

A Qualitative Study on Chinese Primary School EFL Teachers' Understanding of Intercultural Foreign Language Teaching and Its Influence on Their Teaching Practices

Huang Wang

Hunan First Normal University, China

Abstract

Intercultural competence (IC) has become one of the important goals of foreign language education in many countries, and language teacher plays an irreplaceable role in fostering and promoting students IC. Currently, many research on intercultural foreign language teachers in China focuses on university teachers, and little attention is paid to primary school EFL teachers. However, the cultivation of IC is a staged and continuous process which cannot be achieved at one stroke. Therefore, it is important to understand how primary school EFL teachers define culture and IC, and how their understanding of these concepts influence their teaching practices. This paper collected data on Chinese primary school EFL teachers' understanding on intercultural foreign language teaching through semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the transcription. The study found that: 1. Chinese primary school EFL teachers generally hold an essentialist view of culture; their understandings of IC varies, the majority had one-sided understanding of the concept; 2. Random and fragmented cultural teaching is very common, most cultural teaching practices are teacher-centered, reflective or exploratory activities are rare; 3. Teachers' intercultural teaching practices generally align with their conceptualization of intercultural foreign language teaching. This is evidenced by their emphasis on cultural differences based on national boundaries, the tendency to equate culture in English class with culture of English-speaking countries. At last, two suggestions was proposed. First, providing IC related courses in teacher education and teacher training to assist teachers in establishing a more dynamic and flexible perspective on language and culture; second, assisting teachers establish a trans-national paradigm of language-culture teaching.

Keywords: intercultural teaching practices, EFL teachers, intercultural competence, intercultural foreign language teaching, teacher beliefs