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Diploma thesis

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Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)
of university teachers at Palacký University
Olomouc

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Annotation

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Abstract

The thesis utilises grounded theory as the methodology to explore the perceptions of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among university teachers at the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc (UPOL), their beliefs and teaching practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data and utilise the process of coding to analyse data from interview transcripts. The findings indicate that cultural knowledge and personal attitudes/personalities play a crucial role in developing ICC. While teachers' beliefs and teaching practices are linked, the connection is not entirely direct. Their professional and intercultural experiences have both negative and positive impacts on their beliefs. Additionally, teachers did not participate in formal ICC teacher training. Lastly, the study concludes a string of recommendations for future research directions and future educational reforms for educational institutions and teachers in higher education aimed at enhancing ICC development.

Keywords: Intercultural communicative competence; university teachers' perceptions; teachers' beliefs; teaching practices.

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I, Wenqian Wang, declare that I have done this diploma thesis independently and fulfil the requirements of source citation and internal standards for writing a thesis formulated by the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc.

Date

Signature

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Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected and globalised world, the ability to communicate effectively across cultures has become an essential skill. Educators and intercultural education in this session plays an essential role. However, Lázár (2003) indicates that only a few educators received intercultural training in an explicit rather than a systematic way. Moreover, Byram (2003) mentions that teachers lack energy and there is less moral and political education in pre-service and in-service training plans. In addition, nowadays research on ICC is more focused on teachers or students in the field of English language teaching (ELT), rarely existing studies on educators in the field of social pedagogy. Besides, due to fewer international degree programs and the academic environment being mainly in the Czech language, thus the internalization of the Faculty of Education at Palacký University Olomouc (UPOL) is at a low level from the perspective of the researcher. It is of necessity to make further research in order to examine the current status and formulate practical suggestions for future educational policy or reform.

Therefore, this thesis seeks to explain the complexities and differences of their perceptions, beliefs, cultural sensitivity, and pedagogical approaches that solve intercultural issues encountered in the classroom. By exploring these domains, this research contributes to the broader discourse on intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in higher education and its role in a multicultural academic environment. The research questions are set to investigate the perceptions of ICC among university teachers, their perspectives on current issues related to intercultural communications, and explore the correlation between their beliefs and teaching practices, as well as the impacts of their experiences on teaching practices.

The theoretical part is to have an overview of the definitions and functions of culture and language, as well as their relationships. In addition, the introduction of ICC and ICC models will be explained for the main theoretical base. The review of teachers' roles and responsibilities in higher education is regarded as a bridge connecting the

culture, language and ICC. Besides, the overall picture of teachers' beliefs and teaching practices are seen as a sub-related section of studying ICC in pedagogical settings.

For the practical part, the methodology of the grounded theory developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) was employed for data collection and analysis. The researcher followed the procedures of open coding, axial coding and selective coding, which were represented in the session of results. The interpretations based on the data set, implications and recommendations for future research and future educational actions were formulated in the last.

The limitations of this thesis can be summarized as follows: (1) due to the characteristics of a longitudinal evaluation on ICC, this thesis only represents the results at a concrete moment. (2) depending on the features of qualitative research, the research findings could not be generalized to the whole university. (3) relying on participants' unconscious neglect of some interview questions, some aspects of data are weakened. (4) there is a possibility of influencing the results by individual understanding of the researcher.

To sum up, this thesis could provide university teachers with analytical reflections on their global competence - ICC, and their teaching practices, as well as their views are beneficial to formulate latent recommendations for future education measures.

A. Theoretical Part

1. Culture and language

Due to globalization and the new information era, different kinds of activities among countries and individuals are dramatically increasing, attracting attention among educational institutions and educators to attach the importance of culture and language. This section gives an account of explanations of several definitions of the term culture, utilizes the existing metaphors of culture to explain it in a more concrete perspective, and explicitly states the relationship between culture and language.

Culture plays a more significant role in daily life than we often realize. As Martin and Nakayama (2013) observe, one of the defining characteristics of culture is its elusive nature, making it challenging to pinpoint. “Trying to understand our own culture is like trying to explain to a fish that it lives in water. Therefore, we often cannot identify our own cultural background and assumptions until we encounter assumptions that differ from our own” (Martin & Nakayama, 2013, p. 23). Therefore, all cultures have a strong ethnocentric tendency to use the categories of one’s own culture to evaluate the actions of others (Lustig & Koester, 1999). Considering that a significant portion of the population may reside in regions that remain culturally homogeneous. They accept a “monoculture”, which can increase risks (Jackson, 2006, p. 203). Therefore, they “espouse ethnocentric views” (ibid). When they encounter any new cultures, they just neglect or ignore them. They are stubborn in their mindsets and cognitive frameworks, aiming to create a structured ranking of cultures, assisting in the dominance of their own culture (Genc & Bada, 2005). This results in a decline in their motivation to learn a new language, which in turn undermines their communicative competence and, more significantly, interpersonal skills.

Language is considered both a communicative tool and a constructed system comprising grammar and vocabulary. Its purpose is to convey fundamental meaning

through spoken or written forms and to describe and convey human experiences and perceptions of the world (Hinkel, 1999). It is declared by Kramersch (1998) that language is connected to our thought processes and behaviours, influencing not only our own actions but also forming the behaviours of those around us. This suggests that our perception of reality may be constructed through language or linguistic interactions.

1.2 Introduction of culture

The term culture can be traced back to the Latin word *colere*, which means to cultivate. It refers to that which has been cultivated and nurtured (Kramersch, 2014), which embraces the social behaviours, institutions, and norms found in human societies.

Culture exists everywhere in our society life. The concept of *culture* has been of concern to many different disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, literature, and cultural studies, and the definitions offered in these fields vary according to the particular frame of reference invoked (House, 2007). It demonstrated that there are nearly as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviours, and activities (Hinkel, 1999). In other words, from varied perspectives or academic fields it could be defined in a massive manner. Culture is considered as the byproduct of various human activities (Tylor, 1871), which represents a sophisticated string of shared beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviours, knowledge, ideas, activities, and communicative patterns formed by a group of people (Bates & Plog, 1980; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012; Dodd, 1995; Matsumoto, 1996; Sperber, 1996). People must know it “in order to act as they do, make the things they make, and interpret their experience in the distinctive way they do” (Quinn & Holland, 1987, p. 4) and operate effectively in a specific social environment (Bloch, 1991). Stated another way, Hofstede (1984) concludes culture is a distinguishing collective programming of the human mind among diverse group of people. What’s more, culture represents a historically transmitted pattern of meanings, encapsulated in symbolic forms, through which individuals communicate, preserve, and evolve their

understanding of and attitudes towards life (Geertz, 1973), also viewed as outcomes of actions taken and as factors that condition subsequent actions (Adler & Gundersen, 2001). There are numerous perspectives and angles from which the term culture can be defined, thus it is unlikely that a single definition will ever achieve consensus among all scholars (Matsumoto, 2009). Kroeber and Kluckhohn, American anthropologists, made a comprehensive review of the concepts of culture and formulated a list of 164 definitions in 1952 (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012). To define the term “culture” in a more comprehensive manner, Kumaradivelu (2008) concludes as the following:

Standards defines culture in familiar terms, i.e., Culture with Capital C and culture with a small c. It defines the former as —the formal institution (social, political, and economic), the great figures of history, and those products of literature, fine arts, and the sciences that were traditionally assigned to the category of elite culture, and the latter as —those aspects of daily living studied by the sociologists and anthropologists: housing, clothing, food, tools, transportation, and all the patterns of behaviours that members of the culture regard as necessary and appropriate (p. 24).

As this definition points out, it is crucial to distinguish between Big C and small c culture, representing various aspects of different fields and our daily lives. Furthermore, culture is constantly developing, progressing, and transforming.

1.2.1 The metaphors of culture

1.2.1.1 Culture as an iceberg

It is well-known that culture is considered as an iceberg because thousands of things are invisible and be neglected in human beings’ life. The iceberg model of culture has been developed through the contributions of numerous theorists (Penstone, 2011), which describes culture into different layers. The Cultural Iceberg Model formulated by Gary Weaver and R.M. Paige in Penstone (2011) serves as a conceptual framework to comprehend the multi-layered nature of culture.

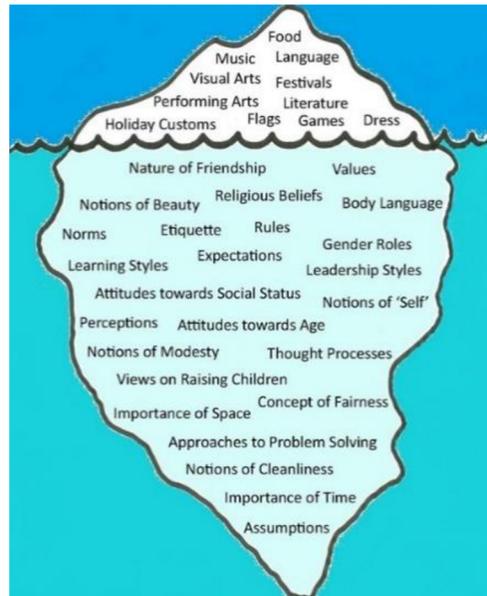


Figure 1 Penstone, J. (n.d.). Interculturalism matters.

<https://interculturalism.blogspot.com/search?q=The+Iceberg+Model+of+Culture>.

As shown in the figure above, culture resembles an iceberg due to its analogous features, where a substantial portion remains submerged beneath the surface. The tip above the water, about 10% of its total description, representing elements such as art, literature, language, music, dance, dress, etc., is visible and relatively small, which “tends to be the most stable part of the entire establishment” (Sasu, 2016, p. 81). The nine tenth of the iceberg is invisible and is regarded as “deep culture” (Hanley, 1999, p. 2), which include elements such as values, religious beliefs, body language, norms, attitudes towards social status and ages, approaches to problem solving, assumptions, etc. Undoubtedly, the concealed dimension in this model holds great significance than the visibly smaller component, as it is the source of cultural distinctions and conflicts. Hence, recognizing, comprehending, and engaging with this concealed aspect is regarded as an effective approach for navigating authentic cultural scenarios. The process involves acquiring a deeper understanding, implementing this knowledge, engaging in reflective practices, and fostering more pragmatic cultural interactions. The model has proven useful in promoting a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in intercultural interactions and communication dynamics.

1.2.2.2 Culture as an onion

Cultural differences are multifaceted. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), culture can be likened to an onion, comprising four distinct layers: symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. In this model, symbols represent the outermost layer, while values constitute the innermost core, with heroes and rituals occupying intermediate positions.

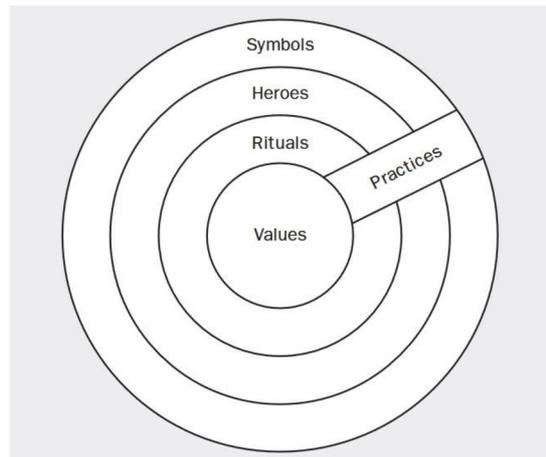


Figure 2 The “Onion”: Manifestations of Culture at Different Levels of Depth (Hofstede et al., 2010)

In this model, the initial layer of *symbols*, such as words, gestures, pictures, or objects, which carry specific and particular meanings shared by a group of people with similar cultural backgrounds. This layer is the most superficial and simple to change. New symbols can easily emerge and evolve, while older ones may fade away over time. Next layer is *heroes*, who could be real or virtual, past and present, alive or dead, highly attached the significance in a culture. They also serve as models for behaviours.

Rituals is of importance to attain success from different angles of social life. They are necessary collective activities, which is carried out for their own sake. For example, ways of greeting, paying respect to others, social and religious ceremonies, as well as, the way language is used in text and talk, in daily interaction, and in communicating beliefs.

The three layers above can be included in the term *practice*, because they are visible and observable by outsiders, while are invisible and precisely known and interpreted by insiders.

The core layer of culture is *value*. Values includes broad tendencies towards preferring certain states of affairs over others. “Values are feelings with an added arrow indicating a plus and a minus side”, described by Hofstede et al. (2010, p. 9). Thus, they can be stated by opposite pairs, such as evil versus good, dirty versus clean, dangerous versus safe, forbidden versus permitted, decent versus indecent, moral versus immoral, ugly versus beautiful, unnatural versus natural, etc.

1.3 The relationship between culture and language

Language can be regarded as a fundamental approach to classify an individual’s cultural experience, thoughts and behaviours, to acquire knowledge of the world, to transmit mental representations, to make them public and intersubjectively accessible (House, 2007), and as a sophisticated way to explain and represent human experience and understanding of the world (Hinkel, 1999), thus the vocabulary of a language mirrors the culture of its speakers, including shared values, beliefs, and experiences (House, 2007). Language serves as the “carrier” of culture, as it facilitates the learning, sharing, and active engagement in the development of cultural norms and practices (Duranti, 1997, p. 69).

Culture is the product of socially and historically situated discourse communities, that are to a large extent imagined communities, created and shaped by language (Kramsch, 2014). A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are inextricably linked so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture (Brown, 2014). In a nutshell, culture and language are interconnected and inseparable. Further as Risager (2006) explains that language and culture are deeply intertwined and closely connected. Moreover, based on manifestations of culture in Figure 2, language is regarded as the symbol of culture. Relatively, culture is abstract, and language is concrete. In other words, language is a concrete manifestation of culture. As Jiang (2000) states that “the referents of language are the entities, events, states, processes, characteristics, and relations that exist in the

culture, whether these are referred to by single words or by phrases” (p. 332).

Furthermore, in the field of education, numerous scholars argue that culture should be embodied in language education or the whole education process of children and teenagers due to the reasons that language is a symbol of cultural reality (Kramsch, 2014). As Kramsch (1993) holds the view that culture should not merely be regarded as a fifth skill in the learning process, as this perspective may lead learners to become what Bennett (1997) terms as “fluent fools” (p. 16) - individuals who can speak a foreign language proficiently but lack a deep understanding of its real meaning within social contexts and environments. In order to cope with this severe issues, other international alternative cultures should be introduced, not only the main and popular cultures, to better motivate students to understand diverse frames of cultures, to raise the awareness of “a nonjudgmental evaluation”, and consequently to increase the ability of “the acceptance of the norms of the target language culture” (Krasner, 1999, p. 83). When it comes to establishing new cultural frames for students, it is important to address mistakes that often occur in international or intercultural communications. These mistakes “arise not from linguistic, but from socio-linguistic differences” and “can be mitigated with appropriate training” (ibid, p. 81). In essence, linguistic competence alone is not the sole or primary determinant of successful and efficient interactions. Therefore, the aim of learning cultural knowledge is not to know some new things and information about target culture, is about action, understanding and knowing how interact with diverse backgrounds of people (Liddicoat, 2011). To better learn it effectively and efficiently, engagements of verbal and non-verbal practice of culture to further obtain the insights about the way of living in a certain target cultural contexts (Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat, 1997) are attached the importance of boost one’s ICC. Thus, it should concentrate on the impact of body language, eye contact, and other over behavioural and communicative paradigms (Hinkel, 1999). Furthermore, the aim of cultural education is to develop learners into mediators who are able to skilfully navigate not only their own cultural environment but also diverse cultural contexts (Buttjes & Byram, 1991).

2. Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

ICC has risen to the attention of educators and academic researchers in recent years, though as a research area it only has a short history of about 50 years (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017). In the contemporary globalized landscape of international engagement and multicultural exchanges, effective intercultural communication is increasingly regarded as essential for fostering social harmony and achieving organizational success (Knapp et al., 2007). And what matters in productive intercultural communication is “modes of understanding”, rather than “so much communicative repertoire” (Wolf, 2014, p. 448).

In working setting, acquiring Intercultural Competence enables people to communicate effectively and behave in a way that could be acceptable in a group of people from diverse cultural backgrounds (INCA, 2004).

In this session, the definitions of ICC from different perspectives will be clearly introduced, because how culture and intercultural competence are defined (Collier, 1989) is quite important in studying this area. And the current situation of ICC in education in Europe and in the world, and the occurring issues will be outlined.

2.1 Intercultural competence and communicative competence

From the researcher’s point of view, ICC is not merely a singular competency but rather a combination of intercultural competence and communicative competence. Therefore, in this session, it is crucial to explain the nature of these two competencies, explore their interrelations, examine their mutual influence, and formulate strategies for integrating them into ICC.

In Cambridge Dictionary, the prefix inter- means “between or among the people, things, or places mentioned”. It also comes with the sense of “intermediate”. At some extent, the intercultural competence is the ability of being as a role of mediator who have an ability to foster the effective and efficient process in corporation. As Johnson

et al. (2006, p. 530) defined it as “an individual’s effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad”.

According to existing reviews and research in intercultural competence, it exists more than 30 models and 300 related constructs (Leung et al., 2014). All components or factors mentioned in these 30 models can conclude 3 domains, which are (a) intercultural personalities, (b) intercultural knowledge and (c) intercultural skills.

(a) **Intercultural personalities.** Intercultural characteristics are often considered among the most significant domains, as they reflect the deep-rooted aspects of individuals’ personalities. These characteristics are shaped by their values and beliefs, which are essentially stable and difficult to change, manifesting in their daily behaviours. Examples include curiosity, courage, maturity, emotional intelligence (Mendenhall et al., 2008), openness and passion for diversity (Stevens et al., 2014; Javidan et al., 2010), confidence, modesty, tolerance of ambiguity and respect (Deardorff, 2006).

(b) **Intercultural knowledge.** Intercultural knowledge is widely recognized as essential for successful interactions, requiring efforts to attain. Formal education primarily serves as a channel for acquiring this knowledge. However, the authenticity of information disseminated through social media platforms may spontaneously reinforce prejudice and stereotypes, posing challenges to intercultural understanding. Examples include deep understanding and knowledge of culture, which include context, role and impact of culture and others’ worldviews (Deardorff, 2006) and cognitive-oriented knowledge (Mendenhall et al., 2008).

(c) **Intercultural skills.** Intercultural skills also make a vital role in intercultural interactions, contributing to the effectiveness and efficiency of communication. Examples encompass the ability to interpret, discover and react (Byram, 1997); the skills to build up cross-cultural relationships, the capability to manage intercultural conflicts or ethical issues, ability to emotional connection, skills to negotiation (Mendenhall et al., 2008); and skills of adaptability and flexibility

(Javidan et al., 2010).

In our daily life, we encounter and communicate with people to exchange information we get and have corporations to reach our common goals. In these everyday procedure, the communicative competence matters, which decide the effectiveness of the interactions and the quality of corporations. Hence, the communicative competence is not only about the linguistic grammar, but also visible manifestations of individual's beliefs, values and their cultures. As Steven Wilson and Christina Sabee (2003, p.3.) indicate that:

Why have so many scholars, from so many fields, studied communicative competence within so many relational, institutional, and cultural contexts? Our hunch is that scholars, as well as the contemporary Western societies in which most live and work, widely accept the following tacit beliefs: (a) within any situation, not all things that can be said and done are equally competent; (b) success in personal and professional relationships depends, in no small part, on communicative competence; and (c) most people display incompetence in at least a few situations, and a smaller number are judged incompetent across many situations.

Though we know the importance of studying communicative competence from multiple fields, definitional problems arise due to the difficulty of exact definition and the uncertainty of subcomponents in communicative competence. Moreover, there is no consensus among scholars (Wilson & Sabee, 2003). For example, they agree that the appropriateness and effectiveness play a crucial role in this competence, but there is no consensus on how the appropriateness and effectiveness should be defined exactly and what the rubrics are to assess them. Therefore, to give a clear and exact definition of communicative competence is quite impossible. However, when considering the dimensions of communicative competence, namely linguistic competence (grammar and vocabulary), sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness in different social contexts), discourse competence (organizing and structuring discourse), and strategic competence (using communication strategies to overcome difficulties) (Canale, 2014), discourse competence, and strategic competence, it becomes evident that certain

aspects deserve particular emphasis when discussing communicative competence.

In summary, the explanation and components of intercultural competence and communicative competence stress their foundational role in intercultural communication. Effective communication skills are essential for engaging in intercultural interactions, while cultural knowledge and sensitivity are crucial for navigating differences and adapting communication strategies appropriately. By combining these competencies, individuals can engage in meaningful and respectful communication across cultural boundaries, consequently fostering mutual understanding and collaboration.

2.2 Introduction of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Research in ICC can be traced back to the 1960s, with an American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher Edward T. Hall (1914 – 2009) regarded as a foundational figure in shaping this field of study by amounts of scholars. Furthermore, research in ICC experienced significant and rapid growth during the 2000s, influenced by fields such as cross-cultural psychology, social psychology, education, and medicine (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017). While the history of research in ICC spans only 50 years, it has contributed significantly to the development of ICC models, assessments, research approaches, methods for teaching and learning ICC in language education, and an understanding of various factors that influence individuals' ICC in international work environments.

Before defining the term Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), it is well-known in academia that it exists numerous similar terminologies, such as Global Competence, Global Citizenship, Intercultural Sensitivity, International Competence, Intercultural Competence, Multicultural Competence, Cross-cultural Competence, etc. Nowadays, the appearance of ICC is more frequent than other terms. Not only do different scholars have their perceptions and dimensions in defining the term of ICC, but also “the definition of intercultural competence continues to evolve” (Deardorff,

2006). Therefore, there is no sole definition to make it clear what exactly it is. And according to Deardorff (2006), most preferred a more general definition. However, the most-cited definition in education is that ICC is “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes” (Deardorff, 2004, p. 194). All definitions of ICC stress its fundamental prerequisite: appropriate and effective management of communication among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017; Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009, p. 7.). This necessitates the fulfilment of five key criteria: world knowledge, foreign language proficiency, cultural empathy, approval of foreign people and cultures, ability to practice one’s profession in an international setting (Lambert, 1994). Even if individuals possess the necessary knowledge and personal attributes and have extensive experience in international or intercultural communication, it remains common for them to unconsciously engage in behaviours or speech patterns. Hence, the aim of assessing or learning ICC is to shift the unconscious value to the conscious level in order to develop individuals’ attitudes of positiveness and openness in culture diversity and their critical cultural awareness (Larzen, 2005) and ultimately experience relationships of reciprocity (Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

ICC consists of “two sides of the coin-the awareness and acceptance of one’s own world and the perception and acceptance of the foreign world” (Neuner, 2003, p.49). From the perspective of sociology, no one can live solely and totally keep away from society. Therefore, it is significant to take training and engage in regular practice of both verbal and non-verbal communication to develop ICC significantly. This attempt enables us to enhance our ability to establish stronger personal relationships with those in our social circles.

It is obvious that equipping cultural awareness is far from enough, the ability to analyse, explain and elaborate this awareness is also quite important (Liddicoat, 2011). However, it may still cause misunderstanding. Thus, one of another essential skills is “decentred”, which requires that the language user keep away from his/her own cultural and linguistic framework in order to see the world from alternative perspectives (ibid.).

2.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in the EU

The European higher education area (EHEA) was established in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999. One of the objectives to achieve EHEA by 2010 is “promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the free movement of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff” (Coperías Aguilar, 2009, p. 243), which was trying to improve the intercultural interactions among member countries. The European Union is consisted of several countries, which have different languages, cultures and customs. This diversity is valuable for all people and institution, which should be protected and developed. However, it could also be the “a barrier regarding communication at personal or institutional level or exchange of people and cultural products” (ibid. p. 244.). Hence, the integration of linguistic and cultural competencies into ICC plays a vital role in corporations.

Research on ICC has developed enormously in the past about 400 years. Dell Hymes first introduced the concept of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), emphasizing the importance of appropriate language usage over grammatical competence. However, this perspective was criticized by Bryam, who argued that Hymes overlooked the significance of social identity and culture for both native speakers and second-language learners (Byram et al., 2002). Since then, it has raised attention among teachers and educators in numerous disciplines, mainly in human resources, business, healthcare, engineering, social work, and foreign languages. Due to the rapid international development of trade and industry among countries around the world, the states are fully connected, which contributes to the urgency of the construction of more intercultural environments (Bennett, 2015; Kelly, 2011). Hence educators with diverse intercultural perspectives, extensive cultural knowledge, the ability to communicate effectively, and successful practice or experience in the intercultural scene play an essential role in this session.

Intercultural communication, as a relatively new interdisciplinary field, includes a wide range of issues in higher education of pedagogical subjects. From the perspective

of their attitudes, some teachers hold negative views. They doubt whether culture can be effectively integrated into teaching, whether ICC can be successfully cultivated within a school setting, and whether it has a significant impact on pupils (Sercu, 2005a). While some teachers maintain a positive outlook on the increased importance of intercultural competence (IC) training and its role in language teaching (Byram & Risager, 1999; Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al., 2003), there are conflicts in their willingness to implement IC teaching in practice. They often face challenges when balancing the priority of linguistic competence with IC teaching (Sercu, 2005; Sercu, 2005b; Castro et al., 2004). Moreover, they lack sufficient attention on thoroughly considering what is to be taught and how (Zarate, 1986). Based on the perceptions and criteria they used to select textbooks, it becomes evident that teachers emphasize linguistic or communicative competence (Sercu, 2005b). Additionally, their teaching methods still tend to be teacher oriented. This overall scenario suggests that they may not fully recognize the significance of intercultural teaching, potentially placing it in a secondary role (Sercu, 2005). Moreover, due to external conditions and their circumstances, educators lack moral, political, and intercultural communication education or interdisciplinary teacher training in a systematic way (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al., 2003; Byram, 2003; Jedynek, 2011). Consequently, they may encounter challenges related to insufficient energy, and time constraints, in addition to a shortage of suitable teaching materials (Lázár, 2011; Sercu, 2005b). These obstacles have contributed to a lack of effective strategies for addressing stereotypes and prejudice in the classroom, as well as a general unfamiliarity with intercultural teaching methods. (Byram & Risager, 1999; Jedynek, 2011).

Numerous Czech official publications place importance on the cultural curriculum in higher education. The Czech Republic became a participant in European Communities' educational programmes in 1995. Teachers now have the opportunity to engage in the Erasmus+ program, initiated in 2014, allowing them to benefit from lectures and global workshops aimed at broadening their intercultural exposure. Furthermore, the Czech government has launched the strategy of internationalizing

higher education in 2021 to further develop intercultural competence among graduates and academic educators, while also integrating cultural teaching and practice into the curriculum. Furthermore, under Strategy 2030+, the government is trying to create a new system of measures that aim to deal with current issues in Czech Republic. For example, modernization of current education in the dynamic and ever-changing world of the 21st century, reduction of inequalities in accessing to high-quality education and paving the way for maximum development of potential children, pupils and students. Pupils need to get key competences for personal development and fulfilment, employability, social inclusion, sustainable living, a successful life in peaceful societies, and the ability to cope with life's demands with an awareness of the importance of health and active citizenship. The 2018 European Reference Framework includes eight key competences for lifelong learning. Three of them related to ICC are communication in foreign languages; personal, social and learning competences; cultural awareness and expression.

The Council of Europe has defined the dimensions of Intercultural Communicative Competence, encompassing intercultural awareness, intercultural skills, 'existential' competence (*savoir être*), and the ability to learn (*savoir apprendre*). Intercultural awareness entails an enriched understanding of a broader range of cultures, as well as knowledge and comprehension of the dynamics between the "world of origin" and the "world of the target community". Moreover, it involves an awareness of the regional and social diversity within both domains. Additionally, it contains an understanding of how each community is perceived from the perspective of the other, often manifested through national stereotypes. Intercultural skills involve the ability to identify and effectively employ various communication strategies when interacting with individuals from diverse cultures. It is also foundational to be as a mediator between one's own culture and others to address misunderstandings and conflicts that may arise in the course of interactions, while also weakening one's own stereotypical perceptions. Beyond intercultural awareness and skills, individual personality traits are influential, shaped by attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive styles, and more. In

educational contexts, cultivating attitudes and awareness is consider an integral part to fostering an intercultural personality, in which specific personality factors facilitate or hinder interaction and the acquisition of a second language. Meanwhile, *savoir apprendre* refers to the capacity to observe and engage in new experiences, integrating new knowledge into existing frameworks, and adapting or refining the latter as needed. Its components contain language and communication awareness, general phonetic skills, study techniques, and heuristic abilities, such as the observation and interpretation of observed phenomena, analysis, inference, memorization, and more.

3. Teachers' role and responsibility in higher education

In the swiftly developing information age, coupled with dynamic advancements in higher education, instructors now have the ability to access educational resources rapidly. However, it is well-known that teaching is never a simple task, teachers are always supposed to upgrade their teaching methods, develop a more diverse and comprehensive mindset about their beliefs, and evolve in formulating their teaching practice due to the responsibility of future development among students and the sense of ethical responsibility. In this sophisticated procedure, in order to conducting effective teaching activities and providing more efficient knowledge to students, the roles and responsibilities of both teachers and students are subject to significant and dynamic changes.

There are five types of teaching styles, which are lecturer, demonstrator, hybrid, facilitator and delegator. The lecturer style, also called formal authority style, is frequently used in a long-time single-track lecture in a giant auditorium, which allows instructors introduce a clear and well-constructed content to a large amount of student in a one time. When teachers are as demonstrators, they still remain their authorities, but combing the student-centred teaching style and strategies of encouraging students to ask questions so that they can repeat what they've learned before. Under the hybrid approach, educators are striving to combine the traditional and modern teaching styles to cater students' diverse needs. A much more student-focused approach is the teacher-as-facilitator style. Teachers provide supports rather than direction instructions to foster students' critical thinking skills, problem-solving strategies, collaborative techniques and communicative competence. Teachers as delegators are more likely to stand beside to observe students' performances, encouraging student's self-learning and developing their decision-making skills.

The scholarship of teaching primarily focuses on the exploration and research dedicated to enhancing and facilitating student learning (Trigwell, 2008). Therefore,

university teachers also serve as mentors, guiding students through the complexities of their academic and professional development by fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. They are expected to engage in reflective practice and critically assessing their teaching method. What's more, Forest (2007, p. 350–351), drawing on Lee Shulman's ideas, highlights that the objective of higher education centres on engaging and motivating students. It emphasizes the importance of aiding students in acquiring knowledge and fostering their understanding. Additionally, it emphasizes the necessity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through actions and performances. The approach supports for stimulating students to critically reflect on the world and their role within it, as well as enhancing their capability to deal with the world's constraints and complexities when making judgments and planning actions. Moreover, it aims to foster a lifelong commitment to critical self-examination and personal growth. These goals are interconnected and support one another, including the thorough development of students that includes cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. Achieving these objectives involves a comprehensive educational approach that nurtures the multifaceted growth of individuals.

With a growing emphasis on students' needs, requests, and self-development, modern teaching methods are gradually shifting from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred style. This shift significantly alters the teacher's role from being an authority figure to acting as other roles, such as facilitator, demonstrator or delegator. This kind of change stems from the constructivism. The central idea of constructivism is that "knowledge cannot be transmitted; it cannot be neutral either" (Laroche et al., 1998, p. 8). Therefore, this theory suggests that knowledge constructed by individuals has stimulated the development of didactic situations emphasizing the importance of increasing student participation in acquiring and employing academic knowledge (ibid.). Šteh et al. (2014, p. 51), drawing on Simons's ideas, summed up six characteristics of learning or teaching style of cognitive-constructivist theory, which is (1) an active process, in which students find out specific meanings with their own mental activity, (2) a constructive process, in which connecting information and

concepts is necessary to master complex study subject-matter, (3) a cumulative process, in which each learning derives from previous knowledge or existing concepts, (4) a goal-oriented process, (5) a process in which learning goals are diagnosed or continue to be pursued, and (6) a reflective process.

An extended framework of academics' beliefs about teaching and learning was proposed, describing seven orientations in terms of nine qualitative belief dimensions (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). The research explores fundamental differences between teaching-centred and learning-centred orientations, with evidence presented through qualitative analysis, hierarchical clustering, and narratives of two academics. The nine beliefs can be summarized of desired learning outcomes (recall of separate information to the development of a deep, conceptual understanding), expected use of knowledge (the differences between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences), teachers' responsibilities for organizing or transforming knowledge, nature of knowledge (views on whether knowledge is externally constructed or personalized by the learner), students' existing conceptions (whether and how teachers take into account students' pre-existing knowledge and misconceptions), teacher-student interaction, teachers' responsibilities for control of content, teachers' views on whether students' development as professionals, and the methods or strategies to engage students' learning interests and motivations.

It can't be denied that from the perspectives of diverse cultures, teachers' characteristics, personalities, experiences and their educational degrees, almost every teacher plays different roles in the classroom and even employs several roles in one time. Since teacher roles can be broadly associated with two fundamental conceptions of teaching and learning (Cortazzi, 1990).

One of teachers' responsibilities is teaching, which is a critical component of the educational process, with the quality of instruction significantly impacting not only student learning outcomes but also influencing the ongoing professional development of educators. Quality teaching covers multiple dimensions critical for fostering an effective learning experience (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012). These include:

Curriculum and Course Content Design: Designing the curriculum thoroughly to ensure it is comprehensive, relevant, and in accordance with learning objectives. This involves selecting appropriate content that both challenges and engages students.

Diverse Learning Contexts: Incorporating a variety of learning approaches such as guided independent study, project-based learning, collaborative learning, and experimentation. These methods cater to different learning styles and encourage active participation and critical thinking.

Feedback Mechanisms: Actively requesting and utilizing feedback from students to continually refine teaching methods and materials. Feedback serves as a crucial tool for both instructors and students to assess understanding and improve teaching and learning strategies.

Effective Assessment of Learning Outcomes: Implementing assessments that accurately measure student learning and progress. Effective assessments not only assess what students have learned but also how they apply their knowledge in different contexts.

Adapted Learning Environments: Creating learning spaces that support and enhance the educational experience. This involves ensuring physical or virtual classrooms are accessible to learning and equipped with the necessary resources.

Student Support Services: Providing support services that address the diverse needs of students, including academic advising, tutoring, mental health services, and accommodations for students with disabilities. Support services play a vital role in ensuring all students have the opportunity to succeed.

Teaching quality globally is being shaped by significant changes within the higher education settings. These influencing factors contain the internationalization of higher education, diversity in education and student populations, technological advances, the need for civic engagement and regional development, global competition and economic efficiency, and a 21st century skilled workforce (ibid.).

Thus, it is paramount for university teachers to deliver high-quality teaching that

integrates education about ICC, multi-culture or communicative strategies in international scenarios. This approach is crucial in preparing students to thrive in an increasingly globalized world, where understanding and navigating diverse cultures and perspectives is a key to personal and professional success. Integrating ICC into the curriculum not only enriches students' educational experiences but also fosters a more inclusive and empathetic academic environment. By prioritizing high-quality teaching that emphasizes these competencies, educators can significantly enhance students' ability to communicate and collaborate effectively across cultural boundaries. Ultimately, this preparation equips students with the skills necessary to address complex global challenges, making intercultural communicative competence an essential element of contemporary higher education.

4. Teachers' beliefs and teaching practices

Language is seen as one of a necessary and useful instrument in our daily life to have communications and corporations. And learning foreign languages are seen as the most fundamental and basic methods to know and comprehend foreign cultures, and is the fundament of improving individual's ICC, as Firthian-Hallidayan functional systemic British Contextualism regarded language is a social phenomenon. For example, English, as a lingua franca, is seen as the most important tool to attain the common goals or aims among diverse people in the world. However, learners' language proficiency and their cultural awareness or sensitivity may be influenced by teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, existing in episodic memory where earlier experiences, episodes or cultural sources of knowledge transmission generate content (Nespor, 1987). Young and Sachdev (2011, p. 84) indicates that for an area as complex as the combination of language, culture, teaching, and learning, the views of educators who have applied experience in the field are likely to be highly relevant. Because teachers are knowledgeable, active thinkers and decision-makers who "make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Moreover, previous research suggests that non-native speakers serving as language may lack confidence in addressing sociocultural contexts (Young & Sachdev, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the significance of examining educators' beliefs and teaching practices, consequently enhancing them to enhance their confidence and sense of responsibility in educating others about their lesser-known cultural contexts. Because teachers' beliefs are seen as "the heart of teaching" (Kagan, 1992, p. 85), because their ideas and mental regulations guiding their teaching practice (Khader, 2012).

In general, belief is personal subjective, experience-based and tacit knowledge (Pehkonen & Pietilä, 2003), also seen as a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive

a person's actions (Zheng, 2009), which plays an important role in individuals' identification and comprehension of the world and themselves (Pajares, 1992).

While teacher beliefs can be described as a collection of conceptual frameworks (Harvey, 198), also known as a system consisting of their pedagogical, epistemological, and self-efficacy beliefs (Levin, 2014); general knowledge of objects, people and events, and their characteristic relationships (Zheng, 2009). Researchers view teachers' beliefs as serving multiple functions: they act as filters through which teachers interpret their experiences, frameworks for tackling challenges they face, and guiding principles for their actions, which are influenced by the social, cultural, political and historical contexts teachers encounter during their careers (Levin, 2014).

However, the issue of research on teachers' beliefs and practices is that an incomplete consideration of teachers' beliefs about teaching and a systematic examination of the relationship between those beliefs and teachers' practices (Kane et al., 2002); a small amount of research providing the insights of relationships among teachers' beliefs, teachers' knowledge, students' knowledge, and students' learning outcomes (Pajares, 1992). The previous research on university teachers' belief is more focused on related topics, such as student learning, academic work, lecturing (Kane et al., 2002); teachers' practical knowledge and practical theories (Levin, 2014). And there are less studies about ICC.

Therefore, this chapter aims to attain the better understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices for the researcher to investigate the specific teaching status of teachers at Faculty of Education UPOL, which contribute to the final outcomes about the specific and concrete pattern of one tiny aspects of Czech university education on development of internationalization. This session clears up the development of teachers' beliefs, relationships between teachers' beliefs and teaching practice as well as, the most important part, teachers' beliefs in ICC education.

4.1 The development of teachers' beliefs

The research on teachers' beliefs was raised last century, Elbaz employed the term *practical knowledge* to describe the teachers' rules of practice, practical principles, and images that guide their actions in 1980s (Levin, 2014). Teachers' situational, personal, social, experiential, and theoretical beliefs are regarded as five dimensions of teachers' rule based on Elbaz's work. Before it is finally determined that teachers' beliefs are as the final term, there were a number of other terms to describe teachers' beliefs, such as personal practical knowledge, practical arguments and practical reasoning, practical theory, practical philosophy, schema, and personal practical theories (ibid.). In 1990s, numerous scholars had intensive discussion about what exactly beliefs and value are, and the difference between them. However, diverse perspectives and numerical opinions persist, potentially stemming from the emergence of new terminology, as well as the inadequacy and complexity of research on teachers' beliefs.

Personal theories, beliefs, and assumptions need to be uncovered before development can occur, enabling critical reflection and then change (Donaghue, 2003). Therefore, student teachers and pre-service teachers should have an comprehensive comprehension about what exactly teachers' belief is in order to further develop professional career, to be an effective decision-maker, and to make meaningful progress in their teaching instruction. Moreover, it is crucial for school administrators and mentors to comprehend the content and origins of teachers' beliefs, as these beliefs significantly impact instructional methods and classroom behaviours (Levin, 2014, p. 50). Failure to fully grasp these beliefs can lead to the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of new educational policies. Therefore, conducting comprehensive investigations and gaining insight into teachers' beliefs will aid in enhancing teaching practices, supporting professional growth, and fostering a greater sense of responsibility and pride among educators.

The elements affect teachers' beliefs could be numerous, for example, the sources of teachers' beliefs, real contexts or situations around them, and stability of teachers'

beliefs (ibid.).

The sources of teachers' beliefs could be numerous. In order to examine and investigate the resources of teachers' beliefs, Buehl and Fives (2009) conducted research on pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions on beliefs about the origins of teaching knowledge. Results indicate that it consists of formal preparation; formal bodies of information; observational experiences; interactive and collaborative experiences with others; and self-reflection. This research provides inspirations for other scholars and empathize the importance of investigation on teachers' insights about teaching knowledge, which is seen as other elements influence their beliefs, implicitly showing through their behaviours. As Levin (2014) observes, teachers' beliefs and behaviours can't be seen separately from situations in which they occur, including the political, social, economic and educational environment. McMullen et al. (2005) investigated the teachers in childhood education from U.S, China, Taiwan (The Republic of China), Korea and Turkey. These five countries might be seen as a highlight of this research, since some scholars attach the importance of taking a cross-cultural or intercultural perspectives in research, which makes the results of studies could be utilized to a large extent and the high possibility to replicate the research procedure in other countries and circumstances. They utilized Teachers Beliefs Scale (TBS) to get the average score of teachers' beliefs. Results show that the similarities between countries' culture make the same values in early childhood education, such China, Taiwan (The Republic of China) and Korea, which the whole society is deep grounded the strong values of Confucianism. It is also connected to philosophical values. Moreover, Levin (2014) wrote a short, but thorough paragraph about the change in stability of teachers' beliefs. According to his observations, there is no certainty whether teachers' beliefs would change, thus it is essential to conduct any further research focusing on the way, time, and reasons of their change; whether such changes is visible or observable; and the external elements causing shifts.

4.2 The relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices

Scholars might define teachers' beliefs from various perspectives. From a general perspective, belief is "an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (Pajares, 1992, p. 310). And this kind of judgment could have different meanings for teachers, which some beliefs are explicit, while others are implicit within a complex, interconnected, and multidimensional system (Buehl & Beck, 2014).

Teacher's beliefs and teaching practices as two factors can influence each other. Beliefs are regarded as the prerequisites of individuals' behaviours or actions in real life (ibid.). However, practices in pedagogical settings or people's behaviours partly and unconsciously manifest from one's beliefs or values from deep heart.

Research studied the relationship between beliefs and practices among three ESL teachers in intermediate communication lessons. Basturkmen et al. (2004) conducted a case study to examine whether teachers' beliefs and their behaviours in classroom keep consistency and to what extent. They observed 48 courses lasting 40 to 65 mins conducting by 12 teachers at a private language school in Auckland, New Zealand. Moreover, they also self-report, which includes in-depth interviews, cued response scenarios and stimulated recall, as methods of data collection to gain more deep perceptions of three male native speakers' beliefs of English language communicative teaching styles or forms. The average years of students involved in this research is 22-year-old from Korea, China, Japan, and Taiwan. During the procedure of observations in classrooms, a wireless clip-on microphone is used to attach teachers in each lesson, which made records of all class interactions, including communications between teacher and students, pair and group talking sessions. And it was transcribed into texts. Research results show that teachers' beliefs and practices differ from diverse aspects of focus on form. Participants have distinguished forms in type, complexity, and response, while they reached agreements in linguistic focus and source. And based on their individual differences, such as teaching experience, they have a huge argument on what linguistic forms should be the object of focus on form. Furthermore, what teacher hold

teaching views as their beliefs is not shown up in teaching practice. For example, teachers think that their technical knowledge should be employed to deal with learners' incorrect use of linguistic forms. In contrast, teachers utilize their experience or practical knowledge.

Another example that supports this statement is Kuzborska (2011). She conducted an evaluative-interpretative study to investigate the relationship between university teachers' beliefs of eight teachers in the Lithuanian university context and their teaching practices among advanced learners in reading class. The similar methods for data collection were employed, such as classroom observation; video stimulated recall, along with semi-structured interviews; and document data analysis. The outcome suggests that teachers prefer to utilize skills-based teaching style to conduct reading courses, attaching the importance of vocabulary, translation and reading aloud, and group discussions of texts, which is not fully associated with their beliefs.

On the contrary, teaching practices evolve over time, often leading to adjustments in teachers' beliefs. Moreover, the impact of these practices on beliefs can be observed in their teaching self-efficacy beliefs or other ability-related beliefs (Buehl & Beck, 2014). For instance, Rushton et al. (2011) employed oral interviews, written reflections, and in-class observations to explore the change of beliefs and practices among seven high school chemistry teachers in a one-year professional development (PD) project. The result shows that they emerged numerous views about teaching reform due to deep self-reflections, which made a huge change in their beliefs.

Beliefs are seen by teachers as a systematic framework for problem-solving and course-planning, and a guideline for actions (Buehl & Beck, 2014). In spite of these two functions, beliefs can be also seen as filters for interpreting their experiences (Levin, 2014). However, study evidence suggests that teaching practices may not always be in accordance with teachers' beliefs, and what they implement in actual classrooms may not accurately reflect their beliefs (Liu, 2011). Liu (2011) investigated the relationship between beliefs and practices among primary teachers in Taiwan, which 1139 teachers filled out the questionnaire. Research findings show that these participants hold the

views or beliefs of student-centred teaching styles. Even though teachers adjusted their teaching activities and instruction details based on the local educational policy, what teachers believe in still distinguish from their teaching action and behaviours.

To summarize, teachers' beliefs and teaching practices are partially intertwined, shaped by a combination of internal and external factors. This is illustrated in the following diagram proposed by Buehl and Beck (2014).

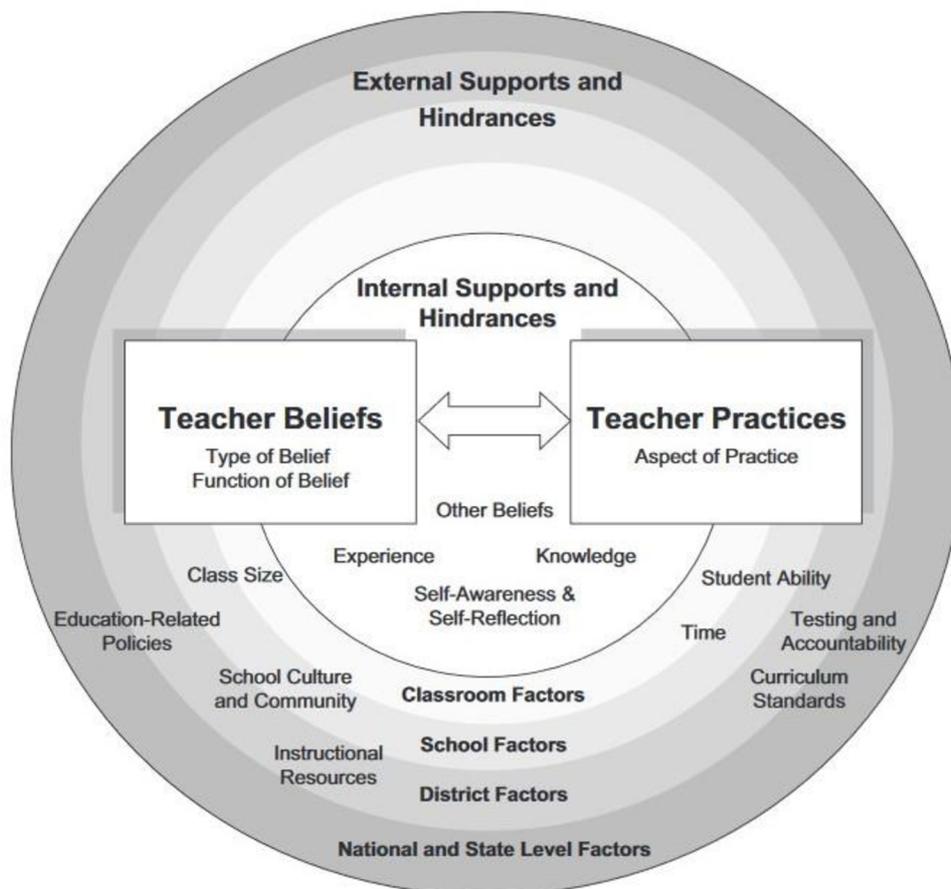


Figure 3 Relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in a system of internal and external supports and hindrances (Buehl and Beck, 2014)

Such internal factors embrace other beliefs, experiences, knowledge, as well as teachers' self-awareness or self-reflection. Other beliefs, in other words, mean that teachers hold beliefs regarding their capabilities and self-efficacy, which serve as mediators in shaping their beliefs about teaching content. These beliefs are manifested through their confidence in their knowledge and skills, as well as their behaviours in the classroom. More importantly, lack of sufficient knowledge of content or subjects

could contribute to teaching practices without fully connected with their beliefs. Furthermore, relationships of the extent of teachers' self-awareness or self-reflection and the consistency between beliefs and practices are directly proportional.

External factors outnumber internal factors, containing aspects classroom, school, district, national and state level factors. From the perspective of classroom issues, students' ability, students' attitudes, classroom management and class size could challenge current teachers' beliefs. The support or weakness issues stemming from school factors may include administration, parental support, colleagues, and the availability of resources within the school. Moreover, national education policies, curriculum standards, as well as teachers' role in political and social environments are also considered essential factors at the national level.

4.3 Teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in ICC

The role of teachers is to be a mediator helping students build up their sense of cultural awareness or formulate the ability to improve their ICC. In the course of this procedure, teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices affected by beliefs might have a huge influence on students' abilities to make improvements in these aspects or their future life. Furthermore, the research on teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in ICC is more focusing on linguistic knowledge or foreign language teaching and learning, mainly for example English. Some research also involves students' experience as a part of research dimension. Since the importance of develop ICC is taken into account in official documents launched by the Council of Europe's Common European framework of reference for languages.

Gay (2014) made a thorough review article about teachers' beliefs in culture diversity via a Google search and the University of Washington libraries worldwide website getting 100 articles. He indicates seven main issues in this research field: (1) the majority of research objects tend to choose pre-teachers, only few studies focus on on-service teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. (2) the population on research lack

balance. Participants of numerous research are white people. Coloured people or people from other continents, such as Asians or Africans, are less likely to be studied. (3) lack of research on teachers' views about themselves as a culturally diverse figure. Since white teachers are regarded as main and fundamental supporters to reinforce white identity, power, and privilege. (4) few research on instructors of other disciplines, in spite of foreign languages, scholars, college staffs and administrators. Their beliefs showing up by behaviours and attitudes could make an implicit or explicit effect on candidates' academic outcomes. (5) the arguments on the ambiguity of the beneficiary groups of ICC education. Some teachers hold views that ICC education should be involved in primary school rather than secondary education, while other teachers persist that some cultural diversity issues are more controversial, which can't be taught at all at school. (6) the separate studies in teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. Study and practice of teaching is grounded in our conceptions (Pratt, 1992). In other words, beliefs and teaching practices are as different parts of teachers' values, but inextricably interconnected. (7) the study results on teachers' beliefs of cultural diversity mostly remain the same, though research have raised since 1980s and 1990s. As Zeichner (1993) drew a following conclusion:

Research has also shown that many teacher education students come to their preparation programs viewing student diversity as a problem rather than a resource; that their conceptions of diversity are highly individualistic (e.g., focusing on personality factors like motivation and ignoring contextual factors like ethnicity); and that their ability to talk about student differences in thoughtful and comprehensive ways is very limited... These students generally have very little knowledge about different ethnic groups in the United States, their cultures, their histories, their participation in and contributions to life in the United States... and often have negative attitudes about cultural groups other than their own. (p. 137)

Several studies are focusing on English language teachers. For example, Young and Sachdev (2011) made research to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices of English language teachers in USA, UK, and France, based on Byram's ICC model, employing mixed research, collecting data by multiple methods, such as diaries, focus groups, and

questionnaires. Results shows that teachers attach the importance of ICC education more or less. However, it still exists lots of severe issues, for instance, the active neglect of education in ICC, teachers' unwillingness to put it into practice, lack of learner's motivations, insufficient textbook, less support on conducting ICC course, less assessment tools and official evaluating procedure, and ethical controversial issues. As well as there is not any formal teaching training, standard assessment protocol, ICC certification. Some teachers still believe that ICC education is more about the daily life and routines of target country and language. To sum up, nowadays, it still tough to conduct or launch activities to boost ICC both on teachers and students, since some teachers hold the perspective that other educational issues are much more important than ICC education.

Similarly, study from Lázár (2011) investigated two Hungarian pre-service English language teachers employing pre-course and post-course questionnaires with the trainees, lesson observations and in-depth interviews. This research also examines what factors make influence in teachers' ICC and recommendations on educational reform. Research findings indicate that the impact of beliefs of ICC education on teaching practice is quite influential. Moreover, one method to improve ICC is to travel and frequently involve in intercultural interactions, which however, could be seen as the alternative approach, while individuals consistently obtain the first-hand experience of minority cultures. More importantly, language teachers should cooperate together to integrate IC education into classroom, not only focusing self-teaching characteristics. The textbooks should be selected strictly and precisely to forbid any unauthentic and unproven cultural content. Another factor that can't be ignored is formal, systematic, and continuable teacher training. Thus, teachers could get more assistance and inspirations of teaching strategies to effectively communicate with diverse cultural colleagues, which to some degree make changes in their beliefs and impact their attitudes and behaviours to implicitly make better influences on students' cultural awareness.

These prior studies primarily focus on foreign language teachers, overlooking

university teachers who instruct in other disciplines. Further investigation is warranted among teachers of pedagogy or didactics, as they shape the beliefs and teaching practices of future educators, continuing them across generations. This effect can influence students across various disciplines over time. Moreover, the majority of samples are from larger countries such as China, the USA, and the UK, neglecting other nations like the Czech Republic. It is essential to conduct a thorough and in-depth investigation into Czech education, particularly within Czech universities, as they represent a potential pathway for the nation's future development.

5. Theoretical framework: intercultural communicative competence

5.1 Deardorff's (2006) Process Model of Intercultural Competence

Initially, Deardorff (2004) visualizes the components and detailed descriptions of each element, which make it clear to understand the relationship between these aspects.

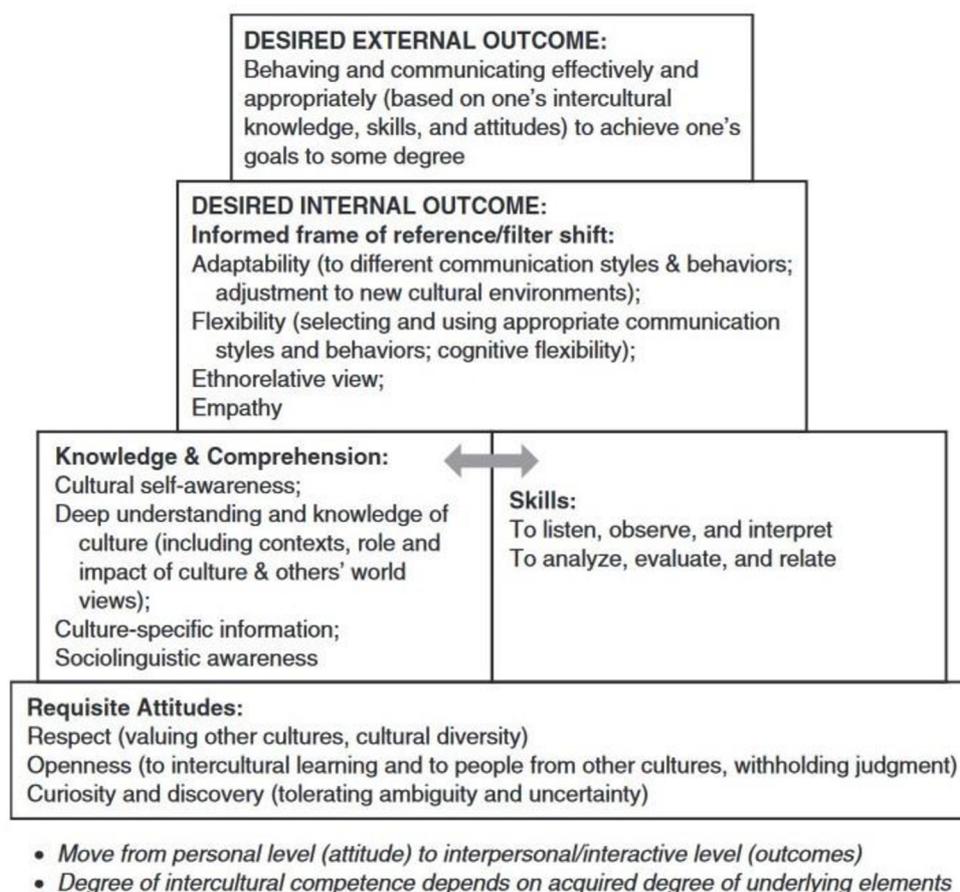


Figure. 4 Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2004)

This model includes four interdependent layers, each integral to the overall framework. The foundational layer centres on attitude, requiring individuals to embody respect, openness, curiosity, and a spirit of discovery. Proceeding upwards, the subsequent layer encompasses knowledge and comprehension, as well as skills, which are mutually reinforcing. This layer cultivates learners to arise cultural and

sociolinguistic awareness, to foster deep understanding and knowledge of culture and culture-specific information, and to develop the ability to listen, observe, interpret, analyse, evaluate and relate. The third layer emphasizes adaptability and flexibility in navigating diverse cultural contexts, alongside fostering empathy and an ethnorelative worldview. In summary, these levels culminate at the top level, where external skills and knowledge are combined with internal character and traits to achieve effective behaviour and communication in international interactions, thus contributing to the achievement of personal goals to a large extent.

Deardorff (2006) used a Delphi methodology in which 23 intercultural experts participated, resulting in the first research study to document consensus among these leading intercultural experts on the definition and components of intercultural competence. By using the grounded theory and inductive technologies to generate a model based on experts' own perspectives and theories. And she formulated two models of ICC.

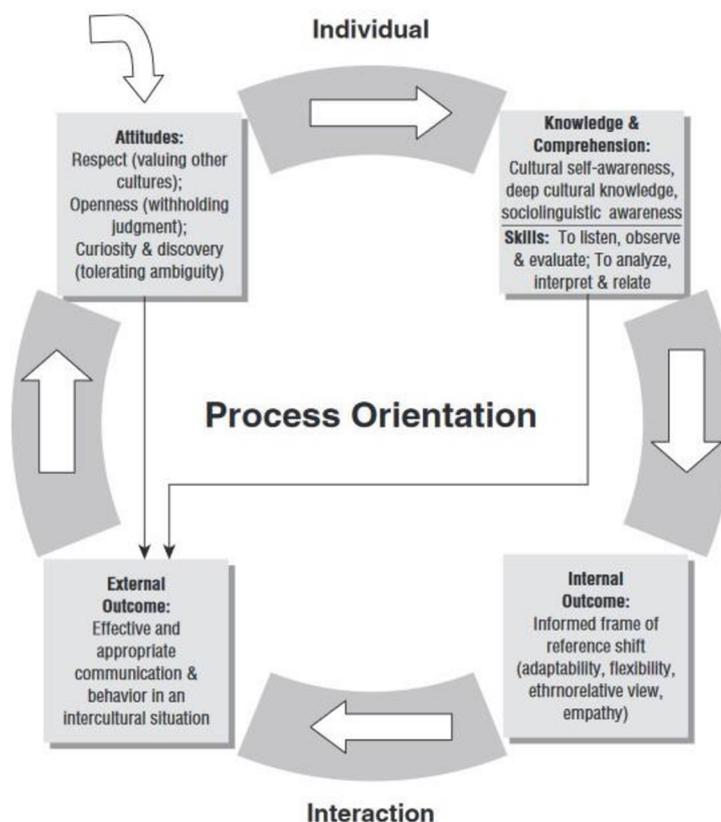


Figure. 5 Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006)

The second model, consisting of similar components as previous model, operates as a closed loop, indicating that the acquisition of intercultural competence is an ongoing process that never ends. It includes four sessions, commencing with the crucial component of attitude, progressing from the individual level encompassing attitude, knowledge, and comprehension to the interaction level, also referred to as external outcome. As illustrated in the figure, these four sessions are interconnected and indispensable, forming a cohesive and integrated framework. And as Deardorff states, the degree of individuals' ICC fully depends on acquired degree of attitudes, knowledge/comprehension, and skills.

5.2 Byram's (1997) Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Byram argues that it is necessary to consider social context when to describe the intercultural communication (p. 40). Therefore, he formulated a model that is helpful for teachers to teach and assess. He has established four *savoirs* as its basic dimensions: *savoirs* (knowledge), *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating), *savoir être* (attitudes), *savoir-apprendre/faire* (skills of discovering and/ or interacting). And these four factors can be acquired by experiences and reflections.

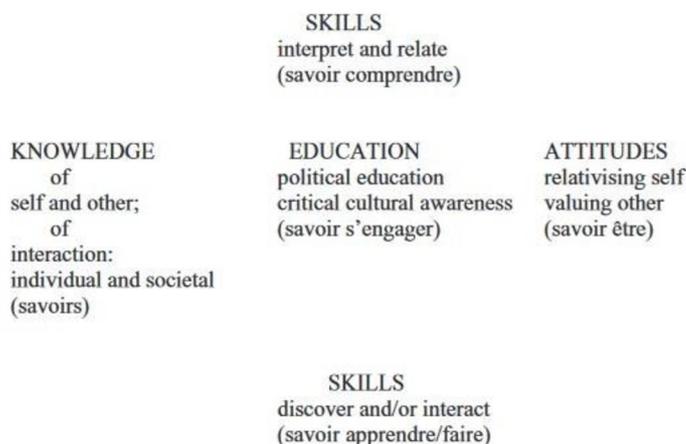


Figure. 6 Dimensions of Intercultural (Communicative) Competence (Byram, 1997)

Attitudes here in this model indicate that different perspectives in cultural meaning, beliefs, values and behaviours to people. Though keeping positive attitude might be helpful in an intercultural communication, it also could be barriers in a real successful effective interaction. The ability to “decentre” (Byram et al., 2020, p. 45) is the main issue and the highest level. People in interactions are supposed be the attitude of curiosity and openness, stop making any judgement about other’s beliefs, values and behaviours, and also temporarily give up their own beliefs, values and behaviours, thinking issues from other’s point of view.

Knowledge includes one’s own cultural group, automatically acquired by social experiences, and interactors’ culture and groups, which is of significance interactions but acquired by practice. Only attaining this knowledge is not sufficient, in a successful interaction, it also acquires people’s skills in understanding, relating and comparing.

Skills is the ability to interpret and relate based on existing knowledge. To fully understand specific document and circumstances and relate these to comparison with their own cultural group. Also the skills of discovery is another fundamental ability to build up the specific knowledge and understanding of beliefs, values and behaviours based on specific cultural circumstances.

All these components are related. The relationships between attitudes and knowledge are not just simple causation. They are interconnected, the more knowledge interactors get, the more positive and open attitudes they increase. Also, the comparison between one’s own culture and other’s cultures, judging own culture, and trying to understand other’s cultures also could make improvement in positive attitude. Therefore, in a smoothly effective interactions individuals are supposed to apply the knowledge they have, improving and making progress about their previous existing knowledge, keep their positive attitude with sensitively cultural awareness and operate the skills in interpreting, relating, discovering, and interacting (p. 45-49).

The model above is describing the Intercultural Competence (IC), which is not the Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) according to Byram. The biggest difference between them is that ICC require

individuals have linguistic competence as mediators to cope with the issues encountered in the course of communication, which the complexity of cultural context is much higher. It also demands learners to formulate critical thinking and reflection. Here following is the comprehensive model of ICC, of which limitation is that it does not include the non-verbal communication.

As this figure describes, the acquisition of ICC could be at classroom, fieldwork, or by independent learning. The five components of Intercultural Communication mentioned (IC) above are as a whole included in the ICC, which also includes sociolinguistic and discourse competence.

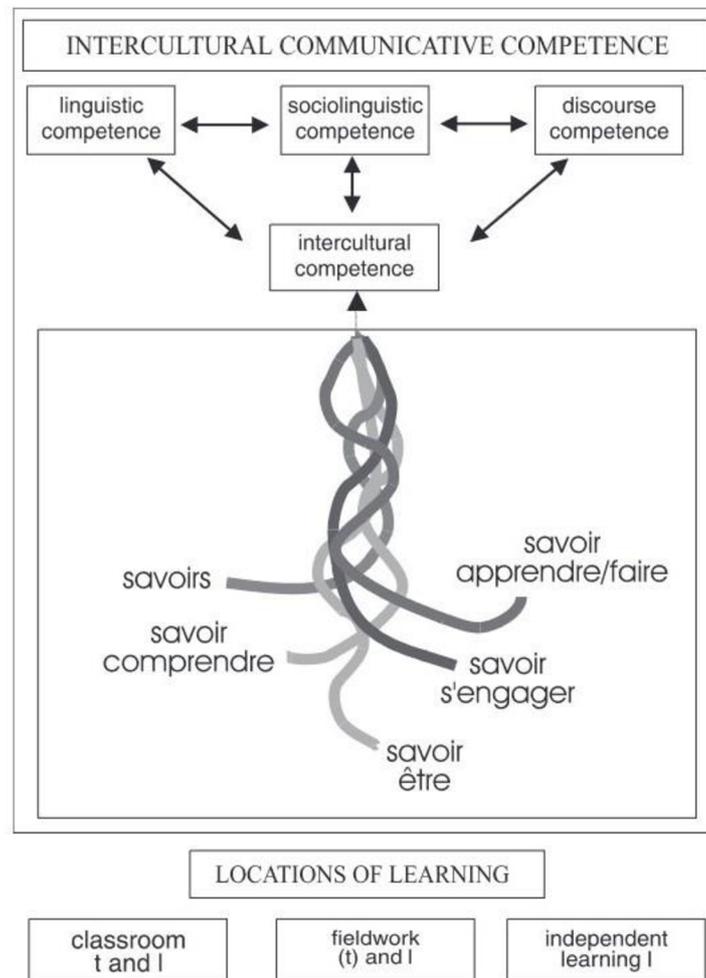


Figure. 7 Intercultural Communicative Competence and locations of learning (Byram, 1997)

B. Practical Part

6. Research design

6. 1 Research methodology

The main methodology in this thesis is qualitative research. Qualitative research is regarded as an interpretative approach to explore and describe social phenomena in an inner way. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) proposed qualitative research consists of interpretive practices that render the world observable through various means. These practices reshape our perception by converting the world into a string of representations such as fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and personal memos. Qualitative researchers investigate phenomena within their natural environments, aiming to comprehend and interpret them based on the significance individuals attribute to them.

Moreover, the key features of qualitative research design emphasize more on the process and “a concern with ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions” rather than numerical issues (Ritchie et al., 2003, p.3). Based on the research aims of this thesis, the research questions aim to investigate and explore university teachers’ perceptions on ICC, their beliefs and teaching practice in order to understand the fundamental nature of a social phenomenon or an issue, which are the main characteristics of qualitative research – “not well-understood” and “deeply-rooted” (ibid, p.37). What’s more, participants’ personal experiences will be utilized as data to support research findings, which to some extent could be sensitive to interviewees. Personal perceptions and beliefs are more sophisticated and abstract, which is hard to present in a numerical form and should be analysed based on existing theories or previous related findings.

Furthermore, the challenges in recruiting additional participants, aiming for at least 50, along with university teachers’ tight schedules, linguistic barriers, and the researcher’s own preferences, are key factors that led to the selection of qualitative

research as the chosen methodology.

6. 2 Research aims and research questions

The initial motivation for conducting this research is the increasing communication demands among people from diverse cultural backgrounds. At the same time, the conflicts emerging from intercultural interactions, such as cultural misunderstanding, intensive relationships among countries, institutions or individuals, unfriendly behaviours towards people, etc., would draw more attention from people and should be dealt with in a more systematic and effective way. These issues could even happen in educational settings. University teachers are regarded as having one of the most essential roles in boosting a healthy environment or smooth atmosphere for students to conduct effective intercultural engagements. UPOL is listed as one of the top NO. 5 universities and the second oldest university in the Czech Republic, which could be seen as the persuasive authority to improve and upgrade ICC of the whole of Olomouc, which is a so-called university town. From these civic and educational dimensions, university teachers are seen as a vital group in investigating and clarifying the complexities and differences of their perceptions and beliefs of ICC and pedagogical approaches that solve intercultural issues encountered in the classroom. By exploring these domains, this research contributes to the broader discourse on intercultural competence in higher education, its role in a multicultural academic environment, and the formulation of general theoretical patterns related to specific educational settings.

Based on the aims of this study, I formulated two main research questions and two sub-questions:

RQ1: How do university teachers at Palacký University Olomouc perceive intercultural communicative competence (ICC)?

RQ2: What are university teachers' core beliefs about ICC in the context of their teaching at Palacký University Olomouc?

RSQ1: How do teachers' beliefs affect their teaching practices?

RSQ2: How does intercultural experience influence their teaching practices?

6.3 Participants and setting

Because of this qualitative research, non-probability methods will be utilized for selecting participants, which are deliberately selected by the researcher due to their specific and common features or familiarizations in a certain research area (Ritchie et al., 2003). Non-probability methods include three concrete techniques to select research samples. The best technique fitted in this study is purposive sampling, which is in a literal way purpose-based selection. This approach guarantees that “all the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter are covered” (p. 113) and explores more connected features related to research questions due to sufficient diversity included (ibid.). Therefore, the sample selections will be kept in a small size. Furthermore, one characteristic of qualitative research is in high intensity, which makes it harder to conduct and analyse numerous interviews, documents, and observations in a one year (ibid.). In the course of the procedure of data collection and initial data analysis, the researcher revised the Interview Protocol and selected a further suitable sample to refine the upcoming potential categories or description of data. The researcher will not continue this process until it reaches data saturation.

The researcher was assisted by her supervisor and another teacher to find and contact six participants, who are now working at the Faculty of Education. The varied nationalities of the six participants, coupled with their frequent work-related travel abroad, ensure they engage in numerous international or intercultural interactions with a diverse array of individuals. This background enriches their understanding of intercultural issues within educational contexts, allowing them to approach these challenges with a more systematic and global perspective. What’s more, their high-quality English language competence and the researcher’s disability to speak the Czech language or other languages are other reasons that they were selected as participants.

In the conduct of interviews, a quiet, private, and relaxing environment plays a crucial role in the overall quality of both the audio and the interview itself. Such settings can put interviewees at ease, enabling them to concentrate more effectively on their

thoughts and articulate them more clearly. In contrast, a lack of comfort can lead to tension and anxiety among participants, often resulting in awkward and less than detailed responses (King et al., 2018). Therefore, the place was selected by interviewees' convenience, mainly in their office and during their working time.

	The interview			
Number of the interviewees	Date	Place	Language	Length
1	19.12.2023	Personal place	English	33 mins
2	22.1.2024	Empty classroom	English	49 mins
3	6.2.2024	Office	English	32 mins
4	8.2.2024	Office	English	35 mins
5	12.2.2024	Office	English	37 mins
6	15.2.2024	Office	English	41 mins

Table 1: Information on the procedure of data collection

6.4 Data collection

Before conducting a formal interview, the researcher contacted them in advance via email to settle down the locations and schedule. It is important to leave the interviewees the right to choose an interview location that is more familiar to them. What's more, the researcher sent them Informed Consent and Interview Protocol according to their needs. Some of these interviewees might need to review the interview procedure and questions ahead of time in order to understand the terms mentioned in the Interview Protocol, think about them, and make constructions of their words.

In the procedure of interviews, the interviews were conducted in English and in an ease and comfortable way. All participants agreed to the conditions presented in Informed Consent. The researcher strictly followed the ethical issues while studying, as well as kept a neutral position, being polite and a positive listener. The researcher was

trying to conduct a small talk with participants, which made them relax, and asked permission to record their voice. At the beginning of this interview, the simple and common questions related to their responsibilities at the Faculty of Education and their teaching duration were mentioned. After that, the researcher asked deeper and wider questions about the research topics. By asking open questions, showing willingness and interest to listen and using extra sub-questions to explore more details and investigate their perspectives, beliefs and behaviours in the classroom. At the end of the interview, the researcher asked whether they had any further recommendations and extra information or opinions related to these interview questions. After that, the researcher appreciates their participants and their valuable answers as contributions to the thesis.

The instruments for collecting data consist of Informed Consent (see Appendix 1) and Interview Protocol (see Appendix 2). The Informed Consent makes clarifications of the research title, research purpose, possible benefits for interviewees, no existing potential risks, confidentiality, freedom to withdraw, researcher's contact details, as well as the agreement signatures from participants. Based on the research aims and models of ICC formulated by Deardorff (2006) and Byram (1997), the Interview Protocol consists of 19 questions, with some potential follow-up questions, and five parts related to research questions, which are participants' personal information including their educational degrees, teaching and administrative responsibilities at faculty, teaching durations, as well as their frequency of work-related travelling abroad; participants' perceptions about ICC, focusing on detailed questions about ICC components; participants' beliefs and teaching practices, aiming to explore the relationships between them and how their views on ICC have an impact on their beliefs and practices; and participants' personal experience of teacher training related to ICC or similar international programs, aiming to investigate teachers' views about conducting these programs and the current situations at UPOL, serving as future recommendations for faculty and future research directions. Due to the features of semi-structured interviews, some of these questions will not be asked in order, and according to the situation on-site and answers, the researcher will ask sub-questions related to the

main questions.

The interviews took 37 minutes on average. The shortest took 32 minutes and the longest took 49 minutes. All these participants answered questions thoroughly asked by interviewers.

6.5 Data analysis

In this thesis, the grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss will be used to analyse data. This analysis technique is suitable for drawing a specific conclusion from collected data fitted in educational settings at UPOL. One of a special feature of grounded theory is the high connection between data collection and research analysis, these two actions are in “an ongoing cycle” throughout the whole research (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, p.35). The reasons why grounded theory is employed can be summed up as following:

1. According to Corbin and Strauss, grounded theory provides an explanation of a specific phenomenon or issue. This thesis aims to explore an explicit explanation of university teachers' perception of ICC, how teachers' beliefs and teaching practices connect with ICC, and how these aspects have impacts on current educational status.
2. Grounded theory is seen as a practical approach to revision and updating as new knowledge emerges (ibid). The finalized theory, specifically tailored to the Faculty of Education, is open to evolution and further development by other researcher. These efforts can lead to the formulation of educational policies or enhancements suitable for various times and future diverse educational backgrounds or state educational policies.
3. These procedures offer a pathway to discover fresh insights into long-term challenges, as well as to explore new and emergent fields requiring research. Since the research topic of ICC is highly emerging and developing, and there is

less research studying Czech universities, at a specific faculty. They also serve to reveal the beliefs and meanings that drive actions, look into both rational and irrational dimensions of behaviour, and illustrate the interaction of logic and emotion in shaping individuals' responses to events and their approaches to problem-solving through action and interaction (ibid).

The procedure of grounded theory follows three steps, open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Moreover, memos are a vital step in data collection and analysis. Memo is an abbreviation of these meanings: Mapping research activities, Extracting meaning from the data, Maintaining momentum, and Opening communication (Birks et al., 2008). It is a technique to record the researcher's thoughts, feelings, insights, and ideas, which is regarded as a fundamental session when conducting grounded theory.

6. 6 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations should be highly considered as the most important issues at the beginning of research till the end of presenting the research report. The following five aspects should be taken into account:

1. That research should be worthwhile and should not make unreasonable demands on participants. (Ritchie et al., 2003, p.78)
2. That participation in research should be based on informed consent. (ibid.)
3. That participation should be voluntary and free from enforcement or pressure. (ibid.)
4. That adverse consequences of participation should be avoided, and risks of harm known. (ibid.)
5. That confidentiality and anonymity should be respected. (ibid.)
6. The interviewer should keep in mind that their purpose is to collect information,

not make any judgments on participants' responses, even though their beliefs and values are significantly different. (Corbin & Strauss, 2007)

7. The researchers should keep themselves in good mental and physical health. Otherwise, they can't make equal judgments and think critically about research. (ibid.)

7. Result

7.1 Open codes

Open coding is a descriptive process of reflecting the data sets, which allows the researcher to obtain new views on the research phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Based on participants' responses, the researcher is trying to determine the similarities and differences between their views and experiences and make comparisons to formulate more abstract, inclusive, comprehensive labels or categories. The codes originated from the analysis are as follows:

1. **Cultural knowledge and education**

- Willingness to obtain cultural knowledge
- Critical perceptions of the impact of knowledge in education
- The role of basic cultural information in fostering cultural sensitivity
- The importance of knowledge for teachers and students

2. **Personal qualities/attitudes**

- Fundamental qualities/attitudes: openness, respect, tolerance, acceptance, inclusive, humility and empathy
- Individual's curiosity about culture
- Beliefs of people's kindness

3. **Abilities/ skills in intercultural settings**

- Strategies for cultural adaptation: observations, imitations
- Experiencing and addressing cultural conflicts and stereotypes
- Mutual cultural understanding
- The ability and willingness to engage
- The ability of critical/global thinking

4. **Cultural perception and critique**

- The ability to "decentre"

- Critical cultural awareness: analytical reflections
- Self-reflection and comparison within cultural frameworks
- Critical awareness of cultural differences and stereotypes

5. Language and intercultural communication

- The significance of language proficiency
- Developing communicative competence and strategies for intercultural interaction
- The challenges of language barriers
- The role of language diversity in enriching educational experiences
- The importance of non-verbal communication
- Factors that influence effective communication: politics, media, family, personalities

6. Diversity of cultural experiences and personal growth

- Valuing diversity through cultural and culinary experiences
- The impact of cultural experiences on professional and personal developments
- Exploring and navigating cultural differences in social norms
- The role of intercultural experiences in expanding horizons and perspectives
- Challenges and growth from intercultural communication and cooperation
- The mutual learning in international/intercultural settings

7. Travel and cultural exposure

- The motivations of travelling for the intercultural experience: Erasmus Mobility
- The benefits of participating in international programs, e.g. Erasmus, Aurora
- The impact of travel on intercultural communicative competence
- The aspiration to engage with diverse cultures through travel

8. Stereotypes and intercultural understanding

- Stereotypes as a barrier in intercultural interactions
- Inevitability of stereotypes
- Strategies for recognizing and overcoming stereotypes
- Self-reflection in altering prejudiced perceptions
- The influence of individual and group experiences in shaping cultural stereotypes

9. Teaching practices in intercultural settings

- Teachers' beliefs and teaching practices influence students' ICC
- The responsibility of educators in facilitating intercultural education
- Teachers as facilitators and student supporters
- Strategies for engaging students in a culturally diverse educational environment
- Teaching strategies: collaborative and interactive teaching method, effective classroom policy, encouragement of English use
- Strategies for integrating cultural knowledge and awareness into teaching practices
- The influence of personal and cultural experiences on teaching practice

10. Professional Development and Institutional Support in Intercultural

Competency

- The necessity of ICC among university teachers
- Both positive and negative thoughts about conducting intercultural training
- The importance of life-long learning for developing ICC
- Issues: the infrequency of intercultural training for educators, out-of-date information
- The inspiration of education from international/intercultural cooperations

11. Equality and intercultural ethics

- The role of equality and inclusivity in fostering intercultural unity
- The importance of equal treatment in diverse educational settings
- The necessity of recognizing common humanity in intercultural education
- Strategies for supporting students from diverse backgrounds

The following are examples of open coding with the researcher's memo.

Data	Open codes
<p>Interviewee 5</p> <p>If I had time, I would prefer something, but I still have some more important courses in my head like first aid. But if I had time after these courses, I've completed, I might be interested in it. So it's not so necessary for me.</p>	Negative thoughts about conducting intercultural training
<p>Interviewee 6</p> <p>If there are some courses for workers at the lifelong learning centre. Let's say a few lessons per year for beginning, I could join to see whether I am doing wrong or good. To check my competencies, but also I think for people who never have contacts, I think for them it should be good for sure.</p>	Positive thoughts about conducting intercultural training
<p>Memo</p> <p>Why do some teachers attach importance to ICC training while others do not? The reasons could be related to their nationalities, teaching responsibilities, or lack of time and energy. However, from an international student's perspective, it is essential for university teachers to attend formal training about ICC, which, to some extent, could foster the internationalization of schools and help foreign students integrate into the local community. What kind of institutional support can better foster ICC in university teachers?</p>	

Table 2: Memo 1

Data	Open codes
<p>Interviewee 1</p> <p>The benefits was that I could get along with almost everyone... But the challenges which connected my culture is all the time I don't want to be the one who have loud voice... So sometimes I feel hesitant and I don't have enough courage to speak out a lot.</p>	Critical awareness of own culture
<p>Interviewee 2</p> <p>But I said no, I am not. I mean, no, I am not yet or I need to learn a lot of because like, yeah... I know that sometimes I did some mistakes in international communication, so I have to work on myself pretty hard...</p>	Critical self-reflection in intercultural interactions

<p>Interviewee 4 We have a specific sense of humour, for example, that might be sometimes for other cultures, a bit sharp maybe.</p>	<p>Critical awareness of own culture</p>
<p>Memo In intercultural communications, the ability to “decentre” and critical cultural awareness are essential competencies, which require individuals to analyse or think about values or behaviours from others who are engaging. These abilities could be presented by teachers through daily teaching practices unconsciously or deliberately.</p>	

Table 3: Memo 2

7.2 Axial codes

Axial coding is the second step of grounded theory, aiming to figure out potential connections among the main open codes, which is the basis for selective coding and establishing the final framework. According to (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), this process follows a “coding paradigm” model including phenomenon, causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies and consequences.

Phenomenon is a term indicating the question of “what happened?” or “what is happening?”. The researcher tries to determine the “repeated pattern” (p. 130) of existing things, events or people’s behaviours.

Causal conditions are a set of events or incidents that lead to the occurrence of the phenomenon.

Context is a specific set of properties that pertain to the phenomenon.

Intervening conditions are the external factors that weaken or enhance the strategies for addressing a phenomenon, which also clarify the diverse perceptions among participants.

Action/interaction strategies are the methods or processes used to manage, respond to, or work with the phenomenon.

Consequences are the outcomes or results of employing those strategies.

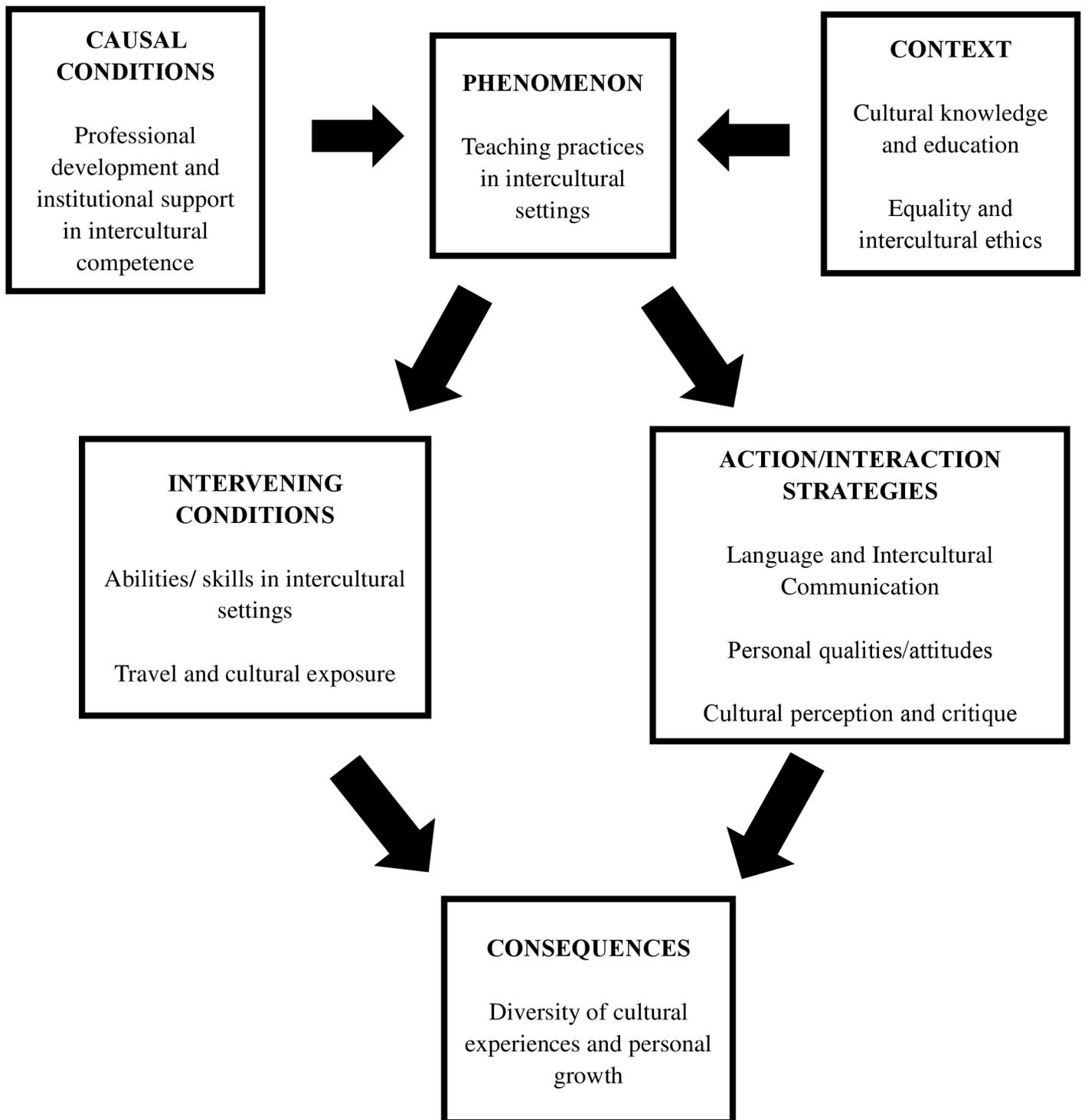


Table 4: Conceptual map of ICC

7.3 Selective codes

7.3.1 Phenomenon

The phenomenon is represented by teaching practices in intercultural settings embracing the sub-categories of teachers' beliefs, their teaching strategies, and their roles.

All participants noted a deep connection between their beliefs and their teaching practices, emphasizing how these two aspects mutually influence each other over the course of their teaching careers.

Some interviewees believe that it is their responsibilities to conduct teaching contents about culture and as a spreader of knowledge. The combination of cultural knowledge into class practices “lies mostly on the shoulders of teachers”, aiming to construct a more innovative and enjoyable studying environment for learners (Maijala, 2020). In consequence, they, in the classroom, tend to be a leader in conducting collaborative or interactive activities for students to understand each other better, and they endeavour to cultivate students with knowledge of diverse cultural norms or traditions.

I think the main reason why we have those courses for our students is trying to show them there are so many different type of cultures in the world. And the main aim should be let them understand there are different type of cultures... (Participant 1)

That the student or a pair of students they prepare something about a culture, and the choice depends on them like it will be Roma people, or Vietnamese people. ... So that it's not just sitting and hearing some theoretical information, but we try to do something. (Participant 2)

To express their thoughts so that they could share experiences and also give them opportunities to accept the thoughts, experiences or beliefs from other people. ...we are all here for the purpose of spreading knowledge and develop knowledge. (Participant 6)

Due to the global evolvement, teachers' role in teaching and learning also have undergone a significant shift, which transfer from teacher-cantered to student-centred. As a result, they all believe that they are the spreaders of cultural knowledge and

facilitators or leaders to conduct cultural understanding. This transformation of teachers' role could demonstrate students active learning to be a master to get new knowledge for their own purpose, because it makes a clear orientation of students' responsibilities (Šteh, et al., 2014).

It's kind of facilitators. Like... to connect students with the courses. (Participant 1)

I believe that they were there, but just make them feel comfortable. Accept it. And they learn English at the same time and I am a facilitator. (Participant 3)

In addition, Phalet et al. (2004) perceive that “changes in the social and ethnic composition of student populations have far-reaching implications for educational psychology. Learning and teaching in multicultural classrooms pose a major challenge to both students and teachers (p. 60)”. In consequence, they have attempted to employ multiple strategies to engage students in discussions and formulate a more intercultural communicative environment. Strategies, such as the encouragement of speaking in English, group integration of multiple national students, diverse teaching contents, formulation of an open and freedom of speech atmosphere, as well as incorporation of intercultural case studies or customs to provide real-world context, etc.

I'm trying to find a better way that to engage them more in the class. For example I could provide more interesting content or different ways of teaching... (Participant 1)

I just remind that you should speak English in case they don't feel comfortable with that, so I ask them what can I do for them to feel more comfortable. (Participant 3)

I want to open a place for discussion. I want save place for discussion. And I want save place for sharing, sharing ideas. (Participant 4)

Secondly, if they continue even after that, I will say: OK, let's mix the group more to share our thoughts. And I will try to separate them to put them in divided groups. (Participant 6)

What's more, driven by personal need for professional development, feedback from students is normally seen as a powerful, fundamental and effective source of information (Husain & Khan, 2016). Therefore, the outcomes of the impact of their teaching strategies and beliefs on students can be received from students' feedback,

becoming a motivation for teachers to revise or improve their teaching methods to adjust students' needs, a tool of self-reflection to enhance their skills for further professional development, an approach for institutions or departments to foster a more relevant and involving curriculum, as well as a specific perspectives on the clarity, fairness and effectiveness of assessment system.

So I see those years I've received quite positive review from the students. They are saying that it's very friendly environment and they appreciate that. ...you feel more motivated and you will... it will motivate you to do even better next semester. (Participant 1)

... sometimes by the evaluation I can read that, yeah, there are some small influences at my students. (Participant 2)

7. 3. 2 Casual conditions

It is exactly professional development and institutional support in intercultural competence that more or less carry over their beliefs and make the occurrence of teaching practice in intercultural settings. The teacher training follows a ecological spiral cycle of shifts between research, reflection and practice (Bronfenbrenner 2002 & Morin 2008; also cited Bastos & Araújo e Sá, 2015). It is the process of continuance and development of their beliefs in ICC, since it provides them an opportunity to involve in seminars and workshops to further cultivate their awareness of cultural bias, launch the strategies to foster inclusive classroom environment and experience more intercultural communication. On the other hand, the professional development and institutional support might be the severe issues to further develop teachers' ICC, since their infrequency of participating in related training or they develop this competence in an unsystematic way.

But it was a very long time ago. It was in my master's degree. 20 years ago. It was a summer school in multicultural competence development. (Participant 5)

Not strictly a course for developing my competencies. But I think during the experience for the Erasmus study program, I think that's in indirect way, which developing our competencies. (Participant 6)

But I think it's in the time that I was pregnant... so it's something that is very old... So at the time it was very helpful for me, like about activities, what to do about some sources about some books. But now I'm not using that in my lessons, really concrete because it's too old... (Participant 2)

In addition, there exist different views from teachers about the necessity of teacher training related to ICC. Some teachers hold views that it is necessary to involve in ICC training for teachers to enhance their skills or abilities and this training is seen as a better opportunity for them to learn different perspectives or teaching practices from other colleagues based on diverse culture. On the other hand, other teachers perceive that it is not essential to them because of time constraints and energy consumption. Moreover, there exists more important issues in teaching and learning that they have to deal with.

I can say I would welcome also the course for me and my colleagues. I think it will be enriching and it could help us just to realize what is this competence actually about and maybe you will find some things, some parts of the competence that we need to strengthen them. So yeah, I would welcome this course. (Participant 4)

I think it didn't help. It didn't affect me at the time... But if I had time after these courses, I've completed, I might be interested in it. So it's not so necessary for me. (Participant 5)

However, from the perspectives of other participants, they consider improving or developing one's ICC as a life-long learning experience and learning from others as another effective and efficient way to improve their ICC from different aspects.

So for this project we are sharing experiences like how we could deal with different situations in the classroom. These colleagues from different countries. I wouldn't consider it's as training but it's as opportunity to learn or to say how are the teachers doing in the classroom. You might learn something from them. (Participant 1)

I know that sometimes I did some mistakes in international communication, so I have to work on myself pretty hard, but I have some experiences and I hope that in the future years I will have the opportunities to learn more. So no, not yet. I'm not, but I hope that I will be better and better in the future years. (Participant 2)

... and trying to find the way we can communicate together. And to learn also the person I'm having contact with. (Participant 4)

7.3.3 Context

Cultural knowledge and education, equality and intercultural ethics are often the drivers that cause teachers to integrate diverse cultural knowledge into class practice and be a role of students' supporter.

When the ICC was first mentioned to participants, they all perceived that cultural knowledge is the basic element, and they presented a willingness to learn knowledge. Since culture is as a magnifier for human beings to observe and comprehend the world (García & Dominguez, 1997) and as an explicit way to understand the operating regulations of the world. In addition, a teacher with insufficient cultural knowledge might formulate defective thinking.

And you need to have some necessary knowledge for people who are from different cultures. (Participant 1)

I think it's a set of skills, knowledge and about the cultural background... (Participant 4)

For the perceptions of the impact of knowledge in education, they have different and critical perceptions, such as the thinking shift of importance from acquisition of cultural knowledge to cultivation of attitudes, emphasizing the learners' mental state plays an essential role in process of learning. In addition, they concern about the practical application of knowledge in didactics and the difference or gap between theoretical knowledge and practical applications, since there exist challenges about the effectiveness of how knowledge can be applied to deal with issues in reality.

There should be a lot of knowledge. But I changed my attitude lot of years ago that it's not so much about a lot of new knowledge... (Participant 2)

... it was really important for me like to know other countries and habits and culture and food and people and everything. And of course schools. So to be honest, it was not so very helpful for my main subject, which is didactics, because it's something very specific. (Participant 2)

In classroom practice, equality in corporations and supporting students are of importance, including showing teachers' willingness and kindness to offer help,

creating an inclusive atmosphere for them to open discussions, and neglecting their differences in nationality, culture, etc.

What I already told it's about to offer my help and to offer my support in the academic way ... If we are partner in the project like everybody's at the same level. (Participant 2)

I don't see it like a difference between, you know, nations in this. We are the same. We are really having the same feelings, the same emotions. (Participant 4)

So we need to give them an opportunity to see the diversities and everything surround us. (Participant 6)

7. 3. 4 Intervening conditions

Abilities/skills in intercultural settings, travel and cultural exposure are the external factors that can impact how intercultural teaching and learning are approached.

The essential abilities in intercultural settings are observations and imitations. Since these skills are the most effective and efficient methods or techniques for outsiders to quickly involve in local cultural environments. In addition, this is as a mirror that people can observe and reflect themselves from others' perspectives.

To observe their facial expressions. To find some small hand in the conversation, to observe their body language... (Participant 1)

... sit at some square or drinking coffee or I don't know and just look at the houses, people, clothes, what they are doing, how they are speaking just like watching them... And the second one is imitation. You just look or watch what they are doing and trying to do the same. (Participant 2)

I see other people how to communicate and behave... (Participant 6)

Additionally, another vital skill is mutual understanding in communications. For a deep comprehension of the context, intentions, emotions behind the words, and the effectiveness of communication, it requires teachers and learners to listen actively, be empathetic, and utilize multiple perspectives to consider issues.

The second part is to have some social understanding for different people from different countries.

Be more empathetic. Understanding that different people from different countries are different. (Participant 5)

... trying to understand people. (Participant 6)

Furthermore, travelling is seen as a specific and practical method to improve one's ICC, since it will increase individual's intercultural/international experiences, such as diverse cultures, traditions, and ways of life, which to some extent expand their horizon. In addition, the challenges and issues encountering in travelling could serve as valuable experiences which contribute to develop individual's skills of problem-solving and cultivate their global and critical thinking.

... the best way is when the person travels abroad and experiences it from another side and then gets there. (Participant 3)

I'm trying to but I don't think I have enough experience. Maybe I should travel more. I wish I could travel more not only to European countries but also to other countries that are not in Europe, so my intercultural competence will be probably much higher. (Participant 4)

I want to send them abroad as soon as possible for some experience so that they know have friends from different countries, different nations and that they learn how small Czech Republic is and how can the meaning of some people can be, closed like that and I want them to open the eyes. (Participant 4)

7.3.5 Action/interaction strategies

Personal qualities/attitudes, language and intercultural communication, cultural perception and critique are the strategies employed to facilitate intercultural interactions, which manage and work with the phenomenon.

Openness, politeness, respect, tolerance, acceptance, inclusion, humility and empathy are seen as the fundamental elements of an individual's attitude. These positive aspects of personal attitude not only enhance personal relationships and collective growth but also serve as a practical inner mindset for educators or students to foster a friendly environment with a sense of unity.

I mentioned the respect. And second is open mind... being polite. (Participant 1)

I believe it's connected with common sense and politeness... and maybe empathy. (Participant 3)

Being humble. Not to think too much about yourself, not to expect too much from everybody. Be happy with little. Trying to see positives in everything. (Participant 5)

In addition, the belief of human's kindness also play an essential role.

People generally, if you don't like people, this is a problem everywhere. I think really to like people. (Participant 5)

... you like people or love people that you like to communicate with people... (Participant 2)

What's more, linguistic competence and communicative strategies are the fundamentals for effective and efficient communication in an international environment.

And it's also should focus also on the language itself... trying to find a way of communication. (Participant 4)

Some general communicative skills like using verbal, and nonverbal. (Participant 5)

Lately I learned this language here, so I could participate more in society, such as understand people behaviour and communicate more. I think I was well prepared to accept the differences, in my opinion. (Participant 6)

However, a string of elements could influence the validity and authenticity of interactions, such as politics, family and personalities, especially the media. We are in an information era, due to the economic interest, the stakeholders might publish different types of news with controversial or partly unauthenticated arguments, which reinforce public's stereotypes and prejudices about some cultures, narrowing down and weakening their ability or skills to think diversly and critically.

Well for sure that our students could be affected, not only from school from teachers they could have... a friend who gave them different ideas or from family members their supporting specific politic parties ... (Participant 1)

So generally, people are affected negatively. I think also the media don't help. I think the media are spreading different news. I think they watch their own purposes and political purposes so they don't affect it very positively. (Participant 5)

In order to cope with these issues, it requires individual to develop the ability of “decentre” and critical cultural awareness, which are to analyse meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours from the viewpoint of others and be critical towards stereotypes and prejudices. Since numerous research results indicate that the negative stereotypes weaken individuals’ creativity, flexibility and open-mindedness (Luria, et al., 2017).

The benefits was that I could get along with almost everyone... But the challenges which connected my culture is all the time I don't want to be the one who have loud voice. I think because my culture teaches me that I need to be modest and to be place yourself in a safe situation. So sometimes I feel hesitant and I don't have enough courage to speak out a lot. (Participant 1)

But I said no, I am not. I mean, no, I am not yet or I need to learn a lot of because like, yeah... I know that sometimes I did some mistakes in international communication, so I have to work on myself pretty hard... (Participant 2)

They (Stereotypes) have a huge impact. I can see that almost every day I'm trying to not behave according to them. I'm trying. Of course. Sometimes I'm not successful. I've witnessed that it influences our daily life all the time. It's part of our life and it's very hard to avoid it. (Participant 6)

But usually, you have stereotypes about some let's say groups of people. But... I don't usually you don't meet the groups. You meet the individual and usually the individual people are very nice. (Participant 2)

7. 3. 6 Consequences

All these elements mentioned above together contribute to the final consequence, the diversity of cultural experiences and personal growth, which is beneficial to their teaching practice and provides them with pedagogical inspiration in pedagogy. In addition, based on their diverse cultural experiences and backgrounds, they could integrate their interesting exposure into teaching practice in order to create a more creative and dynamic learning environment.

When I found out it's interesting and I might write down and to see if it possible to use it or to... to apply it in my lesson. ... the point of the training is to give you more information to equip you with different sorts of information. And when you know so many things, when you know there are so many skills well equipped. And enables you to make better choice in teaching practice. (Participant 1)

There was also some small project about alternative music instruments, so it was like music instruments from Africa for example. So it's also for me wow, I didn't know. Thank you. So this is for me the point. (Participant 2)

This is something that they can do only by travelling and by learning to communicate with people from different nations. I think this is something that they cannot be done here. (Participant 4)

In addition, several participants hold extensive intercultural experiences and incorporate intercultural interactions and communication into their everyday lives. This integration highlights their deep engagement with different cultures, not only in professional settings but as an ongoing, enriching aspect of their personal lives.

Yeah, the problem is today I have so many that now have think about like, yeah, exactly like to tell just one is very complicated for me. (Participant 1)

I think I have communicated more than 10 years in intercultural communication. It's part of my daily life. I could say almost every month it's something memorable, so I don't know some. (Participant 6)

In some dimensions, university teachers at the Faculty of Education cultivate deep mindsets and have multiple experiences, which are integrated to their beliefs and represented by teaching practices. However, there is a lack of elements based on Byram's and Deardorff's ICC models.

8. Discussion

The methodology of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was employed in this thesis to formulate an explicit and concrete pattern or theory related to specific educational settings at the Faculty of Education, UPOL. The research questions were set to investigate and explore teachers' perceptions of ICC in higher education, their personal views about the components of being an intercultural competent individual or a teacher, the relationships of their beliefs and teaching practices, as well as the factors influencing their teaching practices.

The findings of this study develop a complex pattern where university teachers, despite holding different and diverse perspectives on ICC. However, they all focus on the essential qualities, personal characteristics, necessary skills and related technologies that define ICC. This consensus is somewhat consistent with the established model of the ICC, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these components within a broader ICC framework. Among these main elements identified, the adequacy of cultural knowledge and proficiency in foreign languages are decisive, emphasizing their fundamental role in effective intercultural communication.

Moreover, the research findings discover a significant relationship between the teachers' personal beliefs about ICC and their pedagogical practices. This connection suggests that teachers' beliefs may influence their approach to teaching, though there is not a direct, one-to-one correspondence with their behaviours in the classroom. This distinction points to the complexity of transforming personal beliefs into teaching practice and potential barriers to fully embodying these beliefs in educational settings.

The study also reveals the unique perspectives of university teachers who are either foreigners or have extensive international or intercultural experience. These individuals demonstrate a more critical view on the concept of ICC, often expressing deeper insights into its complexities and showing a stronger engagement to participating in international environments. Their experiences and backgrounds provide them a unique lens on ICC, highlighting the impact of personal and professional intercultural

encounters in shaping educators' understanding and assessment of ICC. This detailed and critical view emphasizes the importance of diverse experiences in cultivating a powerful and critical comprehension of ICC. It suggests that exposure to different cultures and international contexts enriches teachers' perspectives and enhances their willingness to engage with ICC in more meaningful ways.

8. 1 Interpretations

This thesis aims to draw the outline of the relationships between views of university teachers' perceptions, beliefs and practices regarding ICC. Despite individual differences, there is a common consensus on its core components. This consensus has some similar features with established ICC models, emphasizing the integral role of cultural knowledge and linguistic competence. These findings draw attention to the necessity for educational institutions to prioritize ICC development, incorporating comprehensive cultural and language education into the curriculum. It discovers that the integration of cultural insights and linguistic skills is not merely an added value but a critical dimension of comprehensive education in our increasingly globalized world.

The cultural knowledge is the fundamental element to build up one's ICC. A significant number of study participants prioritized knowledge, considering it as a foundation in all intercultural interactions. Culture encompasses a broad range of dimensions, including but not limited to race, religion, ethnicity, social class, and culinary practices, which deeply influence individuals' values and both their conscious and unconscious behaviours. Within this context, knowledge is categorized as 'rational', including "the meanings, beliefs, values and behaviours imputed to an interlocutor" (Byram, 1997, p. 47). This type of knowledge is primarily acquired through socialization processes within one's social groups. It often serves to contrast the characteristics of one's own national group and identity (ibid.). The acquisition of such knowledge is not only about gathering extensive details about a specific country or region. It values the intention and effort to understand and appreciate the perspectives

and information shared by those from different cultural backgrounds. Even lack of comprehensive information, this willingness to learn and understand plays a critical role in fostering effective intercultural dialogue and enhancing one's ability to deal with the complexities of intercultural communication.

Linguistic competence matters in intercultural communications. Learning a new language involve in far more than mastering syntax and vocabulary, for the reason that studying a language can feel meaningless without understanding the culture of its speakers or the country where it is spoken (Genc & Bada, 2005). Since this study focuses on the current educational situation in Olomouc, the Czech Republic, which is a place where English is infrequently used in addition to the exchange of international programs or groups of international students. In addition, the majority of programs or academic activities at the Faculty of Education are in the Czech language. It is the reason that one participant mentioned that teachers at UPOL should have full preparation to teach in English or another language one day. What's more, in the classroom, they attempt to utilize multiple teaching methods or strategies to formulate intercultural activities and interactions, such as the forbidden policy of speaking their native language, strategies to integrate more nationalities in one group, and collaborative or interactive activities to immerse the students in an imaginary intercultural environment.

Strategies for more effective and efficient communications: personal positive characteristics, instructive communicative skills, and methods to avoid stereotypes in real life. Attitudes which are essential for successful intercultural interaction must go beyond mere positivity or tolerance. Even well-intentioned prejudices or tolerance can hinder mutual understanding (Byram, 1997). The competence or communicative strategies highlighted by participants encompass a range of interpersonal skills and attitudes for fostering mutual respect across cultural divides. This includes cultivating equal respect for all cultures to ensure everyone feels comfortable and valued, demonstrating genuine curiosity about the cultures of interlocutors, and adopting an open-minded, humble, tolerant, and inclusive stance towards the various events and

individuals they encounter. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of setting aside any preconceived expectations of others, maintaining politeness, showing empathy, and carefully addressing people's feelings. This willingness to engage authentically with people from different backgrounds is critical to fostering productive intercultural relationships. Moreover, the consensus among participants was the acknowledgement of stereotypes as a significant barrier to effective and authentic communication. Stereotypes, which are often deep-rooted and subconscious, can mislead understanding and hinder authentic intercultural interaction. They suggest strategies to get rid of these stereotypes involves actively challenging and setting aside existing prejudices. Engaging in travel to acquire more international experience is a highly recommended method for enhancing one's intercultural competence. This is because travel fundamentally requires individuals to engage in intercultural interactions, which not only expands their understanding of the world but also encourages a more open and adaptable mindset towards diverse cultures. By immersing themselves in environments that are culturally distinct from their own, individuals can confront and examine their preconceived notions, leading to a more detailed appreciation of cultural differences and similarities. This process of continuous exposure and interaction during travel serves as a practical method for broadening one's horizons, fostering a greater openness to diversity, and subsequently contributing to the development of a more refined and empathetic intercultural competence.

Critical cultural awareness and analytical self-reflection regarding cultural experiences represent advanced levels of ICC. This level of awareness involves the crucial ability to “decentre”, which is a process that challenges individuals to momentarily suspend their own cultural frameworks, including interpretations, beliefs, values, and actions, to genuinely comprehend and appreciate those of others in their interactions. Such a skill not only promotes a deeper understanding of diverse cultural perspectives but also encourages individuals to critically evaluate and question their own cultural norms and behaviours, emphasizing the significance of valuing the experiences of others (Byram, 1997, p. 45). This practice of critical reflection goes

beyond mere awareness and urges people to conduct an introspective examination of their own cultural assumptions and their impact on their personal and professional lives. In the context of the study, two participants exemplify this advanced level of ICC. They have developed the capacity for critical thinking about cultures, enabling them to consider their own cultural backgrounds in a systematic and analytical manner. These individuals are not only able to identify the negative aspects inherent in their cultural norms but also recognize how these elements affect their behaviours and teaching practices. Their ability to reflect critically on their cultural assumptions and practices illustrates a profound understanding of the role of culture in shaping personal identity and professional interactions. Through such reflective practice, they demonstrate how critical cultural awareness can lead to meaningful changes in classroom dynamics and workplace culture, ultimately fostering more inclusive and culturally sensitive environments.

Formal teacher training related to ICC and institutional support is directly connected to teachers' beliefs and teaching practices in the classroom. Ensuring that teachers receive training to deliver culturally relevant teaching is crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment. When educators and school leaders lack cultural competence, it can create significant challenges within the school system. Not only do these deficiencies undermine the effectiveness of educational instruction, but they can also contribute to broader systemic problems, making classrooms and schools spaces where students and their families feel alienated or unwelcome (Pucket, 2020). All participants acknowledged that their exposure to teaching training, which is either partially or directly related to ICC, has been limited. There is no such specialized training or practical workshop offered at the Faculty of Education. This lack of formal training contributes significantly to their varied and often polarized views on the subject. A subset of the participants believes strongly in the necessity of such teaching training and considers it a fundamental responsibility to equip students with this basic competency. They argue that preparing students to cope with different cultural contexts is an integral part of their educational mission. On the

other hand, another group of participants felt that their extensive personal intercultural experience is sufficient to mitigate the need for formal training in ICC. Nonetheless, they expressed a willingness to participate in ICC training, if available, because they were curious and wanted to assess and improve their inherent abilities and explore the depth of their true intercultural skills in a structured environment. In contrast, the last group denied the usefulness of attending such workshops directly. They believed that ICC training had little benefit to their teaching practice and stressed that their schedules were already tight, leaving no room for activities they considered irrelevant. These varied attitudes reflect wider debates about the role and value of the ICC in educational settings, with implications that extend far beyond personal beliefs. Participants' varying receptiveness to ICC training not only reflected their personal experiences and priorities but also had a tangible impact on their teaching methods. As educators who hold different views on the importance of intercultural competence, their beliefs and teaching behaviours in the classroom are inevitably influenced by these underlying beliefs, affecting the way they interact with students and integrate intercultural elements into their courses.

8. 2 Implications

These findings further describe details of the existing framework provided by Deardorff's ICC model (2006) and present a nuanced perspective when compared to the ICC model proposed by Byram (1997). The differences between these models emphasize the complexity and multifaceted nature of ICC and highlight that different models may be relevant in different contexts because they emphasize different components within the broader ICC construct. In addition, both Byram and Deardorff emphasize the importance of critical thinking skills and the ability to "decentre" or adopt perspectives different from one's own, as vital elements in developing one's ICC.

Furthermore, a comparison between Byram's and Deardorff's models reveals their respective emphasis on various attitudinal dimensions that are critical to ICC. Byram

places a particular focus on fostering curiosity and openness as key attitudes, while Deardorff highlights the significance of respect towards others from diverse cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the participants in this study demonstrated a string of these attributes, consistently demonstrating both respect and openness in their professional interactions. They described efforts to maintain an equal and respectful standpoint when engaging with individuals of different cultural backgrounds. It is also necessary to maintain an openness to diverse perspectives, even in the face of disagreement or differing viewpoints. This balance suggests a comprehensive approach to embodying the attitudinal dimensions of ICC as outlined by both models.

In addition to these attitudinal components, a subset of participants also implicitly recognized the role of curiosity, which they defined as an eagerness to acquire new knowledge and understanding. This curiosity was particularly evident when participants described how to cope with unfamiliar situations, expressing a willingness to seek help from locals to improve their performance and integration in foreign environments. This active approach to learning and adaptation emphasises the dynamic nature of ICC as a set of skills that extends beyond theoretical knowledge to practical application and problem-solving in reality.

Furthermore, the agreement between Deardorff's emphasis on putting oneself in other's shoes and Byram's concept of critical cultural awareness was evident in participants' reflections. Some participants demonstrated an ability to critically evaluate cultural norms and traditions, including their own, hence increasing their critical cultural awareness. These self-reflections not only deepen their understanding of cultural complexities but also influence their beliefs and teaching methods, indicating the transformative potential of ICC in shaping their teaching practices and interactions.

More than that, the study explores several aspects that challenge traditional models and perceptions held by some scholars, suggesting the need to reconsider key elements of ICC. As Bennett (1977) explains, the term "fluent fool" (p. 16) is a person who can speak a fluent foreign language but can't fully understand the real potential cultural meaning. The findings of this study emphasize the essential role of linguistic

proficiency as a foundational component of ICC. This is particularly evident in the context of the Faculty of Education and the wider city of Olomouc, where English is rarely spoken. This insight suggests that without a strong grasp of the target language, individuals may have difficulty engaging meaningfully in intercultural interactions, highlighting the important function between language proficiency and cultural understanding.

Additionally, this study reveals the overlooked effects of travel abroad and the richness of diverse international experiences, factors that are not widely acknowledged in mainstream intercultural competency models or theories. Research results show that these experiences are one of the most direct and influential means of enhancing personal ICC. Exposure to different cultures through travel not only provides immersive learning opportunities but also exposes individuals to diverse perspectives and lifestyles, promoting a deeper and more nuanced understanding of cultural differences. This direct exposure challenges preconceived notions and stereotypes, encouraging adaptability, open-mindedness, and a deeper understanding of cultural diversity. Thus, the study recommends a broader recognition of the value of linguistic competence and international experiences in the cultivation of ICC, integrating these elements into theoretical frameworks and educational practices aimed at developing ICC.

8.3 Limitations

The evaluation of an individual's ICC is recognized as "an ongoing process" (Deardorff, 2011, p. 68), emphasizing the fluid and evolving nature of ICC. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in this study. It is valuable for capturing nuanced insights into participants' perspectives and beliefs about ICC. However, it poses considerable challenges for researchers in terms of time and labour. It has proved to be particularly time-consuming for the process of transcribing interviews and analysing the vast amount of data collected within a few months. Consequently, the findings of this thesis provide a summary of the participants' perspectives on ICC at a

specific moment, rather than a longitudinal analysis.

Additionally, the methodology of this study is rooted in qualitative research and grounded theory, thus requiring the use of a relatively small sample size. This limitation essentially limits the ability to generalize the findings to the wider academic staff at the Faculty of Education and the academic community at UPOL as a whole. The small sample size emphasizes the study's exploratory nature and highlights the diversity of individual experiences and perceptions regarding ICC.

During the data collection phase, it was observed that some participants might have unintentionally overlooked certain questions or provided implicit answers, diminishing the clarity and richness of the data collected. This phenomenon emphasizes the importance of the researcher being "alert to topics that your subjects either intentionally or unintentionally avoid" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 82), since overlooked topics can provide critical insights into the underlying complexities of ICC. Additionally, the occurrence of one participant providing brief and repetitive responses posed a significant challenge in eliciting in-depth information. This situation explains the broader challenges faced by researchers in obtaining comprehensive data. "Searching for missing information is not easy. People may not trust the interviewer, may not wish to speak when others are present, or may not understand the investigator's questions" (Opler, 1945, p. 93). These challenges require a nuanced interview approach, where building trust and ensuring clear communication are critical to uncovering the many facets of ICC.

8. 4 Recommendations

Future research endeavours should adopt a diverse approach in terms of methodologies and data collection techniques to enhance the comprehensiveness and applicability of their findings. Due to inherent limitations of qualitative research may limit the generalizability of results across the university, mixed methods can provide a more comprehensive framework for data analysis and interpretation. This is particularly

relevant for studies focusing on ICC within the context of the Czech Republic. The unique characteristics of the Czech education system require tailored ICC assessments for teachers, students and other educational involver. Such assessments should be designed to capture the differences of intercultural interactions and competencies specific to this context.

Moreover, model validation is a detailed and continuous process that entails repeated cycles of developing measurements and conducting validity studies. This successive process is essential to substantiate the validity of a measurement and its underlying theoretical framework (Leung et al., 2014). This ongoing validation process is crucial to ensure that the models used for ICC assessment truly reflect the educational environment in the Czech Republic. The existing models may not be entirely suitable for capturing the complexities of Czech educational settings. Consequently, there is a need to develop a specialized model for ICC that in accordance with the specific requirements and cultural diversity of the Czech Republic. Such a model would facilitate more targeted and effective interventions to promote intercultural understanding and competence among educators and learners.

Additionally, the findings from this research emphasize the importance of integrating comprehensive cultural competence training into existing teacher training programs. Such training should not only aim to enhance educators' intercultural awareness and skills but also equip them with the pedagogical tools necessary to foster a culture of mutual respect and understanding within diverse classroom settings. By making ICC as a core component of teacher education, educational institutions can take an important step toward preparing educators to meet the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly multicultural world.

9. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the perceptions of ICC among university teachers at the Faculty of Education, UPOL. Moreover, teachers' beliefs and teaching practices are also seen as an essential session to study, since to some extent teachers' beliefs would influence their teaching behaviours in the classroom and students' perspectives towards diverse culture. Therefore, the research objectives are to explore university teachers' views and opinions on the elements or components of ICC, examine the inner relationship between their beliefs and their pedagogical approaches, and determine the factors influencing development of their ICC and teaching practices in context of intercultural settings.

Since the topic of this thesis is about ICC, the theoretical part contains culture and language, to clarify its definitions, functions, and their relationships. Moreover, based on the research questions about teacher's beliefs and teaching practices, it is essential to introduce the development, relationships, and its applications in ICC, in order to deeply investigate the inner thoughts and perceptions among university teachers at the Faculty of Education, UPOL. In addition, detailed presentation of ICC and its existing model is regarded as the most significant part, which is the foundations of the research and source basis for data collection.

Moreover, grounded theory serve as the methodology and semi-structured interviews are as techniques to collect data, which lasted for two months. The research results reveal that the majority of university teacher hold a detailed views of the elements of ICC, and their experiences have diverse influences on their beliefs and teaching behaviours, mainly positive. On the other hand, their methods for developing this competence tend to be in an unsystematic way. Furthermore, their beliefs and teaching practices are partially interconnected, with their understanding of ICC and international experiences influencing these aspects to some degree. It is worth noting that their emphasis on equality in the classroom is one of the aspects which is not mentioned in Deardorff's ICC model, since this model is in a more general level.

Additionally, the findings of this study largely reach the initial expectations and objectives set forth by the researcher, while orientate potential directions for future studies. One such direction is the need for the development of a specific and concrete model of ICC matched to the context of the Czech Republic. This suggests that there are gaps in current teaching frameworks. Once it would be addressed, the effectiveness of intercultural teaching in specific educational settings could be improved.

The determination of a qualitative research as the final methodology for this study was intentional and aimed to gain a deep and detailed understanding of participants' internal perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs towards ICC. This approach allowed for a rich exploration of the subjective experiences of university teachers, offering insights into the complexities of teaching in an intercultural context. Nevertheless, it is significant to acknowledge certain limitations of this study. These include time constraints, potential neglect regarding participants' engagement with the semi-structured interview questions, and challenges related to generalizing findings across the entire university community.

Moreover, the unique position of the researcher, an Asian female, served as a bridge, offering a distinct and comprehensive perspective on the study's subject matter. This outsider viewpoint contributed fresh insights to the field of ICC research, particularly in a relatively low internationalization environment, such as the Faculty of Education under study. The research questions were carefully designed with current issues faced by teachers, highlighting the need for a stronger approach to promoting internationalization and intercultural understanding in academic settings.

In sum, this research not only clarify the current state of ICC among university teachers in the Czech Republic but also emphasize the importance of systematic development and integration of ICC into teaching practices and teacher training. Furthermore, it opens a discussion on how diverse researcher backgrounds can enrich the analysis and understanding of intercultural dynamics in educational research. It sets up the foundation for further exploration of how higher education institutions can better prepare for and respond to the complexities of a globalized world.

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Appendix 1

Informed Consent

Research title

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) of university teachers at the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc

Research purpose

The objective of this study is to investigate university teachers' perceptions and beliefs of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) at the Faculty of Education, Palacký University Olomouc. The data collected and information gathered by semi-structured interviews will be used in this thesis. Based on these data, I aim to formulate a new theory related to specific educational settings and to further reflect their beliefs and teaching practices.

Possible benefits

- You may have an opportunity to reflect on your experience and teaching practice.
- You may contribute to offering more information to civic leaders about the national status of intercultural settings.
- What you said may further help improve the curriculum at the university or educational system.

Risks

This research is not associated with any known risks or discomforts.

Confidentiality & Freedom to withdraw

Your identity will remain confidential throughout this study. You are under no obligation to participate, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Any information concerning you will be securely deleted if you choose to discontinue your participation in the study.

Contact information

Wenqian Wang

Phone number: +420 774 206 057

E-mail address: wenqian.wang01@upol.cz

You may also contact my supervisor PhDr. Jitka PLISCHKE, Ph.D. (jitka.plischke@upol.cz)

I am willing to be contacted for an interview (of about 30 minutes) to discuss my experience:

Yes No

I am also interested in receiving a summary of the research report when available:

Yes No

I have carefully reviewed and comprehended all the information provided above, and I willingly offer my participation as a volunteer in this study, I know my name

and what I said will be kept confidential. Additionally, I would like to receive a copy of this consent form for my records.

Participant's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 2

Interview Protocol

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Name of the interviewee:

Introduction

Thank you for your time today. My name is Wenqian Wang, and I am a master's student at Palacký University Olomouc. I will ask you some questions about intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Please be assured that your name and personal information will remain confidential. Our conversation will be recorded for transcription purposes. You are free to pause or end the interview at any point. May I have your consent to begin the recording?

A. Personal information

1. What was your Ph.D. or Master's program?
2. How long have you been teaching as a university teacher?
3. Please provide a brief overview of your role and responsibilities at the Faculty of Education. (exploring more details of their working responsibilities related to culture)
4. How often do you travel abroad for work-related purposes each year, such as attending academic conferences or serving as an Erasmus staff?

B. Participants' perceptions

5. Please define Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in teaching from your point of view.
6. Do you consider yourself interculturally competent?
(Answering **YES**) What was your journey to become interculturally competent?
/ What qualities are necessary to be an interculturally competent teacher?
(Answering **NO**) Why?
7. How do you react when someone engages in behavior considered normal in their culture but unusual in your cultural context?
8. In your opinion, how do prejudice and stereotypes influence intercultural interactions?
(follow-up question) What competence or abilities do you think can avoid prejudice and stereotypes?
9. Due to prejudice and stereotypes, it's common to encounter conflicts when interacting with people from different countries. How will you deal with that?
10. In your opinion, why is empathy crucial for effective intercultural communication? (follow-up question) How does it contribute to the overall success of students from diverse backgrounds?

C. Participants' beliefs

11. In your point of view, how does one's own culture affect the development of

intercultural communicative competence?

12. What competencies do students need to acquire to communicate effectively with people from other cultures?
13. What are you trying to achieve by conducting courses related to culture?
14. From your point of view, how do teachers' beliefs affect their teaching practice?

D. Teaching practice

15. Could you please describe any experiences where you actively demonstrated openness towards other cultures in your teaching?
(based on the previous answer) During this session, will you pay more attention to their body language?
(Answering **YES**) Why?
16. How will you design activities among diverse international students for their first meeting in class?
(follow-up question) What are your objectives for the first meeting?
What do you think about your role in this activity?
17. You assign a group project that requires students to work collaboratively. The groups are diverse, with members from different cultural backgrounds. In one group, two individuals are from the same country, while the third member is from a different country. You notice that the two individuals from the same country are communicating in their native language, excluding the third member from participating in the discussion. What will you do?
(follow-up question) What reasons do you think that cause this situation?

E. Participants' personal experience

18. Have you participated in any professional development or training related to intercultural communicative competence (ICC)?
(Answering **YES**) How did it affect your teaching practice?
(Answering **NO**) Do you wish to have this training? Why?
19. Please describe your most memorable experience communicating with people from other cultures. And how did you feel about that?

Is there anything you want to add?