the questionnaires involved descriptive statistics including tabulations of responses, averages, percentages and mean scores as this was the most suitable approach for this number of participants (see Cohen et. al. 2007). Participants' responses in the interviews were coded for emergent themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and those that related to the research questions. While this inevitably involved a degree of quantitative analysis in identifying the most frequently arising themes, it also made use of 'critical incidents' in which particularly representative, articulate or interesting examples drawn from the participants own responses were used to support or offer counter examples to the researcher's identification of prevailing themes. The coding was carried out using QSR NVivo 8 software for qualitative data analysis.

4

Main findings

The course – Intercultural communication and intercultural awareness

Image 1: Homepage for course

The course aims were, as stated at the beginning of this paper, to use online learning objects for this group of English language learners to develop knowledge and understanding of the relationship between language and culture in intercultural communication, the role of English as the global lingua franca of intercultural communication and an understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with intercultural awareness and its role in intercultural communication through English. This was communicated to the learners through the course aims in the course overview (appendix 1).

The course was delivered through the Moodle VLE (Virtual learning environment). The course comprised of ten topics containing interactive online learning objects (appendix 1) based on key aspects of intercultural communication, ICA and global Englishes. There were also seven asynchronous discussion tasks related to the topics and three synchronous chat sessions. The ten topics are listed below.

1. Defining culture
2. Intercultural communication
3. Cultural stereotypes and generalisations in communication
4. The individual and culture
5. English as a global language
6. Exploring my own culture
7. Intercultural communication and the internet
8. Comparing cultures: Politeness
9. Globalisation and transcultural global flows
10. Intercultural Awareness

These topics covered key areas of intercultural communication such as the relationship between culture and language, what intercultural communication studies have brought to our understanding of this relationship and in particular the hybrid and fluid nature of culture and language in intercultural communication. Students were asked to explore their own culture in more detail to gain a greater awareness of the complexities of culture and language in a setting familiar to them. Alongside this students reflected on their own personal relationship to their culture and the role this had in the way they constructed their identities. They were asked to consider the negative impact of stereotyping on intercultural communication but also the necessity of generalisations and how to approach these in a manner that did not deny the complexity of others. Students were also introduced to the notions of global Englishes including varieties of world Englishes such as Indian English, Nigerian English and Hong Kong English as well as English as a lingua franca. Other issues that were dealt with on the course included the growing role of online intercultural communication, the use of English to create and transmit hybrid cultural artefacts and practices in 'transcultural flows' and the relationship between Englishes and globalisation. Finally, the students were asked to explore the role of the types of skills, knowledge and attitudes envisaged in intercultural awareness in intercultural communication for them.

The students were allowed around 15 weeks to complete the ten topics. They were not expected to do the tasks each week as a degree of flexibility was needed to allow the students time for exams, course work deadlines and holidays; however, it was recommend that they followed the order of the syllabus. They were asked to contribute to five of the discussion forums and the chat sessions were optional.[ii] In total it was expected that the course would take around 15 hours.

In relation to pedagogy the course was primarily designed for independent study with each of the topics containing a learning activity or object (LO) which the students completed by themselves. These LOs included reading tasks, podcasts, reflective activities, note taking and comprehension checks which were scaffolded through contextualisation, interactive activities and extensive written reports (see appendix 1). An online glossary of key terminology was also provided. Support was provided from an online tutor who the students could contact through an online course forum and e-mail. Staff at Silpakorn University also provided support and the option of talking to someone face-to-face. The interactive elements of the course were further complemented by the discussion forum where students could discuss their ideas with other students and with the course tutor. The students also had the option of taking part in three synchronous one hour chat sessions. This involved a discussion with the tutor, other students and in the case of the final session with three students from the University of Southampton who were studying intercultural communication. Both the discussion forum and the chat sessions provided an opportunity for students to extend their understanding of key ideas on the course through sharing ideas with both the tutor and other students.

[ii] Students were also asked to complete a learning diary, however only a few of the participants seemed willing to do this, so this was abandoned.

Course participation

Student No.	Topics contributed to	Learning objects attempted	Discussion	Chat
1	10	10	11	2
2	10	10	9	-
3	10	10	7	-
4	10	10	3	-
5	10	10	1	-
6	10	10	-	-
7	9	9	8	-
8	9	5	8	-
9	9	4	7	3
10	8	8	8	2
11	7	6	6	-
12	7	7	4	-
13	6	6	3	1
14	6	4	3	-
15	5	5	2	1
16	5	5	1	-
17	5	4	1	-
18	4	1	6	1
19	4	3	2	
20	4	4	1	-
21	4	4	1	-
22	3	3	3	-
23	3	3	3	-
24	3	1	3	1
25	3	3	2	-
26	3	3	2	-
27	3	2	2	-
28	3	3	1	-
29	3	3	-	-
30	2	1	2	2
31	2	-	2	1
Average	**6**	**5**	**4**	**2**

Table 1: Course participation

Of the 31 participants Table 1 shows that they undertook an average of six of the ten topics either through the LOs, the discussion forum or in many cases both. For compulsory assessed courses students in this institution were expected to attend 80 per cent of classes, so an average of 60 per cent for an optional independent learning course is quite a high participation rate. There was a lot of variation within this though, with six of the students contributing to all the topics and ten of the students contributing to three or less of the topics. All of the students, except one, undertook at least one of the LOs, and all of the students, except two, contributed to the discussion forums. Again there was variation with some students preferring to undertake the independent LOs and others preferring the discussion forum. Only nine of the students contributed to the chat sessions. The low rate of participation for the chat sessions is not surprising as they were offered as an optional activity which was not integral to the course. Many of the students explained in the interviews that the times of the chat sessions had not been convenient for them. Similarly many of the students who made minimal contributions to the course reported in the interviews that they had not had enough time during the semester to adequately participate in the course. Although a case might be made for removing those students with minimal participation in the course from the research, it was felt that it was important to gain the impressions and opinions of those students to investigate why they had not participated.

Students' course evaluation

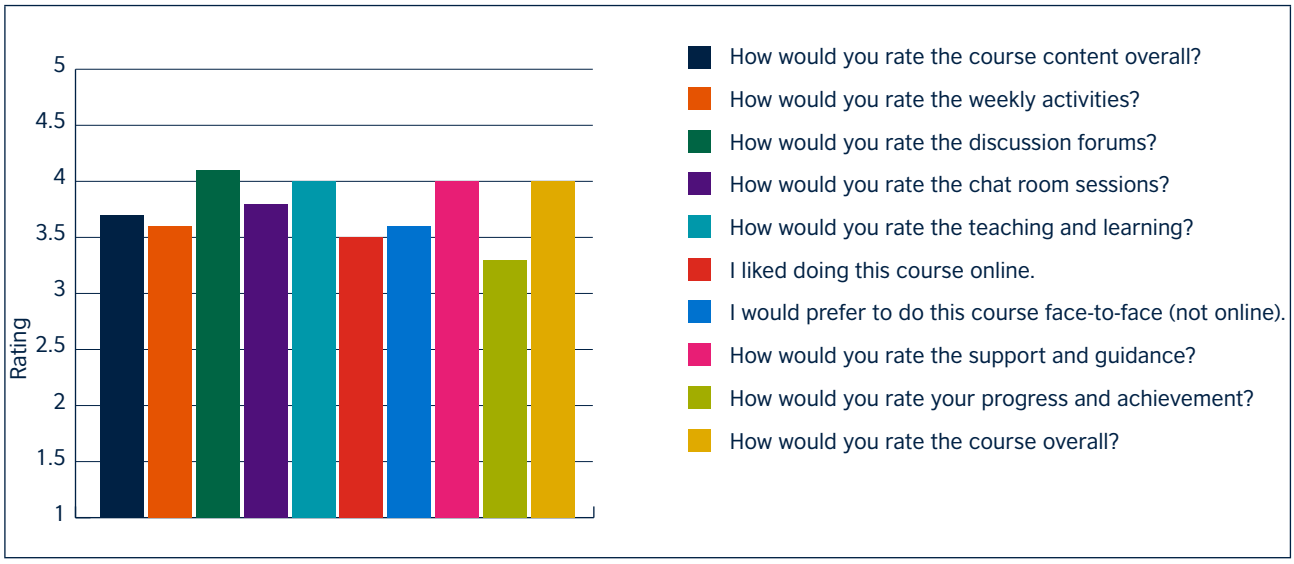


Table 2: Students' course evaluation

The student evaluations for the course are shown in Table 2 with a score of five being 'excellent' and one 'awful'. 22 of the students completed the evaluation. As can be seen overall the students' evaluation was positive. All of the categories received an average rating of better than three (neutral) with many around four (good). Those areas which were rated most highly were the discussion forum, the teaching and learning, which included explanations, course organisation and opportunities for student contribution, the support and guidance and the course overall. The lowest rating was for progress and achievement which may represent modesty on the part of the students and is usually the area which is rated lowest on similar questionnaires used for other online courses in e-languages. It may seem contradictory that students gave similar ratings to 'I like doing this course online' and 'I would rather do this course face-to-face'. Yet, as the interviews revealed, many students reporting that they enjoyed the course online but offered a choice between doing it online or face-to-face they would choose face-to-face.

Alongside the quantitative data presented in Table 2 qualitative data was collected through the interviews. This data offered an explanation of some of the evaluations given in Table 2 as well as providing a more complex and richer picture of some of the participants' attitudes towards the course. A number of salient themes emerged from coding of the data and these are presented and discussed here, together with representative examples. In terms of positive attitudes to studying online many of the students reported enjoying the convenience and the flexibility the medium offered. They liked that they could access the course from anywhere with internet access, not only the university, and that they could choose their own time to study and so manage their time themselves.

Extract 1[iii]

Pat[iv]*: I like that the course online is a course that I can come to learn anytime I like... so I can manage time to learn anytime I like*

However, many of the students also reported a negative side to this in that it was harder to motivate themselves.

Extract 2

Pin: I don't have self control to do the course online and I prefer doing in the class like @ face to face and teacher er will score me and will urge me to @ to do it . where in here . I I have to . control myself and tell myself to do it @ and sometime there there another temptation

Furthermore, as one student explained, online courses can be seen as convenient when time is an issue but face to face courses may be preferable if there is more time.

Extract 3

Nit: this year I have a lot of busy time (?) online course is better for us but if we have time I prefer the course in- face to face with teacher

A number of the students also commented on their positive attitudes to online communication in that they felt that online discussions were preferable to classroom discussions and that online communication was easier than face to face.

Extract 4

At: if we are talking face to face this sometimes we might feel like a little bit more nervous or cannot be able to express our feeling directly or truthfully I mean when we doing something online we don't know whoever in the other side of the computer and we can do things more freely

However, not surprisingly, other students had more negative attitudes towards communicating online such as the lack of spontaneity, the restrictiveness of the medium of communication (typing) and also worries about the grammatically of what they wrote.

Extract 5

Nun: I prefer er face to face (to) online because er you can see how they express you can see their face and how they feel you know instead of just you know typing and replying comments... I think it's sometimes difficult...sometimes I don't know how to explain or you know . or say it or write it or maybe part of it because I am kinda like aware that I would make mistake on grammar

In relation to the teacher support online there were very few positive or negative comments. However, as with online communication in general some of the students appeared dissatisfied with the lack of immediate response.

[iii] **Transcription conventions:**

Punctuation: Capital letters are used for pronoun 'I' and proper names. Apostrophes are used for abbreviations e.g. don't, haven't. No other punctuation is used.

(xxx) - uncertain that word is correctly transcribed

@ -laughter

. - pause (un-timed)

- - indicates unfinished word or sound

. . . - indicates a section of dialogue not transcribed

[iv] Pseudonyms are used throughout

Extract 6
Pat: when I wonder about something in jargon in definition or something I can ask ask the teacher in the class immediately but when if we learn in the course online we can can't do it we must wait

Only one of the students seemed to have had technical problems with the course but some of the students asked for more sophisticated technical content and in particular video.

An area of the course that many of the students expressed particularly positive attitudes towards was the discussion forum. Students felt that this was a very good way to exchange opinions and also to learn new things both from the tutors and from other students.

Extract 7
Pat: we will have different ideas about many things so I think discussion is the great way to exchange this idea and make make make us under- understand each other

Pin: sometimes I don't really stand- understand it until I go to the discussion room... yeah . and see other people talk and then I will much understand

There were almost no negative comments in relation to the discussion forum apart from the already expressed concerns over the difficulty of online communication.

In relation to the learning objects (LOs) or weekly activities there were far fewer comments. Most of the comments were related to the actual content of the materials and will be discussed in relation to intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and global Englishes. Regarding the chat sessions, as already commented on, many of the students were not able to attend at the times offered but the few comments that were given related to the positive aspects of having synchronous communication and that they were 'real' examples of intercultural communication.

Extract 8
Or: I like the chat se- session better because um we can er have a real intercultural communication . and I feel like we can share the opinions face to face more than er just answer in the er discussion group

Teachers' course evaluation

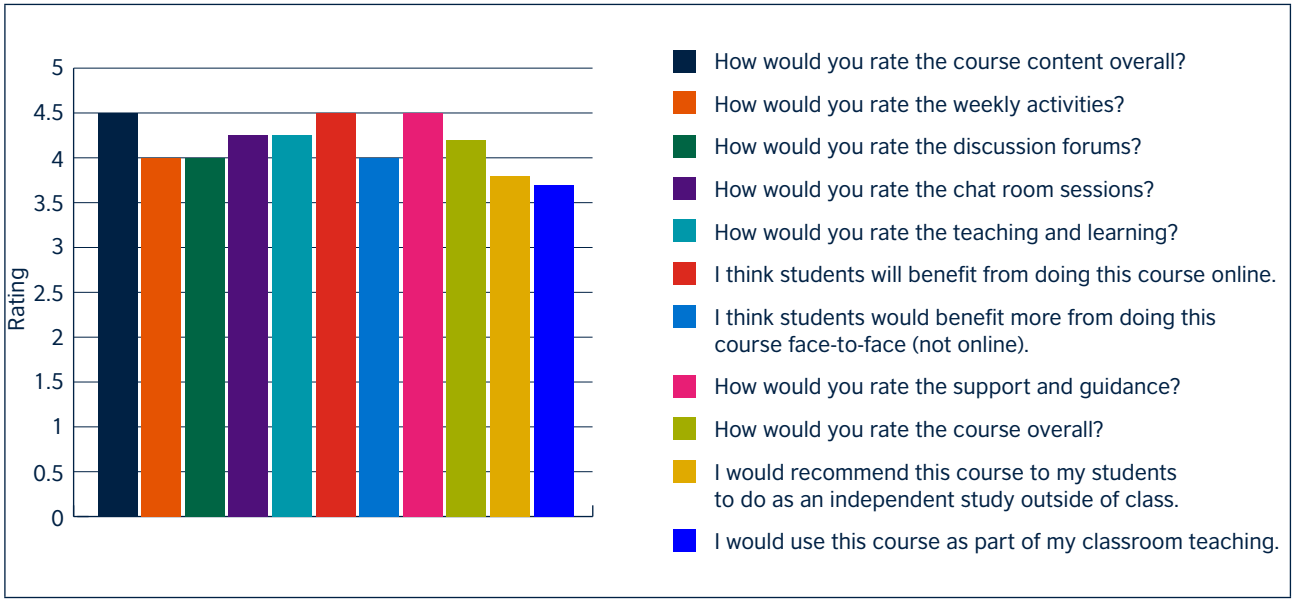


Table 3: Teachers' course evaluation

As with the students' evaluation the teachers were asked to rate aspects of the course. In total six teachers completed the evaluation. However, two of the teachers only completed the final three questions. As their responses were quite different to the other teachers in being generally negative about the course it was felt important to include their data. Similar to the students' responses the teachers' attitudes towards the course appear positive but are generally slightly higher than the students with most scoring four (good) or above. In particular the teachers gave higher ratings to the course being online as opposed to face to face. The only questions which were rated below 4 were the final two related to using the course for independent study and for classroom teaching. This can be explained by the range of the results with most of the teachers rating this very highly but two of the teachers giving more negative or neutral responses.

These responses were explained in detail by the teachers both through the interviews but also by written responses to open ended questions in the teachers' questionnaire. As with the students, the teachers felt that an online course was convenient. They also felt that online learning gave students a chance to learn in different ways through independent activities and again the discussion forum was frequently commented on positively.

Extract 9
Niti: it will be useful... I've looked at the what the discussion board I think that's where they really exchanged ideas about about the topics and in that way they they learn by sharing experience that's nothing like lecturing and you know things that you really have to read and memorise and highlight for example it's a it's a completely different way um from doing it in in college so I think I think yes they learn but it's just a different way and they they they just have to realise that you know by discussing by um doing activities that's that's another way of learning

Another important point raised by some of the teachers was that the course gave different students a chance to participate.

Extract 10
Niti: the fact that you don't have to go to the lecturing room there are some students who are quite shy to speak in class so this this is good like when they do a discussion um for example if I am too shy to speak up in class or suggest my opinion I can you know have my time to think and rephrasing my sentence then put it there so that I can share with other people

Overall, many of the teachers thought the course would make a useful addition to their teaching.

Extract 11
T1[v]: The course looks friendly and more casual and it is different from academic/lecture stuff that the students have to do in class. So it gives students different feelings and atmosphere. It's a great supplement. Much better than homework from textbooks, exercises or reports

However, it was interesting that the two native English speaking, older teachers were less positive and felt they were unlikely to use the materials in their teaching.

Extract 12
T5: It is always a good thing for the students to have access to knowledge in any form, but this is so far removed from my teaching methodology that I cannot see that it would become part of my teaching.

T6: Doing any course outside class requires self-discipline and commitment. Because of the lack of face-to-face interaction the students may quickly become bored with the topic.

Summary and discussion of course development and evaluation

In relation to the first part of the research questions, 'Is it possible to translate the conceptions of successful intercultural communication envisaged in intercultural awareness theory/research into teaching materials?' the development of the materials for this course illustrate one possible approach to this. The materials covered a range of topics specifically related to ICA such as exploring the complexity of languages and cultures, making comparisons between cultures, but also recognising the limitations of such comparisons, and viewing communication and culture in intercultural communication as hybrid and emergent. In particular this was explored in relation to communicating through English since this was the participants' subject of study. This resulted in an emphasis on English used as a global lingua franca to communicate across a variety of cultures rather than on 'native speaker' English and cultures.

Much of the third part of the research questions, 'what are participants' attitudes towards and evaluations of such a course?' is answered through the course evaluation. Firstly, both groups generally evaluated the course positively, although the teachers more so than the students, and with caveats. Almost all of the participants approved of the flexibility and the convenience of being able to study the course anywhere and at any time. There appeared to be few issues with the technology, although some of the students would rather have had more multimedia content. In its present form the course was predominantly text based and it may be that a future version of the course would benefit from more podcasts and synchronous voice or video communication. Nevertheless, delivering a course online was also seen as opening up different mediums of communication, by both students and teachers, which might favour students who do not always contribute well in classroom situations and also helps all students with their written communication skills.

One aspect of the course that seemed to be viewed particularly positively was the discussion forum. Both the students and the teachers felt that the discussion forum acted as a good medium for exchanging and learning new ideas from tutors and other students. It is therefore suggested, following influential theories of e-learning such as Salmon (2004), that such discussion forums, which provide students with an opportunity to reflect on and further explore what they learn in other parts of the course, are an integral part of such an online course. The other course materials seemed to have also been generally positively viewed, however, the chat sessions had not been at a convenient time for many of the students and were less successful.

Although the students appeared to enjoy the course many felt that they would rather have

[v] These comments were submitted anonymously as part of the teachers' evaluation form.

studied the course face-to-face if they had the option. Some of the most frequent reasons for this were that they preferred the immediacy of face-to-face communication and also wanted instant teacher response and support. In contrast most of the teachers viewed the online course as an interesting alternative method of teaching and learning that made for good independent study. These different opinions may be explained by the teachers feeling that this medium encouraged more independent students, whereas the students did not feel as confident about studying independently, but this would need further investigation. Finally, many of the participants mentioned that motivation was key to such a flexible independent programme of study and that without sufficient discipline students were unlikely to participate in or get much out of the course.

Intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and global Englishes

While the previous section of results dealt with the participants' attitudes to the online course and e-learning, this section will focus on the content of the course, although inevitably there is a degree of overlap between the two areas. Data is presented and discussed from the two intercultural communication questionnaires. The first questionnaire was completed by 27 participants and the final by 17 participants. This is supported by qualitative data from the 17 interviews on related themes.

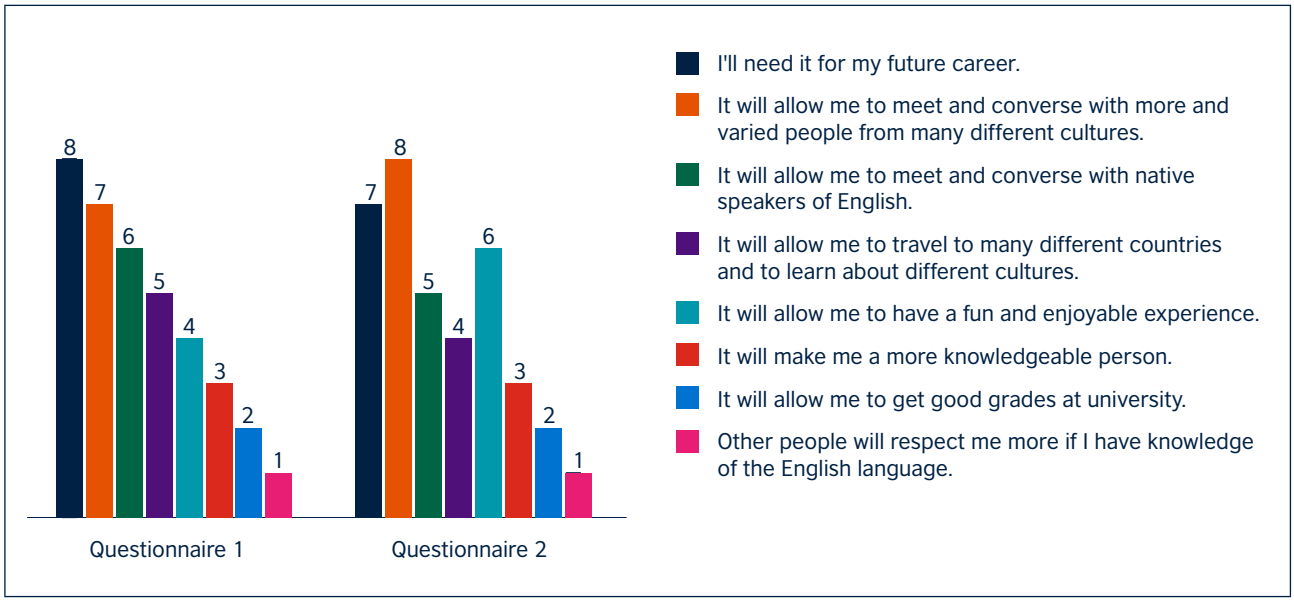


Table 4: Ranking reasons for studying English[vi]

[vi] There was one section before this in the questionnaire which asked students which variety of English they wanted to learn. However, the questions and the results are very similar to the results of attitudes to different types of English (Table 7) and so space restrictions have meant this has been omitted.

Background data on the participants' reasons for studying English illustrated in Table 4 show that using English for careers and communicating with people from many different cultures ranked highly with the use of English with native speakers below this (eight is the highest rank and one the lowest). The follow-up questionnaire (2) results shows that using English to communicate with different people from different cultures moves up to the first reason (perhaps not surprisingly given the focus of the course) and that English use with native speakers is ranked a place lower, suggesting that this is not high in the students' motivation.

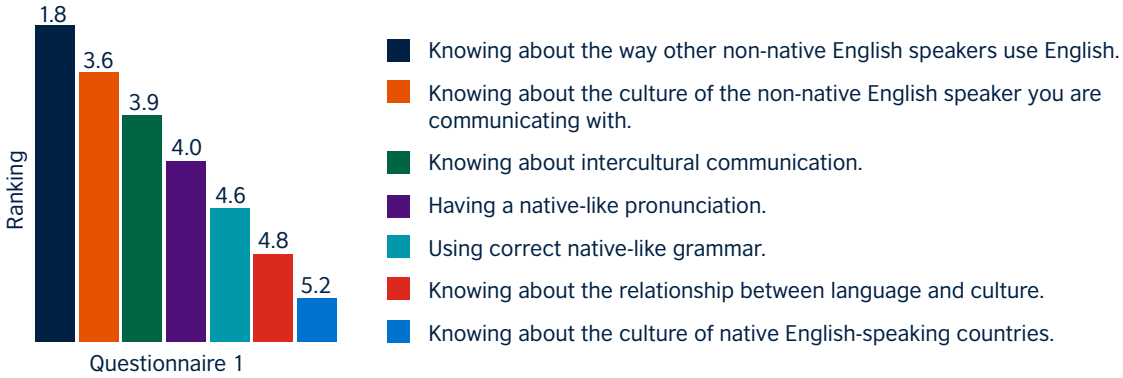


Table 5: Ranking factors that help in intercultural communication through English initial questionnaire

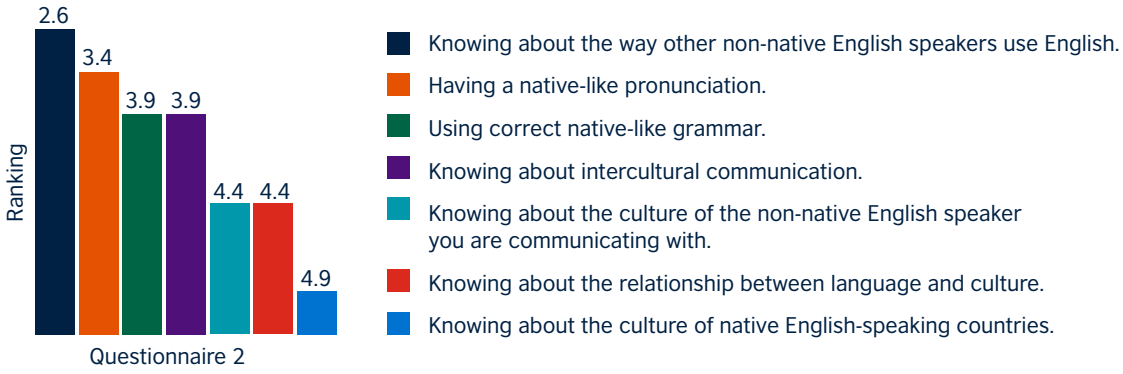
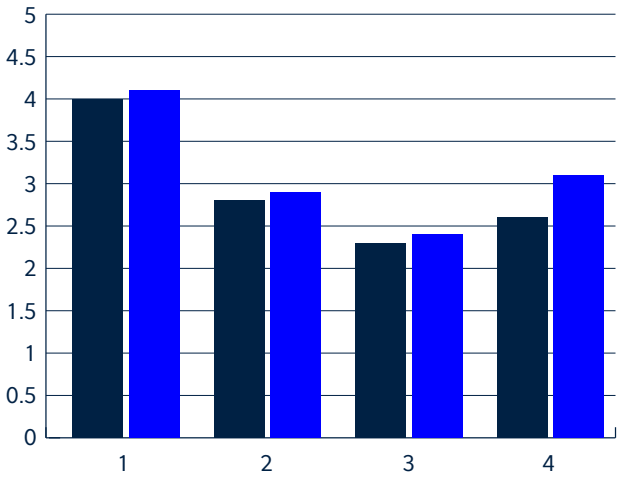


Table 6: Ranking factors that help in intercultural communication through English final questionnaire

Tables 5 and 6 are important in illustrating participants' responses to statements concerning factors that might help in successful intercultural communication between interlocutors who do not use English as a first language. The results show the rankings with a lower mean score (shown at the top of each bar) representing a higher level of importance (1 = most important – 6 = least important). The results between the initial and final questionnaire are quite similar but there are a number of differences that are worth discussing. In terms of similarities in both questionnaires the respondents rated knowledge of how other non-native speakers of English use English as the most important factor. It should also be noted

that knowledge of native speaker like grammar and knowledge of native speaker cultures was rated quite low, again suggesting that native speaker like English and communicative norms are not of particular relevance or interest to these participants.

However, there is also some ambiguity here in that native like pronunciation was rated as an important factor in the final questionnaire. While this may be an anomaly, Table 7 suggests that this is a feature of the participants' attitudes and one that changes little over the course. Participants generally rated English spoken in the traditional native speaker countries of the US, UK and Australia as most standard. There was general disagreement that English spoken in the 'expanding circle' countries, where it does not have an official status, was standard.



1. Standard English is spoken by the native speaking countries (e.g UK, the United States, Australia).
2. Standard English is spoken by those countries colonised by native English speaking countries (e.g. Singapore, India, Hong Kong).
3. Standard English is spoken by any country that uses English (e.g. Thailand, Mexico, China).
4. There is no Standard English.

Table 7: Attitudes towards different types of Englishes

This somewhat contradicts the earlier responses (table 4) which suggested that speaking English to native speakers was not high on the participants list of reasons for learning English. Such ambivalent attitudes towards different varieties of English are further reinforced by the interview data. Extract 13 illustrates what appears to be a general awareness among the students that English is not 'owned' by the original native speakers of the language and that there are a range of Englishes, but at the same time extract 14 suggests 'native English' is viewed as most prestigious even when used with other 'non-native speakers'.

Extract 13

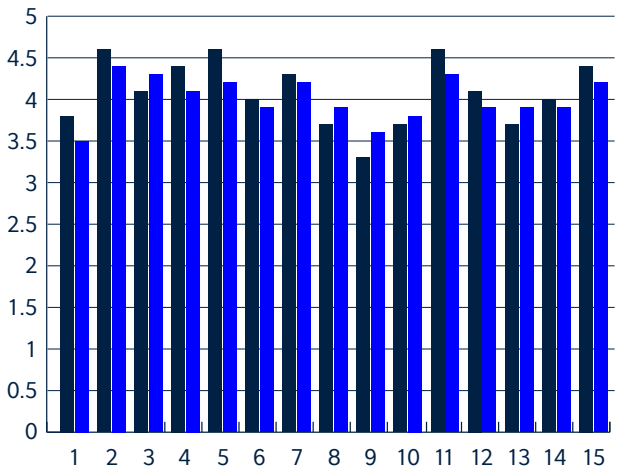
Tima: Nowadays English becomes like the official language in many countries not only in the UK or the US and . each country have their own culture so even though they are using English they have some things that something that are different from in the US or in the UK so if if we got to learn all of them I think we will. I think we it can make us like open up our mind like better

Tip: Nowadays English is truly global language and people in many nationalities in the world use English to communicate and I think it's interesting . to to learn about English much more than in English in the UK or in the United States

Extract 14

Nun: Singapore they have their own English and something I think it is ok it's part of the way they communicate yeah ... I don't feel bad about them but sometime it just not quite nice or beautiful as beautiful as err the native speaker

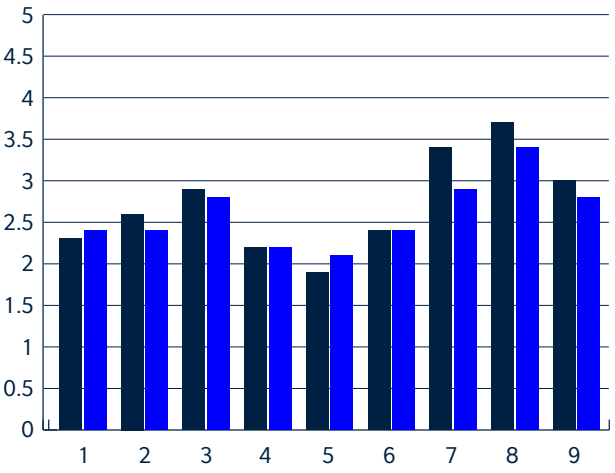
Tima: English is from basically from the UK right and then to the US so are they are like the what to say the origins of English so if we basically talk about English in Asian countries then it might give a weird feeling to me



1. Languages cannot be translated word-for-word.
2. The tone of a speaker's voice (the intonation pattern) carries meaning and is different in different languages.
3. Each language-culture use gestures and body movements (body language), which convey meaning.
4. All cultures have taboo (subjects which should not be discussed) topics.
5. It is important not to judge people from other cultures by the standards of my own culture.
6. To be able to communicate with someone in a foreign language you have to understand their culture.
7. Learning culture is part of learning a foreign language.
8. It is important to understand my own culture when learning a foreign language.
9. Learning a foreign language means learning new kinds of behaviour.
10. Learning a foreign language means learning new beliefs and values.
11. Culture and language are linked.
12. Specific languages, cultures and countries are always linked (e.g. the English language, English culture and England).
13. Languages can be linked to many different cultures (e.g. the English language can be used to express the cultures and countries in which it is used such as India, Singapore, Thailand).
14. Individuals are members of many different groups including their cultural group.
15. Cultures may be defined and understood differently by different groups and individuals.

Table 8: Attitudes towards intercultural communication

The participants were asked to rate their agreement with a range of statements related to features of intercultural communication (the full statements can be seen in appendix 2). As table 8 shows the results were very similar between the two questionnaires with the mean score for the first questionnaire being 4.1 and for the final 4.0. This represents agreement with the statements with no statement dropping below a neutral rating (3). There was strong agreement that languages and cultures were linked and that learning about culture was part of language learning. There was also strong agreement that cultures can be interpreted differently by different individuals and that others should not be judged by the supposed standards of one's own culture. Finally participants rated a number of questions comparing cultures, table 9. Here the responses were largely neutral or negative which suggested the participants had a good sense of the relativity of cultures and that such comparisons were not possible or were negative.



Ouestionnaire 1

Ouestionnaire 2

1. Thai films are better than English language films.
2. Thai music is better than English language music.
3. Thai literature is better than English language literature.
4. Thai education is better than English speaking countries' education.
5. Thai technology is better than English speaking countries' technology.
6. Thai businesses are better than English speaking countries' businesses.
7. Thai family structures are better than English speaking countries' family structures.
8. Thai food is better than English speaking countries' food.
9. Thai lifestyles are better than English speaking countries' lifestyles.

Table 9: Attitudes towards own and other cultures

While the questionnaire does not suggest a change in attitudes over the course, the participants reported having a greater awareness of a number of aspects of intercultural communication as a result of the course in the interviews. In particular many students discussed having a greater awareness of the danger of stereotyping others and being 'open minded' in their approach to communicating with others.

Extract 15

More: I have never heard of er intercultural awareness ... lead me to think about the stereotype of Thailand and the generalisation of cultures in the world and about the . about . um about our my country our Thai culture

Gai: I learn that people should be open minded when they communicate to each other because we will raise from um different background and it's not like people from certain country will be the same because um family background are not the same they don't go to the same school so um we must be really open when we communicate with people even people in my own er country er we use the Thai language but everybody's different

Furthermore, in the interviews the participants frequently discussed how the course had given them a greater awareness of their own culture and the ability to compare it with other cultures, but in a way that avoided simplistic or stereotypical comparisons (see also extract 15).

Extract 16

Chit: I think I can know the different perceptions of culture include in Thailand culture so you can see that there are many different things about peoples thoughts towards their cultures of our culture or foreign culture... your course made us to clarify about our culture first...about the language and about the culture that is something that concerned together...and we can compare our culture with others

Summary and discussion of intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and global Englishes

The data above addresses the second part of the research question 'is an online course an effective manner of delivering such intercultural training?' and in combination with the course evaluation the third research question 'What are participants' attitudes towards and evaluations of such a course?' As with the course evaluation the majority of participants revealed positive attitudes towards course materials that dealt with intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and intercultural communication. This suggests that the learning objects in the weekly activities, which were the primary means of delivering the contents of the course, were effective. Overall participants seemed to feel that the cultural dimension to language learning and use were important and formed a relevant part of their language learning experiences. They also seemed familiar with and favourable towards many of the concepts related to global Englishes. This was demonstrated in both the questionnaire responses and interview data.

The questionnaire responses also revealed that many of these positive attitudes to intercultural communication and global Englishes existed prior to the course. As the participants are reasonably advanced English language learners and almost all of them have experience of intercultural communication this is perhaps not surprising. This may also offer an explanation as to why there does not seem to be a great change in the participants' attitudes between the pre and post course questionnaire. Nonetheless, the interviews with the participants suggested that there were changes to their approaches or understanding of intercultural communication which had occurred as a result of the course. In particular many of the participants reported having a more complex knowledge of their own culture, a better understanding of stereotyping and an ability to compare between cultures and explain their own culture in a less stereotyped way. However, there appears to be little evidence in the participants' interviews or in their contributions to the course of knowledge or use of the elements of ICA (intercultural awareness) which relate to hybrid and fluid communicative practices which are not related to any particular culture. In the data in this study the focus seems to be more on the level of ICA in which the participants explored the complexity of different cultural characterisation, but which still distinguished between an 'our culture' and 'other culture'. However, based on previous research (Baker, 2009a) it may be that longer ethnographic studies are needed to reveal such complex communicative practices and attitudes towards them.

In specific relation to global Englishes the participants consistently revealed that they viewed English as a global language that they would, or already did, use in a variety of contexts with a range of users. Many of the participants already seemed to be familiar with and accepting of the notion of World Englishes and a variety of forms of Englishes. In keeping with many approaches in intercultural communication the participants expressed the view that communicating effectively was more important than native speaker like language. While this did to an extent suggest that native speaker language norms were less influential in this context, the pull of such standardising forces was still apparent. A number of the participants appeared to have conflicting attitudes to English on the one hand accepting the plurality of Englishes but on the other feeling that native speaker English was preferable in some way either in its 'correctness', 'comprehensibility' or as the original 'source' of the language. Such conflicting attitudes towards English have been reported in other studies related to lingua franca uses of English (see for example Jenkins, 2007), and might also be expected given the continuing influence of native speaker English in the teacher materials and examinations these students use.

5

Implications

Before detailing the implications of this research a number of limitations should be addressed. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that the small number of participants and the single setting make generalisations to other contexts difficult. Furthermore, the uniqueness of each teaching context means that it is unlikely that all of the findings here will be relevant to other contexts. However, through providing a range of data covering a wide variety of features of this course it is hoped that there will be aspects of the findings which will be informative to other interested researchers and teachers. Nonetheless, future studies with multilingual groups, as opposed to the monolingual group studied here, may produce different results. Moreover, the relative shortness of the course and of the data collection limits the findings. Second language learning and intercultural communication comprise a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes which are developed over a long period of time. It should also be recognised that the format of the course as an optional, non-assessed, independent study course will impact on the manner in which the learners engaged with it. A compulsory and/or assessed course would likely facilitate a different approach and different learning outcomes. Other limitations include the subjectivity of the researcher and the data, although a range of data sources has been utilised to counter balance the subjectivity of the data. Finally, it must be acknowledged that the data from the participants comes from meta-discussions of intercultural communication rather than examples of the participants actually engaged in intercultural communication. This is of course a limitation of much pedagogic research in ELT which seldom deals with data from participants' communication outside the classroom.

Despite these limitations there are a number of implications which can be drawn from this investigation. Firstly this project demonstrated one approach to building knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication through e-learning which adds to previous studies of different approaches in this area (for example O'Dowd, 2007b). The relative ease through which online learning can link students and teachers around the world and connect with cultural representations of many different cultures on the internet makes e-learning an excellent medium for intercultural communication studies. Furthermore, the positive attitudes towards the course by both students and teachers showed that, in this context, e-learning is an appropriate and relevant part of language learning. However, there was a degree of ambivalence towards the course on the part of some of the students, with many reporting that given the choice they would still prefer a face-to-face course. This suggests that e-learning is still not 'normalised' (Chambers and Bax, 2006) in this setting and that further exploration would be needed to establish to what extent students and teachers would be willing to accept e-learning as part of their everyday learning and teaching experiences. Nevertheless, it is significant that the younger teachers had very positive attitudes towards e-learning.

Another advantage to e-learning emerging from this study is that it opens up new mediums of communication expanding on those traditionally associated with classroom teaching. Discussion forums in particular (as noted by Salmon, 2004) provide an interactive, constructivist learning medium which may also benefit students with different learning and communicative styles who are less able to express themselves in classroom settings. Furthermore, the increased independence may also be more suited to some students' learning styles; however, as many of the participants noted, a high degree of motivation is needed to complete such a flexible course. Future studies might also want to consider including more mediums of communication such as 'real time' synchronous voice and video communication which may benefit students with a further range of learning and communication styles.

As the course was not assessed it was difficult to establish the extent to which the course had resulted in the participants gaining in competence in intercultural communication through English. Moreover, as the participants began with very positive attitudes towards intercultural communication it was also difficult to establish, from the questionnaires at least, if there had been a change in attitudes as a result of the course. However, the interview data and the data from the students' postings in the discussion forums suggest that the participants had gained a further understanding of intercultural communication as a result of the course. Perhaps the most important implication of the research, as regards intercultural communication, is that the participants began with such positive attitudes. This would suggest that due to the relevance the participants attached to knowledge of and training in intercultural communication this should be a more prominent feature of ELT.

Similarly the participants demonstrated a high degree of awareness of global Englishes and generally positive attitudes towards different varieties of English both before and after the course. Again this made it difficult to establish the influence the course had. Nevertheless, as with intercultural communication, the key implication of this is that global Englishes are clearly of relevance and should be a more significant part of ELT. This would bring into question the continuing focus on native speaker English and inner circle cultures in the majority of ELT pedagogy (Canagarajah, 2005; Jenkins, 2007). Given the extent to which inner circle communicative norms feature in ELT, it is not surprising that many of the participants still rated this as of higher prestige than other varieties of English. It is interesting to speculate if English language learners would still hold 'native' English in such high esteem, if they were exposed to the plurality of global Englishes to the same extent in pedagogy.

Conclusion

In answer to the stated aims of this research; to investigate if e-learning was an effective medium for teaching intercultural communication and awareness, the course was well received by both students and teachers and the students discussed a number of changes in their understanding of intercultural communication that had occurred as a result of the course. However, there are caveats to these positive responses. Firstly, many of the students still felt that a face-to-face course would be preferable suggesting that the role of e-learning and its relationship to classroom teaching in intercultural communication education needs further investigation. It was also difficult to judge the precise influence the course had on the participants' attitudes to intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and global Englishes, as they had positive attitudes before the course began and there was no course assessment. Nevertheless, it was clear from the participants' responses that these are areas of relevance to their English language learning. Considering the current use of English as the foremost global lingua franca for intercultural communication, this is perhaps not surprising. However, the extent to which this situation has been recognised in ELT pedagogy is questionable, particularly with its continued focus on native speaker communicative norms. For ELT to be of most relevance to users of English it needs to incorporate knowledge of global Englishes and intercultural communication education and this e-learning course offers one example of how this can be delivered.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Intercultural communication and intercultural awareness course

Course overview and outline

Course aims

This course aims to provide an introduction to intercultural communication through English and the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to successfully do this:

- By the end of the course you have an understanding of the relationship between language and culture in intercultural communication.
- The role of English as the global lingua franca of intercultural communication.
- An understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with intercultural awareness and its role in intercultural communication through English.

Please remember that this course is not a test of your English, so do not worry about making mistakes. The most important thing is to communicate and take part in the course.

Course structure and timetable

Learning in this course will take place online through Language House which is the name given to the University of Southampton's virtual learning environment.

You have **10 weekly topics** to cover which contain interactive activities for you to complete with responses. The weekly topics should take between 30 minutes to one hour to complete. *

You also have a **discussion forum** where you can share your ideas about the topics you have completed with other students on this course and with your tutor. There will also be special guest appearances from students at the University of Southampton. The discussion forum should take about 30–45 minutes to complete. You are expected to contribute to five of the discussion forums. This mean you do not have to post every week; although, you can if you would like to.

There will be a number of live **chat sessions** as well where you can also discuss ideas with your tutor and other students. This will last around one hour.

You have also been asked to keep a **learning journal** where you record your experiences of studying this course. Your journal entries should take around 20–30 minutes a week.

It is probably easiest if you follow the order that the topics are presented in here. However, you can try some of the topics in a different order if you wish and you do not have to do just one a week. You can do more if you prefer, or miss a week if you are busy and catch up later. The discussion tasks will need to be started in the weeks suggested so that everyone can contribute, but they never close so you can add more thoughts later if you wish. In total the course should take around 15 hours and will finish just before the end of term in February next year.

When you have successfully finished the course, including contributions to the discussion forum, you will receive a **certificate from the University of Southampton** indicating that you have undertaken a course in intercultural communication and intercultural awareness. *There is a glossary (a list of difficult terms and their definitions) for the topics. Click on the link for any word or phrase in blue to go to the glossary and see the definition.

Topics and discussion tasks

1. Defining culture

Culture is generally something we all feel we know something about, whether it is our own culture or another culture we are familiar with. However, arriving at a definition of culture is difficult. In these activities you will be introduced to some of the different elements of culture and a range of definitions.

Week 1 discussion task – Based on the definitions of culture given in the activities try to write your own definition of culture.

2. Intercultural communication

What is the relationship between culture and language? What does this mean in intercultural communication? That is, what is the relationship between languages and cultures when people from different cultural backgrounds are communicating using the same language? In these activities you will consider the relationship between language and culture, with a focus on the English language, and what we mean by intercultural communication.

3. Cultural stereotypes and generalisations in communication

What do we mean by stereotypes and generalisations? How do they affect intercultural communication? We all have ideas and impressions of our own and other cultures, are they stereotypes or generalisations? Do they help intercultural communication or cause problems? In these activities you will distinguish features of generalisations and stereotypes and consider some stereotypes about the UK and Thailand.

Week 3 discussion task – Have you ever heard or experienced any stereotypes about Thailand? Are there any stereotypes that you may have had about other cultures?

4. The individual and culture

When you communicate in intercultural communication you are communicating with another individual. It is individual people who communicate not cultures (Thai culture does not speak to French culture!). What is the relationship between an individual and their culture? In these activities you will compare your own behaviour to some common generalisations about Thai culture and explore all the different groups that you belong alongside being Thai.

5. English as a global language

English is not just the language of the UK and USA. English is the official first language of 75 territories throughout the world. Furthermore, English is the most commonly spoken lingua franca on a global scale. In these activities you will be introduced to the wide range of English speaking countries, you will also consider some of the ways of categorising the different types of English and you will explore some of the features of the many varieties of English around the globe.

Week 5 discussion task – Are there any examples of other varieties of English you know? Do you think other forms of English (e.g. Hong Kong English) from the traditional native speaker Englishes are 'standard' English? What type of English do you think students of English should learn? Why?

6. Exploring my own culture

To be able to communicate effectively in intercultural communication it is important to understand different ways of communicating. To do this you must first be aware of your own culture and also the complexity of this. In these activities you will consider the reasons for different types of communicative behaviour in Thailand and also explore the variety and complexity of different dialects and languages in Thailand.

Week 6 discussion task – Think about the languages and dialects you are familiar with. What languages or dialects do you speak at home and at the university? Do you speak any other languages? If yes, when and where? Does anyone in your family or any of your close friends speak a different language or dialect?

7. Intercultural communication and the internet

The internet provides an important source of opportunities for intercultural communication and contact through English. Many cultures and countries are represented through English on the internet. However, how much can we really learn about another culture from the internet? In the first activity you will consider the different ways you can interact with people and information from other cultures through the internet and in the second activity you will examine some representations of culture on the internet.

Week 7 discussion task – Find your own representation of another culture on the internet. What aspects of this other culture are represented on the website (think of the areas you looked at in this week's activities)?

8. Comparing cultures: Politeness

To be able to communicate successfully in intercultural communication it is necessary to be able to make comparisons between cultures. In these activities you will consider why comparisons between cultures are important for intercultural communication and you will make comparisons between Thailand and the UK in relation to politeness.

9. Globalisation and transcultural global flows

The benefits of having one language, English, that is so dominant in the world has been controversial. Is English inevitably linked to Western culture and dominance or is it, as we have seen, changed and adapted to many different cultures and uses? In these activities you will consider the benefits and disadvantages of English as a global language. You will then analyse some examples of local (Thai) uses of English and how they relate to globalisation and the idea of transcultural global flows.

Week 9 discussion task – Can you think of any other examples that mix global and local cultures in a similar way to the instances you explored in this weeks activities e.g. language, music, video, films or personal experiences?

10. Intercultural Awareness
Successful intercultural communication in English involves more than native speaker like grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. One way of describing the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for intercultural communication is intercultural awareness. In these activities you will be introduced to some of the competencies needed for intercultural communication and consider the importance of different elements of intercultural awareness.

Week 10 discussion task – Based on what you have learnt about intercultural communication on this course and in particular the skills, knowledge and attitudes of intercultural awareness (ICA), what do you think are the most important things to learn about when studying English? For example, native speaker like English grammar or pronunciation, experience of other cultures, bilingual communication, knowledge of your own cultures and languages, comparing cultures, globalisation. Do you think ICA should be part of English teaching and learning?

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Appendix 2 – Initial intercultural communication questionnaire (paper form)

Instructions

Thank you for your help in this questionnaire. Please make sure you have completed **all** of the following questions. There are **four** pages.

Part 1

Section A

Name _____ Student number _____

1. Which English do you want to learn? Tick the relevant items (you may tick as many as you need).

- ☐ British English
- ☐ Thai English
- ☐ American English
- ☐ Indian English
- ☐ Australian English
- ☐ Chinese English

Other(s) (Please specify):

_____

_____

Part 2

Section B

Decide which of the reasons given below is the most important and least important for you. You must rank them 1 to 8 with **1 being the most important and 8 the least important**. You must rank all the items. You can use each number only once. **Studying English can be important for me because …**

A. It will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people from many different cultures. ..... ☐

B. It will allow me to meet and converse with native speakers of English. ..... ☐

C. It will make me a more knowledgeable person. ..... ☐

D. It will allow me to get good grades at university. ..... ☐

E. It will allow me to have a fun and enjoyable experience. ..... ☐

F. Other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of the English language. ..... ☐

G. I'll need it for my future career. ..... ☐

H. It will allow me to travel to many different countries and to learn about different cultures. ..... ☐

Section C

When you have a conversation with a non-native speaker in English (e.g. Chinese, German) which of these items help you two understand each other?

Decide which of the items given below is the most important and least important for you. You must rank them 1 to 7 with **1 being the most important and 7 the least important**. You must rank all the items. You can use each number only once.

A. Having a native-like pronunciation. ☐

B. Knowing about the way other non-native English speakers use English (e.g. their accent and vocabulary). ☐

C. Knowing about the culture of the non-native English speaker you are communicating with. ☐

D. Knowing about the culture of native English-speaking countries. ☐

E. Using correct native-like grammar. ☐

F. Knowing about the relationship between language and culture. ☐

G. Knowing about intercultural communication (communication between people from different cultures). ☐

Part 3

How much do you agree with the following statements in sections E, F and G? Rate them 1,2,3,4, or 5, **5 = maximum score** (strong agreement) to **1 = the lowest score** (strong disagreement) as shown in the scale below.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

There are no right or wrong answers since many people have different opinions. Please give your immediate reactions to each of the following items. Don't waste time thinking about each statement. Give your immediate feeling after reading each statement. On the other hand, please do not be careless, as it is important that we obtain your true feelings.

Example

Thai footballers are better than Malaysian footballers. ☐ 3

If you strongly agree with this statement you would mark it 5. If you strongly disagreed with this statement you would mark it 1. If you had neutral feelings about it you would mark it 3.

Section D

1. Standard English is spoken by the native speaking countries (e.g UK, the United States, Australia). ☐

2. Standard English is spoken by those countries colonised by native English speaking countries (e.g. Singapore, India, Hong Kong). ☐

3. Standard English is spoken by any country that uses English (e.g. Thailand, Mexico, China). ☐

4. There is no Standard English. ☐

Section E

1. Languages cannot be translated word-for-word. ☐
2. The tone of a speaker's voice (the intonation pattern) carries meaning and is different in different languages. ☐
3. Each language-culture use gestures and body movements (body language), which convey meaning. ☐
4. All cultures have taboo (subjects which should not be discussed) topics. ☐
5. It is important not to judge people from other cultures by the standards of my own culture. ☐
6. To be able to communicate with someone in a foreign language you have to understand their culture. ☐
7. Learning culture is part of learning a foreign language. ☐
8. It is important to understand my own culture when learning a foreign language. ☐
9. Learning a foreign language means learning new kinds of behaviour. ☐
10. Learning a foreign language means learning new beliefs and values. ☐
11. Culture and language are linked. ☐
12. Specific languages, cultures and countries are always linked (e.g. the English language, English culture and UK) ☐
13. Languages can be linked to many different cultures (e.g. the English language can be used to express the cultures and countries in which it is used such as India, Singapore, Thailand). ☐
14. Individuals are members of many different groups including their cultural group. ☐
15. Cultures may be defined and understood differently by different groups and individuals. ☐

Section F

1. Thai films are better than English language films. ☐
2. Thai music is better than English language music. ☐
3. Thai literature is better than English language literature. ☐
4. Thai education is better than English speaking countries' education. ☐
5. Thai technology is better than English speaking countries' technology. ☐
6. Thai businesses are better than English speaking countries' businesses. ☐
7. Thai family structures are better than English speaking countries' family structures. ☐
8. Thai food is better than English speaking countries' food. ☐
9. Thai lifestyles are better than English speaking countries' lifestyles. ☐

This is the end of the questionnaire please check you have answered all the questions.
Thank you for your help.

Appendix 3 – Students' course evaluation questionnaire (online)

This questionnaire gives you the opportunity to express your views about this course, although your responses will be totally anonymous. We will use the results as part of a process of assessing the effectiveness of the course and to improve its quality.

Please answer all the required questions otherwise your responses cannot be used. Some optional questions are given for you to write your ideas. It is not necessary to complete these, although if you can that would help us. There are 10 required questions and 5 optional questions.

The questionnaire should take between five to ten minutes.

Thank you for your help.

Course content

How did you rate the course content? Indicate your response from the choices below.

1. How would you rate the course content overall?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

2. How would you rate the weekly activities?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

3. How would you rate the discussion forums?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

4. How would you rate the chat room sessions?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

5. What did you gain from this course in terms of knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication and intercultural awareness? How did you feel about the level of difficulty and the previous knowledge required? Note: This question is optional.

Teaching and learning

6. How would you rate the teaching and learning? For example clarity of explanations, organisation, opportunities for student contribution.

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

7. I liked doing this course online.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ No opinion ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

8. I would prefer to do this course face-to-face (not online).

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ No opinion ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Student support and guidance

9. How would you rate the support and guidance? For example how useful was the course documentation? How clear were the aims of the course overall and the individual topics? How helpful were the teachers/staff involved in the course?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

10. What were the benefits of doing this course online? Note: this question is optional.

11. What were the disadvantages of doing this course online? Note: this question is optional.

Your progress and achievement

12. How would you rate your progress and achievement?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

13. How far did you feel challenged by this course? How satisfied were you with your participation in the course discussion forums, chat rooms and your progress? Note: this question is optional.

Overall evaluation

14. How would you rate the course overall?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

15. Are there any other comments you would like to make? Note: This question is optional.

Thank you!

Appendix 4 – Teachers' course evaluation questionnaire (online)

Intercultural communication course teacher evaluation questionnaire

This questionnaire gives you the opportunity to express your views about this course, although your responses will be totally anonymous. We will use the results as part of a process of assessing the effectiveness of the course and to improve its quality.

Please answer all the required questions otherwise your responses cannot be used. There are 12 required questions and 5 optional question.

The questionnaire should take between five to ten minutes.

Thank you for your help.

Course content

How did you rate the course content? Indicate your response from the choices below.

1. How would you rate the course content overall?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

2. How would you rate the weekly activities?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

3. How would you rate the discussion forums?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

4. How would you rate the chat room sessions?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

5. What do you think students gain from this course in terms of knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication and intercultural awareness? How did you feel about the level of difficulty and the previous knowledge required?

Teaching and learning

6. How would you rate the teaching and learning? For example clarity of explanations, organisation, opportunities for student contribution.

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

7. I think students will benefit from doing this course online.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ No opinion ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

8. I think students would benefit more from doing this course face-to-face (not online).

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ No opinion ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Student support and guidance

9. How would you rate the support and guidance? For example how useful was the course documentation? How clear were the aims of the course overall and the individual topics? How helpful were the teachers/staff involved in the course?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

10. What do you think are the benefits of doing this course online?

11. What do you think are the disadvatages of doing this course online?

Overall comments

12. How would you rate the course overall?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Ok ☐ Not so good ☐ Awful

13. I would recommend this course to my students to do as an independent study outside of class.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ No opinion ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

14. Please give the reasons for your response above.

15. I would use this course as part of my classroom teaching.

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ No opinion ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

16. Please give the reasons for your response above.

17. Are there any other comments you would like to make? Note: This question is optional.

Thank you!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us. If you have any questions you can e-mail us on w.baker@soton.ac.uk

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