Critical Intercultural Language Teaching: Moving from Beliefs to Instructional Practices in EFL Classrooms

Zia Tajeddin and Atefeh Rezanejad

Abstract Although several studies have addressed intercultural language teaching, there seems to be a dearth of research in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, specifically focusing on its critical aspects. To address this gap, this chapter reports on a study investigating the non-native language teachers' beliefs about critical intercultural language teaching (CICLT) and their actual critical intercultural practices in their language classrooms. Data collection was done in two phases, through questionnaire administration and class observations. To explore the language teachers' perceptions of CICLT, 219 teachers participated in the first phase by filling out a 20-item CICLT questionnaire. In the second phase, 40 class sessions from 20 teachers were randomly observed using an observation checklist to obtain a clearer picture of the teachers' practices of CICLT. The findings indicated a mismatch between the teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices. Although the majority of teachers were favourably disposed toward CICLT in their responses to the questionnaire items, class observations revealed that this positivity was not necessarily manifested in their instruction. The findings of this study have implications for educators, policy makers, and practitioners regarding the significance of CICLT. As such, they call for more attention to the content of teacher education programs to raise teachers' awareness and enhance their ability to adopt a more critical perspective.

Keywords English as a foreign language · Teacher beliefs · Instructional practices · Critical intercultural competence · Language teaching

Z. Tajeddin (✉)
Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran
e-mail: tajeddinz@modares.ac.ir

A. Rezanejad
Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

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1 Introduction

In the contemporary globalized and "media-saturated" world (Halualani, 2019, p. 20), intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is acknowledged to be one of the most critical aims of language teaching. Globalization has resulted in an increasing emphasis on learning English as an international lingua franca used ubiquitously by non-native English speakers (NNESs) around the globe (Genç, 2018). This has led to transformations in the general goals of English language teaching (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Hong & Cheon, 2017; Kohler, 2020; Zhang & Zhou, 2019). Though it is valuable for NNESs to hold a critical stance while learning English, the majority of them assume that they need to adopt new L2-driven cultural ideologies when learning the language. They may overlook the point that NNESs have the right to "claim ownership of English" (Chamberlin-Quinlisk & Senyshyn, 2012, p. 20) on a par with native English speakers (NESs) and can challenge the idea of superiority of native speakers (Porto, 2020). In this regard, non-native language teachers, constituting the majority of English teachers around the world (Braine, 2010; Tajeddin et al., 2018), are the main agents for educating NNESs for a decolonial option in which they are not "uncritical victims of the global hegemony of NS-based pedagogic model" (Li, 2009, p. 82). In the same vein, Nault (2006) argued that "the globalization of English complicates the issue of how to teach culture" (p. 324). Non-native language teachers may get confused in answering the question of "whose culture must be taught?" as most of them feel a need to teach native-based cultural norms while teaching English to learners of English as an additional language. In undertaking this responsibility, language teachers' own intercultural beliefs exert a great impact on their pedagogical practices and their acceptance of new instructive approaches and activities. Despite the importance attributed to critical intercultural language teaching (CICLT), it has received scant attention in EFL contexts.

Against this backdrop, this chapter commences with a review of the current theories of ICC and the necessity of adopting a CICLT approach. Next, it reports on an empirical study of non-native EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in the Iranian context. The (mis)matches between beliefs and practices are investigated through a survey questionnaire and classroom observation. The chapter continues with a discussion of the findings, and implications for teachers and policy makers to bring to the fore the significance of heightening teachers' critical intercultural awareness. It ends with concluding remarks and directions for further research in teacher education for intercultural language teaching. This section consists of two parts. First, the notion of critical intercultural competence is described. Next, critical intercultural pedagogy and research on it are reviewed.

1.1 Critical Intercultural Competence

In the early 1970s, Hymes (1972) introduced the term communicative competence (CC). It was concerned with social interaction and communication largely within a monolingual and perhaps monocultural community. In 1980 in North America, Canale and Swain further developed the idea of CC, which included grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. Later, in Europe, the theory was further elaborated by van Ek (1986). He put forward the concept of sociocultural competence, in addition to linguistic, strategic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence introduced by different scholars during the previous years (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972). The notion of CC was then integrated into foreign language instruction and turned into one of the most important concepts in communicative language teaching. However, the main shortcoming was taking the native speaker as a model for foreign language learners to follow (Byram & Guilherme, 2000). That is why Byram and Zarate (1994) proposed the idea of 'intercultural speaker' as the main goal for foreign language education.

During the coming years, Byram (1997) proposed his theory of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), a framework that insisted on preparing foreign language learners for appropriate, effective, and meaningful interactions with people from other cultures by focusing on the five knowledge types: (1) knowledge (*savoirs*): knowledge of self and other, of how interaction occurs, and of the relationship of the individual to society; (2) skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir etre*): knowing how to interpret and relate information; (3) attitudes (*savoir comprendre*): knowing how to engage with the political consequences of education and being critically aware of cultural behaviours; (4) skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*): knowing how to discover cultural information; and (5) critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*): knowing how to be; how to relativize oneself and value the attitudes and beliefs of the other.

In today's world, which is characterized by globalization and transformation in communication tools, we are facing a constant interrelationship of language and culture. As Liu and Nelson (2018) state, one of the most notable features of second language instruction in today's world is the diversity of contexts. The global spread and use of English around the world have resulted in a "kaleidoscopic plurality of the language in terms of use, users, cultures, and linguistic forms" (Marlina, 2021, p. 73). It seems that the most significant factor within the framework of ICC would be critical cultural awareness defined by Byram (1997) as the ability "to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p. 53), at the heart of which lies the concept of "evaluation" (Houghton, 2008, p. 222). Halualani and Nakayama (2010) also argued that the most significant and rapidly growing addition to the debates on intercultural communication is the critical approach to it. As Nakayama and Martin (2018) maintain, "critical intercultural communication is not a unified, singular paradigm, nor theory; instead, it is a perspective, a lens for viewing the relationship between culture and communication, and intercultural encounters" (p. 1).

Through intercultural dialogues and interactions, criticality in ICC prompts the ability to cope with both personal and social transformation. Porto et al. (2018) view this transformation as "conscious and deliberate," flowing from "the critical exploration, analysis and evaluation of self and other" (p. 3). Likewise, Liddicoat et al. (2003) assert that a fundamental element of CICLT is gaining knowledge of one's own culture prior to learning about the foreign language culture. In this regard, the "post-native-speakerist approach" (Porto et al., 2018, p. 4) has challenged using native speakers as a model for learners. As English is a widely used international language, it is argued that it also reflects multifaceted beliefs, identities, cultures, and values (Pennycook, 2017). As such, Porto et al. (2018, p. 4) call for "an informed rejection" of the native-speaker as either a socio-cultural or linguistic model.

According to Nakayama and Martin (2018), critical studies in intercultural communication were mainly influenced by three scholarly movements, namely (1) the Frankfurt School, (2) cultural studies in the UK, and (3) the postcolonial movement. In fact, critical researchers believed that some very important facets of intercultural communication were overlooked. Nakayama and Martin (2018) rightly summarized some key elements of the traditional and critical intercultural approaches and enumerated a list of some key ideas and features of the latter approach (see Table 1; based on Nakayama & Martin, 2018), the first of which is "elimination of oppression." Put differently, this approach strives for the elimination of unequal power relationships and tries to "create more just and equitable human relations" (p. 3). Likewise, Halualani (2019) stressed the need to adopt this approach as it will sensitize interactants to the issue of power in intercultural relations, "embedded in many visible and invisible aspects of [their] lives" (p. 23).

Table 1 A comparison of the features of traditional and critical intercultural approach

Traditional intercultural approach	Critical intercultural approach
aims at the understanding and the prediction of communication practices of diverse cultural communities	proposes a more complex notion of culture and cultural identity to include groups/communities within a nation
compares and contrasts communication patterns of different national cultures	identifies unequal power relations and oppression in intercultural encounters
ignores complex cultural variations	creates more just and equitable human relations
considers culture as stable and static	views culture as more fluid, dynamic, & changeable (cultures change and are changed)
focuses on the interpersonal micro level of interaction	focuses on hybridity (no discrete cultures in the era of globalization)
equates a nation with culture	regards power, social justice, and equality as central concerns
references to US Americans actually mean white US Americans and/or often white male Americans	is concerned with hegemony (how and why people consent to domination)
peoples of other nation-states (e.g., French) are considered a homogeneous group	regards history as an integral macro context for understanding intercultural relations

1.2 Critical Intercultural Pedagogy (CIP)

Language is regarded as the realization of a society with its own specific cultural norms (Canagarajah, 2014). Thus, it is not a "stable and neutral system of communication, but (…) a dynamic and value-laden activity" (Chamberlin-Quinlisk & Senyshyn, 2012, p. 15). A fairly commonplace supposition would be that learning a language is "naturally intertwined" with knowledge about the culture of that language (Merse, 2021, p. 92). In fact, due to globalization, more and more opportunities for intercultural encounters and experiences are introduced in diverse educational contexts around the world (LaScotte & Peters, 2021). To integrate linguistic and cultural diversity into English language classrooms, there has been a shift from teaching English as a second or foreign language to teaching English as an international language (Marlina, 2021; Matsuda, 2012; McKay, 2012). The main premise from this paradigm shift, opposing the "practices that glorify lingua-cultural norms and practices of a particular speech community" (Marlina, 2021, p. 75), seems to be challenging the old pedagogical principles and practices of idolizing native English speakers and paying more attention to the learners' own linguistic and cultural norms as an asset in language instruction (Marlina, 2018).

Efficacious and successful ESL/EFL (English as a second or foreign language) learners are considered to be those who are not only competent in technical and linguistic aspects of language but also able to handle intercultural interaction (LaScotte & Peters, 2021). However, the development of ICC has not been a priority in many English language classrooms (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). According to Byram and Wagner (2018), a common fallacy held by some language teachers is that there is no extra need to teach culture, as language and culture are really interrelated. In fact, they assume that they would ineluctably teach culture while teaching the language.

However, according to CIP, it is necessary to understand the "variations in interactional norms between speech communities" (Hismanoglu, 2011, p. 805) and the ability to discover the norms of other cultures. According to Byram (2000), language learners specifically need the ability to interact effectively with people of cultures different from their own. Likewise, Hismanoglu (2011) stressed the need to acknowledge the diverse values and behaviours of others by developing appropriate skills and attitudes to deal with differences in a "non-judgmental way" (p. 805). This is mainly because, in the past two decades, the concept of effective language pedagogy has greatly changed. As Byram and Wagner (2018) maintained, a successful language teaching system will no longer rely on an absolute provision of grammatical or lexical information, but aims to prepare the learners for communication and interaction with people of diverse cultural backgrounds. When teaching a language, the intercultural dimensions cannot be neglected. Similarly, attention needs to be paid to both local and global representations of culture.

The main argument underpinning CIP is that English language learners do not need to clone or strive too hard to emulate native English speakers (Alsagoff, 2012), but could be "competent users of English" (Matsuda, 2018, p. 25) in a world in

which English language users encounter many more varieties of English speakers and cultures than the American or British ones. In fact, "such a change of minds and practices seems urgent if the global ELT sector as a whole wishes to stay in sync with today's cultural and intersectional realities so as not to lose its credibility for cultural learning" (Merse, 2021, p. 95). Also, according to Atay and Toyosaki (2018), the main goal in CIP is to "understand, critique, transform, and intervene upon the dynamics of power and domination embedded inside and outside classroom walls" (p. ix). Likewise, Halualani (2018) asserted that CICLT "is a central vehicle that shapes critical intercultural communication studies and makes it accountable in terms of its larger goals, commitments, theorisings, concepts, and actions" (pp. 4–5).

As to CICLT, it should be noted that language teachers are the most important agents who play a crucial role in equipping the learners with necessary skills. Also, teachers' beliefs inform their pedagogical practices and manifest their conceptions of teaching (Mori, 2011). Breen et al. (2001) argued for the importance of researching teachers' beliefs and perceptions and asserted that it can assist researchers in the description and explanation of teacher actions in the classroom by promoting reflective practices. It can indeed play a role complementary to observational studies. Reviewing the literature shows that several studies have explored teachers' perceptions of CICLT (e.g., Gu, 2015; Nguyen, 2014; Oranje & Smith, 2017; Young & Sachdev, 2011). Nevertheless, research on teachers' perceptions indicates that they are not a "straightforward construct" (Feryok, 2008, p. 228) and many factors may affect their variability in different sociocultural contexts. For instance, Freeman (1991) reminded scholars of the implicit nature of perceptions, which needs to be made explicit in order for it to be comprehensively examined. However, understanding teachers' classroom practices entails listening to their voices and exploring their thoughts, as minds and attitudes have a significant role in shaping their performance. In response to a seemingly small body of research on teachers' perceptions and practices with regard to CICLT in the EFL context, the present study set out to demonstrate the perceptions-practices (mis)match through observations of language classes. In view of this, the main objective of this chapter is to explore the EFL teachers' practices of CICLT and to inspect how their perceptions inform their practices. Hence, the following research questions were put forward:

1. What are English language teachers' beliefs about CICLT?
2. How is CICLT practised in language classrooms by English language teachers?

2 An Empirical Study

In view of the two research questions on CICLT raised in this study, this section describes the method of data collection and the findings of the study.

2.1 Method

2.1.1 Participants and Setting

A total of 219 nonnative Iranian EFL teachers (110 males and 109 females, with an average age of 32) teaching at private language institutes were recruited through convenience sampling. These institutes offer multi-level courses in general English from basic to advanced levels. The textbooks used are global English textbook series published by international publishers such as Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, and Pearson Education. In one of the institutes taking part in this study, global textbooks are modified for localisation purposes. Teachers' recruitment was through direct contact or email communication with teachers and institute managers. Based on the snowball sampling, those teachers who accepted to participate in the study were asked to encourage other teachers to participate. The participating teachers taught English in three nationwide language institutes with many branches as well as other local language institutes. Their L1 was Persian, and they had an average teaching experience of eight years.

2.1.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The research instruments comprised a newly developed survey questionnaire and an observation checklist to collect data on the teachers' perceptions and practices of CICLT. The questionnaire contained 20 items and was based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). To make sure of its reliability, it was piloted with 60 EFL teachers similar to the main participants of the study (with Cronbach's alpha of .80, which according to Pallant (2010) indicates an acceptable reliability coefficient). Also, to gain a clear picture of the teachers' critical intercultural language teaching in language classrooms, an observation checklist was prepared. The checklist included 14 items (see Table 3) whose development was based on the current relevant literature. It mainly revolved around the issues of the general class atmosphere, class activities and instruments, and assignments and projects.

The questionnaire was administered in different ways in order to access more teachers and collect the data in a shorter span of time. As a priority, the questionnaire was handed to the EFL teachers along with some explanation of the nature of the study and the importance of the issue. The electronic version of the questionnaire was sent through email to teachers who had accepted to participate in the study. They filled out the questionnaire and returned it to the second author. Also, the observation data were collected by visiting different language classes in an unobtrusive way so that both teachers and students would feel free to act as naturally as possible. In addition, class observation checklists were filled out immediately after each class session, not during it, to avoid distracting class members. Observations were also recorded and later transcribed to assist data analysis. Finally,

the questionnaire items and the different episodes on the observation checklist were analysed with descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to discover the prevalent types of activities.

2.2 Findings

The findings are organized in two parts: teachers' beliefs about CICLT and teachers' practices of CICLT.

2.2.1 Teachers' Beliefs Regarding CICLT

The first research question in this study probed the teachers' perceptions of CICLT. To address this question, the EFL teachers' responses to the different questionnaire items were analysed. The results provided the data displayed in Table 2. As illustrated in the table, item 1 had the highest rate of agreement as 93.1% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "When teaching cultural issues, a language teacher should remind the students to respect and value all cultures around the world, irrespective of its being L1, L2, or global". Interestingly, not even one teacher strongly disagreed with this assumption. Likewise, item 18 was the second agreed-upon statement in which over 86% of the teachers concurred with the statement that "Through critical discussions on intercultural issues, the students will have a better understanding of their own culture and its values". Similarly, item 20 received the third highest approval with 84.5% of the teachers believing that "Teaching about cultures will increase the language learners' willingness to communicate". These last two favoured statements pertained to some of the outcomes of critical intercultural pedagogy (CIP). On the other hand, the lowest consensus was observed in item 13 in which 43.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "Learning a new language requires the acceptance of its cultural norms". Also, the second lowest agreement was found in item 11 and with regard to the statement "Learning a new language should increase the students' awareness of their own L1 cultural identity" in which 29.2% disagreed.

2.2.2 Teachers' Practices of CICLT

To inspect the current status of CICLT in EFL classes, 40 different class sessions from 20 different EFL teachers were observed using an observation checklist. The detailed results pertaining to each item are summarized in Table 3. As illustrated, the highest observed practice was related to the general class atmosphere. In nearly half of the observed cases (F = 18, P = 45%), the teachers were inclined to teach culture in support of the unit topic (Item 1), i.e., they viewed it as a compulsory part of the book to be taught, in a very limited form. Similarly, item 9 received the next

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for teachers' beliefs about intercultural language teaching

		1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	M	SD
1	When teaching cultural issues, a language teacher should remind the students to respect and value all cultures around the world, irrespective of their being L1, L2, or global.	0	4.1	2.7	39.7	53.4	4.42	.74
2	A language teacher should present a realistic image of the L2 culture by touching upon both the positive and negative sides of the foreign culture and society.	0	8.2	15.5	52.5	23.7	3.92	.84
3	A language teacher should make the students aware of the similarities and differences between cultures.	0	1	18.7	56.2	24.7	4.05	.67
4	A language teacher should remember that the cultural values of non-native speakers of English are as legitimate and valuable as those of native English speakers.	3.7	0	26.9	41.6	27.9	3.92	.93
5	A language teacher should ask the students to critically compare an aspect of their L1 culture with that aspect in the L2 culture and cultures of other non-English speaking countries.	0	1	35.6	50.2	13.7	3.77	.67
6	A language teacher should foster their own cultural awareness in order to be able to help the students improve their intercultural knowledge.	1	4.6	17.8	63.5	14.2	3.87	.69
7	A language teacher should try not to consider American/British culture as representative of global culture.	5.5	10	35.6	26.5	22.4	3.56	1.11
8	A language teacher should encourage the students to culturally behave like people in English-speaking countries.	3.7	19.6	30.1	27.9	18.7	3.38	1.10
9	Intercultural language teaching will enhance students' self-esteem and strengthen their cultural identity.	0	2.3	29.7	60.7	7.3	3.73	.62
10	By teaching the cultural values of other nations to the students and helping them respect all of them, they will develop a global cultural identity.	2.7	0	17.4	67.6	12.3	3.87	.72
11	Learning a new language should increase the students' awareness of their own L1 cultural identity.	0	29.2	22.8	34.2	13.7	3.32	1.04
12	A language teacher should enhance the students' understanding of their own national cultural identity.	0	19.2	21	33.3	26.5	3.67	1.06
13	Learning a new language requires the acceptance of its cultural norms.	14.2	29.2	10.5	41.6	4.6	3.07	1.20
14	Teaching and learning critically about cultures will stimulate the students' intercultural curiosity and motivate them to learn more.	1	4.1	23.7	54.8	17.4	3.85	.74

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

		1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	M	SD
15	Through intercultural awareness-raising in language classes, the students will be able to discover the relationship between language and culture.	0	5.5	26	54.8	13.7	3.77	.75
16	A language teacher should help the students notice and critically evaluate the hidden cultural elements in textbooks.	0	9.6	44.7	37.9	7.8	3.44	.77
17	A language teacher should encourage the students to value their own L1 culture along with other cultures.	0	4.1	16	52.5	27.4	4.03	.77
18	Through critical discussions of intercultural issues, the students will have a better understanding of their own culture and its values.	0	2.7	10.5	76.7	10	3.94	.55
19	Making the students aware of the significance of their own L1 culture in addition to L2 culture will enhance their L1 cultural self-esteem.	0	2.7	29.2	52.1	16	3.81	.72
20	Teaching about cultures will increase the language learners' willingness to communicate.	1.8	1	12.8	68.5	16	3.96	.69

[a]1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree
[b](N = 219)

highest frequency of occurrence. As depicted, in 37.5% of observed classes, the teacher asked the students to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures met. Moreover, in 32.5% of classes, the teacher asked the students about their experiences in a foreign country. This made item 2 the next most frequent one. By contrast, item 8 on the checklist was the least important event in observed classes. Observations indicated that literally no teacher tried to critically discuss a text's meaning with the students while teaching linguistic skills. In addition, the second lowest practised activity was found in item 14. Only 2.5% of the teachers required the students to prepare a short lecture on an aspect of culture.

2.3 Discussion

The main objective of this chapter was to explore the interplay between language teachers' perceptions of CICLT and their actual practices in their language classes. The overall findings indicated that a clear incongruity could be observed between the teachers' beliefs and practices. Whereas the questionnaire results documented that almost all teachers concurred on the merits of incorporating a critical stance toward teaching culture in language courses, very few of them followed this belief in practice. The results corroborate the findings by Cheng (2012), who reported on

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for teachers' instructional practices of CICLT in their classrooms

Statements		*F	**P
1	The teacher teaches culture in support of the unit topics, e.g., discussions on clothing habits and fashion in a unit on clothes.	18	45%
9	The teacher asks the students to participate in role play situations in which people from different cultures meet.	15	37.5%
2	The teacher asks the students about their experiences in a foreign country.	13	32.5%
3	The teacher could overcome his/her own stereotypes (e.g., not try to show any positive or negative attitude regarding the country the L2 is spoken on to their students).	11	27.5%
4	The teacher focuses on an aspect of the foreign culture regarding which he/she feels positive.	9	22.5%
10	The teacher asks the students to compare an aspect of their own culture with that aspect in a foreign culture.	9	22.5%
13	Students are told to write a conversation between interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds.	8	20%
5	The teacher teaches the students to understand and respect people from other cultures.	5	12.5%
11	The teacher asks the students to talk about both positive and negative aspects of L2 culture.	3	7.5%
12	Students were invited to talk about different aspects of a topic presented in their textbook, e.g., compare and contrast different aspects of it in different cultures.	3	7.5%
6	The teacher encourages the students to take risks, analyse, and reflect on their own experiences and learning.	2	5%
7	The class is decorated with posters illustrating some different aspects of world cultures.	2	5%
14	Students are required to prepare a short lecture on an aspect of culture.	1	2.5%
8	The teacher tries to critically discuss a text's meaning with the students even when teaching linguistic skills.	0	0%

*F = Frequency, ** P = Percentage

some discrepancies between EFL teachers' understandings of intercultural competence and their self-reported instructional practices. A comparable incongruity could also be observed between the beliefs and practices in Tian's (2013) research on 96 EFL teachers. Fung and Chow's (2002) study also revealed the very limited relationship between the teachers' favoured teaching procedure and their real pedagogical practices in classrooms. Likewise, Kohler (2015) reported on some language teachers from Australia who showed awareness of the real need to integrate language and culture but faced some challenges in doing so in class.

In the current study, more than half of the teachers agreed on reaching a mutual understanding by focusing on all cultures, irrespective of being L1, L2, or global culture. This was, to some extent, anticipated in the multicultural society of Iran, where people of different ethnic varieties have long lived together peacefully. However, the point is that this was not observed in practice. Despite this stated belief, only a small number of the teachers endeavoured to teach multicultural values directly to their students. In the same way, the majority of the teachers thought that a language teacher must encourage the students to value their own L1 culture.

However, this was witnessed in only a few language classes where the teachers, for instance, asked the students to write a conversation between a native and a non-native English speaker as an assignment. This substantial beliefs-practices mismatch seems to be rooted in the teachers' poor understanding of CIP and the need for reflection on it as a means of developing "a meta-level understanding of oneself and one's own culture" (Moeller & Osborn, 2014, p. 681). This might also be the direct result of a lack of continuous professional development programs for in-service teachers to enrich their ICC-oriented teaching skills and to enhance their knowledge about CIP approaches and teaching materials conducive to the integration of teaching culture in foreign language classes. As Oranje (2016) argued, the absence of this reflection can best designate whether a teacher's approach is intercultural or not. According to some scholars (e.g., Han & Song, 2011; Sercu et al., 2005), what really prevents teachers from being completely intercultural, in spite of having perceptions favouring CIP, is the absence of this reflection. The answer is simple: "as the EFL curriculum does not prescribe specific intercultural teaching strategies, teachers need to make independent efforts to provide learners with opportunities to translate the stated cultural objectives into practice" (Sahlane & Pritchard, this volume, Chap. 17).

What is more, while the integration of language and culture is emphasized at all levels of language learning, the teachers in the present study did not link language and culture to any appreciable extent; they demonstrated a mere passive understanding. This echoes Liddicoat's (2011) differentiation between *static* and *dynamic* views on the nature of culture. Whereas considering culture as static means viewing it as facts, information, and things to be learned separate from language, the dynamic view entails promoting skills of comparison, reflection, and discovery, and is more in line with the fundamental principles of CICLT. As our observations revealed, the language teachers were more attached to the traditional static view, largely neglecting the integration of language and culture and primarily viewing it as "supplementary and optional" (Byram et al., 1991, p. 17) or even as fun activities. The findings are, likewise, in tandem with those reported by Sercu et al. (2005) and Oranje and Smith (2017), who also reported that the majority of the teachers correspondingly favoured teaching language over teaching culture. Similarly, a number of other research studies reported an analogous mismatch between cultural beliefs and instructional practices (e.g., Conway et al., 2010; Han & Song, 2011).

3 Implications for Interculturally Oriented Teacher Education

The current study mainly brings to the fore the significance of fostering critical intercultural competence among second/foreign language teachers. In the current "era of globalization, transnationalism, and multilingual/multiculturalism" (Shin & Jeon, 2018, p. 125), teacher education needs to be envisaged differently if we plan to realize the goals of CIP. What teachers really need is an education program

focused on critical intercultural teaching so that they would clearly know what to do in their classes. Language teachers need to be educated on how to give voice to the local cultures of the learners and create spaces for their active participation in shaping CIP in language classrooms. They should provide the language learners with "multicultural tasks and materials in a balanced context along with the English materials" (Tajeddin & Ghaffaryan, 2020, p. 15). What cannot be denied is that teacher quality and student success are intricately interrelated and teacher education programs play an important role in teacher quality (Rivkin et al., 2005).

Notwithstanding the widespread agreement among language educators on the necessity of intercultural language teaching and its important role in language classrooms, the intercultural dimension is still largely neglected in language pedagogy. This might stem from teachers' lack of confidence and knowledge in dealing with intercultural topics. It is thus suggested that teachers be aided through the incorporation of cultural pedagogical content in teacher education programs; this may help them to grow into teachers who are more conscious and aware of the critical aspects of intercultural language teaching. Teachers need to be assisted in developing critical awareness of pedagogical knowledge to overcome the uncertainty they may experience with regard to culture teaching tasks and activities (Baker, 2015; Byrd et al., 2011). It follows that the beliefs-practices gap can be largely filled through some education sessions in which teachers are made aware of the different procedures to translate beliefs into practices.

As many teacher educators have high university degrees related to the field of applied linguistics, it is assumed that they possess the basic theoretical knowledge of CICLT. Teacher educators may be aware of the basic principles of CICLT, but not conscious of the significance of adding it to teacher education courses, which brings to the fore the importance of noticing. Also, the literature indicates that explicit attention to intercultural language education is often neglected in teacher education courses (Ngai & Janusch, 2015). Hence, there is a big gap in the ESL/EFL education system which can only be filled with more explicit attention to intercultural language teaching. Enhancing the intercultural knowledge of language learners can assist them in becoming more proficient users of English in multicultural contexts.

In this regard, teacher educators may benefit from the results of the study, as the findings revealed that Iranian language teachers are not adequately aware of the theoretical and practical foundations of critical intercultural language teaching. Teacher educators may want to dedicate more time to practical ways of integrating culture into the language course. They also need to further stress the necessity of observing CICLT in classrooms as many teachers are not even aware of CICLT. Therefore, through critical intercultural teacher education courses and workshops, the teachers would appreciate that "learning the English language is learning a way of thinking, perceiving, and acting" and therefore they can "explore ways to guide their students to experience the language in context" (Ngai & Janusch, 2015, p. 366).

The results of this study could also be useful to policy makers and language institute principals around the world. Our findings indicate that language teachers are ready in principle to critically integrate culture into their teaching courses. However, it seems that they face various challenges and problems that prevent them

from practising it in classrooms. This calls for more attention to the intercultural principles of language centres. On a larger scale, of course, materials developers and international publishers need to produce materials that are rich and balanced in intercultural content and keep an eye on the significance of CICLT.

4 Conclusion and Directions for Further Research

This chapter sought to shed light on the current status of CICLT in English language classrooms. The findings indicate a clear gap between the teachers' beliefs about CICLT and their pedagogical practices. From the findings, it can be concluded that although the teachers' beliefs generally align with the tenets of CICLT, they do not have knowledge-in-practice to incorporate it into their language classrooms. This manifests itself in language teachers' poor understanding of CICLT and its foundational principles. To have open-minded, tolerant language learners, teachers need to develop critical intercultural competence in their learners by engaging them not only with the language but also with its culture. Teachers need to remind the learners that the language learning experience cannot in any way be isolated from its culture and that the two are closely intertwined. In the global world of today, language learners need to be provided with ample opportunities to reflect upon their own culture and compare it with the foreign culture through openness to otherness, acceptance of differences, stimulation of tolerance, and exclusion of prejudice and prejudgment (Sobkowiak, 2014).

Overall, if we are about to see some real transformations in language classrooms and in teachers' pedagogical practices, some key steps need to be taken beforehand to alter the language teachers' mindset regarding CICLT. As Fullan (1991) stated, educational changes hinge upon "what teachers do and think" (p. 117). In fact, mere awareness-raising might not lead to a real transformation in the teachers' beliefs and instructional practices (Dogancay-Aktuna & Hardman, 2017; Suzuki, 2011). As Dogancay-Aktuna and Hardman (2018) argued, awareness-raising needs to be accompanied by real practical work so that the desired pedagogy will emerge. We advocate that teacher educators equip language teachers with a clear theoretical understanding and aid them in making appropriate instructional decisions while teaching intercultural issues in their own specific sociocultural context.

It needs to be noted that the present study was limited to EFL teachers; therefore, future studies may explore critical reflections of the EFL learners on their intercultural language learning beside the impact of critical intercultural education on their attitudes, which is of significant value and seems to be an underexplored area. Moreover, future studies may take a more in-depth approach by investigating numerous variables such as age, gender, education level, ethnicity, and the whole educational and political environment and their impact on the language teachers' CICLT adoption. Also, further research is needed to explore the impact of critical intercultural teacher education courses and workshops on teachers' critical intercultural understanding in general and their practices of CIP in particular. In addition,

the current study used questionnaires and observations as data collection instruments. Future studies may explore the topic with other research instruments such as interviews.

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Zia Tajeddin is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Tarbiat Modares University, Iran. His main areas of research include language teacher education, EIL/ELF pedagogy, and second language pragmatics. He is the co-editor of the book series *Studies in Language Teacher Education* (Springer) and co-edits two international journals titled *Applied Pragmatics* (John Benjamins) and *Second Language Teacher Education* (Equinox). He is the co-editor (with Carol Griffiths) of *Lessons from Good Language Teachers* (Cambridge University Press, 2020) and the co-editor (with Minoo Alemi) of *Pragmatics Pedagogy in English as an International Language* (Routledge, 2021). In 2022, his co-edited book (with Atsuko Watanabe) titled *Teacher Reflection: Policies, Practices and Impacts* was published by Multilingual Matters. Email: tajeddinz@modares.ac.ir

Atefeh Rezanejad obtained her Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran. She teaches various university courses in applied linguistics. Her main areas of research include intercultural language learning, pragmatics, language teacher education, and sociolinguistics. She has published papers in numerous language teaching journals. Email: rezanejad_a85@yahoo.com