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A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN JILIN PROVINCE

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Abstract:

Intercultural competence has become a core dimension of foreign language education, particularly as globalisation has reshaped expectations for communication across cultural boundaries. Teachers are increasingly expected to support learners in interpreting cultural meanings and developing adaptable communicative abilities. Yet, foreign language teachers in Jilin Province frequently report limited preparedness when attempting to implement intercultural teaching practices. Grounded in established theories of intercultural competence and cross-cultural training, the paper builds on the work of Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006), and Kolb (1984) to underline the combined importance of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and experiential learning in promoting intercultural development. The paper proposes a conceptual framework that shows how cross-cultural training, experiential learning, institutional support, and teacher motivation interact to enhance intercultural competence. When applied to the Jilin context, the framework reveals how cultural homogeneity and exam-oriented teaching traditions restrict opportunities for intercultural engagement. The discussion demonstrates that effective intercultural learning depends not only on theoretical understanding but also on reflective practice, sustained institutional support, and experiential opportunities, with important implications for teacher education, curriculum development, and institutional policy. This paper is conceptual in nature and develops a theoretical framework informed by established models and literature rather than empirical data collection.

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Cross-Cultural Training, Experiential Learning, Foreign Language Education, Institutional Support, Intercultural Competence, Teacher Motivation



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Introduction

Intercultural competence has become a central element of foreign language education in an increasingly interconnected world shaped by globalisation, international mobility, and intensified cross-cultural communication. Byram (1997) conceptualises intercultural competence as the combination of attitudes, cultural knowledge, interpretive skills, and critical awareness that together enable effective intercultural communication. This perspective highlights language learning as a cultural journey that calls for more than grammatical proficiency. It also encourages learners to rethink assumptions, consider alternative viewpoints, and embrace diversity with openness. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) similarly emphasise that language and culture are inseparable; thus, foreign language education must deliberately develop learners' intercultural understanding alongside linguistic proficiency. Meeting these expectations means that teachers must acquire intercultural competence, enabling them to support students in becoming communicators who respond appropriately to cultural differences.

Despite increased recognition of its value, intercultural competence is not consistently embedded in foreign language teaching, especially in contexts where cultural exposure is minimal or where exam performance is valued more than comprehensive communicative goals. In China, especially in Jilin Province, many teachers operate in culturally uniform environments where students have little opportunity to engage with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. These environments reduce opportunities for genuine intercultural encounters that are essential for fostering intercultural sensitivity and interpretive ability. Jin and Cortazzi (2018) observe that Chinese classrooms remain largely shaped by exam-oriented practices, with strong emphasis on vocabulary learning, grammatical precision, and reading proficiency, thereby marginalising intercultural development. However, existing studies rarely examine how intercultural competence can be developed in contexts where opportunities for authentic intercultural contact are limited, particularly in regions such as Jilin Province.

These challenges highlight the importance of cross-cultural training as a means of supporting teachers in developing the knowledge, attitudes, and pedagogical strategies required for interfacing cultural content with language teaching. Cross-cultural training provides structured experiences that help teachers recognise cultural variability, interpret communicative behaviour, and adapt their teaching to culturally diverse contexts. Fantini (2009) argues that

intercultural competence emerges through the interplay of conceptual understanding, self-reflection, and meaningful engagement with cultural difference. Deardorff's (2006) model emphasises that internal attributes, particularly empathy and adaptability, are foundational since they shape teachers' outward behaviour in intercultural exchanges. Such programmes that integrate cultural simulations, case studies, reflective activities, and experiential learning play a crucial role in supporting teachers to re-evaluate their assumptions, challenge entrenched stereotypes, and develop stronger cultural agility.

However, institutions differ widely in their provision of comprehensive cross-cultural training. Whereas some universities create opportunities for overseas exchanges, international scholarly collaboration, or sustained professional development, others rely on brief workshops that heighten awareness but may not lead to substantial intercultural development. O'Dowd (2020) highlights that in situations where direct intercultural engagement is constrained, virtual exchanges and online collaborative projects can serve as effective alternatives by enabling teachers to interact with culturally diverse peers through digital platforms. These innovations are especially important in regions such as Jilin, where demographic factors restrict the availability of sustained intercultural experiences. Drawing on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, the role of reflection, conceptualisation, and ongoing practice is emphasised as central to achieving deeper intercultural development. Reflective journals, facilitated discussions, and simulations help teachers interpret their experiences and transfer emerging insights into their teaching contexts.

Yet, training on its own is unlikely to result in enduring change unless it is supported at the institutional level. Sustained intercultural development depends on environments that foster innovation, provide professional autonomy, and treat intercultural competence as a fundamental teaching outcome. According to Fullan (2007), lasting educational change emerges from committed leadership, coherent policy frameworks, and sustained support for instructional practices. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) also highlight the role of school leadership in shaping teacher motivation and professional growth. In contrast, rigid curricula and assessment systems focused heavily on rote learning may discourage teachers from integrating intercultural approaches, even when they recognise their value. As Wang and Coleman (2022) note, many Chinese teachers face significant tension between exam-driven expectations and the broader goals of intercultural pedagogy.

Teacher motivation forms the final essential component of intercultural competence development. According to Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation characterised by a sense of autonomy, competence, and relevance strongly influences teachers' willingness to internalise intercultural goals and apply them consistently. Teachers who view intercultural competence as integral to their professional identity are more likely to engage deeply with reflective practice, embrace cultural complexity, and integrate intercultural dimensions into instruction. This is especially significant in culturally homogeneous settings, where individual motivation often makes up for the lack of natural intercultural interactions.

In response to these complexities, this paper proposes a conceptual framework that integrates cross-cultural training, experiential learning, institutional support, and teacher motivation to explain how intercultural competence can be strengthened among foreign language teachers in Jilin Province. It is important to clarify that this paper does not report empirical findings. Rather, it is a conceptual study that synthesises theoretical models and scholarly insights to

propose a coherent framework explaining how foreign language teachers in culturally homogeneous contexts may develop intercultural competence. Through the integration of theory and contextual considerations, the framework establishes a comprehensive basis for assessing and developing teacher readiness and intercultural instructional capacity. The development of teachers' intercultural competence improves the quality of foreign language instruction and enables students to participate more effectively in a globally interconnected world.

Theoretical Basis

Intercultural Competence Models

An understanding of intercultural competence is formed by examining influential theoretical models that have played a central role in research and practice within foreign language education. Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model is extensively applied as it provides a well-rounded framework for explaining the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for successful intercultural interaction. According to Byram, intercultural competence consists of five key elements: attitudes characterised by curiosity and openness, knowledge of one's own and others' cultures, skills related to interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. When considered collectively, these components show that intercultural competence involves more than language ability, incorporating cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects. The model underscores the importance of fostering learners' skills in analysing cultural practices, negotiating meanings, and reflecting critically on assumptions embedded in communication. For educators, it functions as a structured benchmark for curriculum development that unites linguistic and intercultural learning outcomes. However, Byram's model implicitly assumes that teachers and learners have access to regular intercultural interaction, an assumption that may not align with the realities of relatively homogeneous contexts such as Jilin.

Instead of viewing intercultural competence as a fixed set of attributes, Deardorff's (2006) process-oriented model complements Byram's framework by presenting it as a dynamic and developmental cycle. The model emphasises internal outcomes, including empathy, adaptability, and the ability to shift perspectives, alongside external outcomes demonstrated through effective and appropriate intercultural communication. Deardorff highlights that intercultural competence develops gradually through ongoing engagement, reflective learning, and experiential activities. This ongoing process suggests that teachers' intercultural competence must be supported through sustained practice instead of short-term training programmes. Although both Byram and Deardorff provide important theoretical insights, their models often presume regular intercultural exposure, an assumption that may not reflect realities in contexts like Jilin Province where intercultural encounters are uncommon. As a result, adaptations are necessary to enable simulated, virtual, and mediated experiences to serve as alternative pathways through which teachers can develop intercultural knowledge and sensitivity. The conceptual framework presented in this paper therefore adjusts established models to capture more effectively the distinctive sociocultural and educational context of Jilin.

Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual framework, bringing together cross-cultural training, experiential learning, institutional support, and teacher motivation as interconnected processes shaping the development of intercultural competence among foreign language teachers in Jilin

Province. It emphasises the dynamic and reciprocal nature of these relationships within a largely culturally homogeneous educational setting.

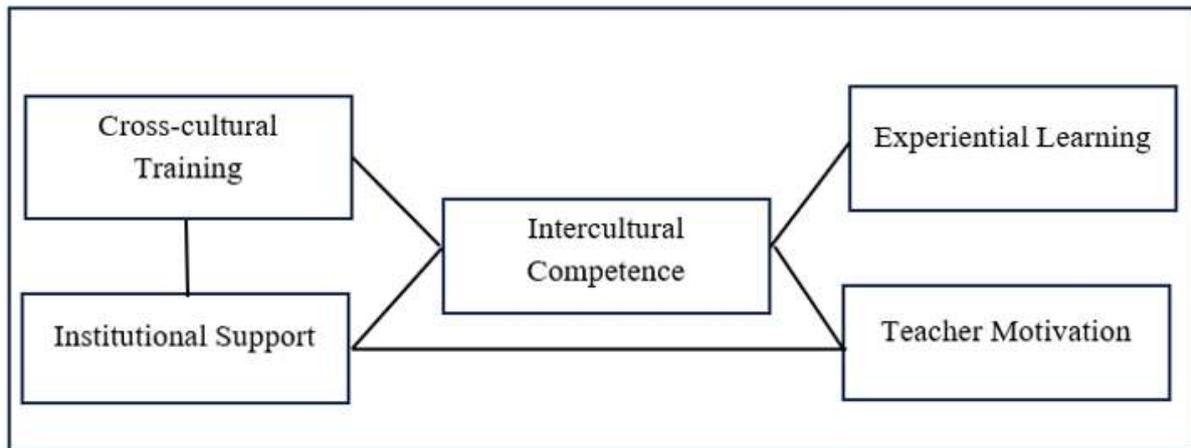


Figure 1: Proposed Dynamic Conceptual Framework for Intercultural Competence Development among Foreign Language Teachers in Jilin

Cross-Cultural Training

As a structured pedagogical approach, cross-cultural training aims to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for effective communication across cultural boundaries. Brislin and Yoshida (1994) characterise this training as an instructional intervention that fosters cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and communication skills through planned teaching and guided practice. Commonly used training strategies include role plays, case analyses, simulations, cultural assimilators, and reflective journaling, which aim to help learners develop a deeper understanding of cultural differences and strengthen their adaptability. These strategies also encourage learners to confront their assumptions, examine stereotypes, and develop awareness of culturally situated behaviours.

Fantini (2009) stresses that effective cross-cultural training must integrate conceptual understanding with experiential opportunities, ensuring that participants not only learn about cultural differences but also practise navigating them. Deardorff (2006) similarly contends that intercultural competence develops through a blend of reflective and experiential activities that encourage individuals to make sense of cultural cues, relational dynamics, and communicative expectations. Empirical studies further confirm the effectiveness of immersive approaches. Cushner and Mahon (2002) found that teachers who participated in overseas teaching programmes reported greater gains in intercultural awareness, self-efficacy, and sensitivity than those who engaged only in classroom-based training. More recent research by O'Dowd (2020) indicates that virtual exchanges, which are especially relevant in geographically or culturally isolated regions, can provide meaningful intercultural engagement even when physical mobility is restricted. These findings are highly applicable to the context of Jilin Province, where uneven institutional resources and limited access to intercultural experiences create variation in teacher training provision. Some institutions implement long-term intercultural workshops and international collaboration programmes, while others continue to offer only short and introductory forms of training. These gaps highlight the need for a structured framework that explains how the quality and design of training influence the development of intercultural competence among foreign language educators.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is essential for fostering intercultural competence because it supports the internalisation of cultural understanding through experience-based learning, reflection, and active participation. Kolb (1984) conceptualises learning as an ongoing cycle consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. The model emphasises that deep learning is grounded in active engagement and reflection on real or simulated experiences, rather than in passive information intake. These experiences, when situated in intercultural contexts, commonly prompt learners to question underlying assumptions and to refine their perspectives through fresh interpretive insights.

Research consistently endorses experiential approaches in intercultural education. Jackson (2015) suggests that intercultural simulations, study abroad programmes, and reflective journal writing contribute significantly to teachers' personal and professional development, especially by fostering empathy, communication flexibility, and cultural sensitivity. According to Hammer (2011), experiential learning plays a vital role in fostering intercultural sensitivity, as repeated involvement in intercultural tasks improves individuals' ability to adjust their behaviour in suitable ways. Although Jilin Province offers fewer opportunities for genuine intercultural encounters due to its cultural homogeneity, experiential learning can still be embedded in local professional development programmes. Virtual exchanges, collaborative online projects, culturally rich case studies, and guided reflection activities can create meaningful intercultural experiences that support learning. As an integral part of the conceptual framework presented in this paper, these approaches support teachers in resource-limited contexts by facilitating intercultural learning processes that closely mirror real-world interaction patterns.

Institutional Support and Teacher Motivation

Institutional support substantially determines how confidently and consistently teachers adopt intercultural perspectives in their instructional practices. According to Fullan (2007), meaningful and lasting change in education, including developments in teaching approaches, curriculum design, and teacher beliefs, is contingent upon ongoing leadership commitment, enabling policies, and well-aligned professional development structures. Institutions that regard intercultural competence as a central educational objective are more likely to provide adequate resources, develop supportive structures, and encourage teachers to adopt innovative pedagogical practices. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) suggest that effective leadership in schools' influences teaching practice by aligning staff around a common vision, enhancing motivation, and fostering supportive settings for sustained professional learning.

However, when institutions place strong emphasis on examinations, rigid curricular frameworks, or narrowly defined academic targets, teachers may feel limited in their ability to integrate intercultural activities. Wang and Coleman (2022) observe that many Chinese teachers operate within systems that reward linguistic accuracy and test performance, resulting in tensions between intercultural goals and curriculum demands. Opfer and Pedder (2011) also highlight that teacher learning is shaped not only by individual factors but by the organisational environment, including norms, expectations, and professional cultures that may either facilitate or hinder change. Teacher motivation is another important consideration. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), Self-Determination Theory highlights that intrinsic motivation supported by autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhances engagement, encourages sustained

commitment, and supports creative teaching practice. Teachers who view intercultural competence as personally meaningful and professionally valuable are more likely to adopt intercultural pedagogies. Conversely, even well-designed training programmes may have limited impact when teachers lack motivation or institutional support. For this reason, both teacher motivation and institutional conditions are central to the conceptual framework proposed in this study, as they determine whether intercultural learning is sustainable and effectively translated into teaching practice.

Conceptual Findings

The combination of theoretical models, empirical evidence, and contextual examination resulted in four main conceptual findings that illustrate ways to strengthen intercultural competence among foreign language teachers in Jilin Province. The findings are grounded in the combined application of Byram's (1997) and Deardorff's (2006) frameworks of intercultural competence, together with pertinent scholarship on cross-cultural training, experiential learning, and institutional environments. These conceptual outcomes draw attention to the complex interaction among individual psychological attributes, professional learning structures, and the sociocultural environment shaping teachers' practice. These findings are structured around the interconnected components of the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 1), which demonstrates how training, experience, institutional context, and motivation jointly influence the development of intercultural competence. Taken together, these perspectives illustrate that intercultural competence must be understood through the interaction of developmental processes, institutional conditions, and sociocultural context rather than as a single individual capability.

Finding 1: Intercultural Competence Requires a Multidimensional, Developmental Approach Rather Than Isolated Skills Training

Theoretical analysis indicates that intercultural competence is a dynamic construct, not a fixed characteristic, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. In Byram's (1997) model, attitudes including openness and curiosity form a core element, together with knowledge of cultural systems and interpretive and relational skills. Deardorff's (2006) process model conceptualises intercultural competence as the result of recurring cycles of reflection, adaptation, and communication. In the context of Jilin, this perspective shows that teachers are unlikely to achieve meaningful intercultural development through one-time workshops or limited cultural content, and instead benefit from long-term, developmentally oriented learning opportunities.

The integrated analysis also suggests that teachers in culturally homogeneous regions need additional support to cultivate internal outcomes such as empathy, perspective-taking, and cultural humility, especially because these qualities are normally strengthened through repeated intercultural encounters. The conceptual findings therefore indicate that intercultural training in Jilin must reflect developmental experiences grounded in real-world intercultural challenges. Teachers need opportunities not only to gain knowledge but also to explore cultural biases, reflect on communication breakdowns, and practise adaptive strategies. As noted by Fantini (2009), the absence of a developmental framework may lead teachers to collect cultural knowledge without realising the deeper mindset shifts or professional identity development that underpin authentic intercultural competence. This developmental perspective aligns with

the dynamic structure of the proposed framework (Figure 1), in which intercultural competence emerges through ongoing and reciprocal interactions among its core components.

Finding 2: Cross-cultural Training is Most Effective When Experiential and Reflective Elements are Integrated

A review of empirical studies demonstrates that cross-cultural training yields stronger outcomes in awareness, sensitivity, and communicative adaptability when experiential learning forms part of the design. Programmes featuring simulations, case-based analysis, role plays, or immersion activities consistently exceed the effectiveness of lecture-based or purely informational approaches. According to Cushner and Mahon (2002), teachers engaged in overseas practicum experiences gained broader intercultural outlooks and higher levels of emotional resilience compared with teachers based in local settings. In a comparable way, O'Dowd (2020) found that virtual exchanges are capable of producing meaningful intercultural development, showing that experiential learning does not depend exclusively on physical mobility.

In synthesising the literature, the conceptual findings suggest that experiential components are particularly important in Jilin Province, where opportunities for natural intercultural interaction are limited. Virtual exchange programmes, collaborative online activities with international partners, and scenario-based simulations can provide teachers with experiences that challenge assumptions, provoke reflection, and encourage behavioural experimentation. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle concrete experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation helps explain why such methods lead to deeper learning. Programmes that stop at the level of conceptual presentation fail to activate the transformative learning processes required for internalising intercultural competence. In this context, the conceptual findings highlight that teacher development in Jilin ought to focus on experiential and reflective approaches in place of predominantly theoretical training. As depicted in Figure 1, experiential learning functions as a central mechanism that mediates the effectiveness of cross-cultural training by transforming conceptual knowledge into reflective and adaptive practice.

Finding 3: Institutional Support Significantly Determines Whether Teachers Apply Intercultural Principles in Practice

Findings from the conceptual analysis suggest that the character of institutional culture, together with the effectiveness of leadership, strongly determines teachers' motivation and competence in embedding intercultural learning within instruction. Educational change research (Fullan, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2020) suggests that the adoption of new pedagogical approaches by teachers is more probable when institutions promote innovation, allocate appropriate resources, and align school priorities with long-term developmental aims. Conversely, inflexible curricular frameworks, assessment-oriented expectations, and minimal administrative backing pose significant challenges to the implementation of intercultural teaching practices.

As can be seen from the proposed framework (Figure 1), institutional support functions as a contextual mediator determining whether professional learning and motivation result in sustained intercultural practice. The findings further underscore that institutional constraints are especially evident in Chinese EFL environments. According to Wang and Coleman (2022), teachers face "double pressure" arising from the challenge of balancing examination

requirements with wider communicative and intercultural educational goals. Opfer and Pedder's (2011) model of teacher learning further emphasises that professional development is influenced not only by individual teacher characteristics but also by wider systemic and organisational factors. In Jilin Province, where many institutions prioritise linguistic accuracy and test performance, teachers may feel constrained from implementing intercultural activities that require time, autonomy, and curriculum flexibility.

A central conceptual conclusion is that improving teachers' intercultural competence in Jilin is shaped by both high-quality training and the extent to which systemic structures are coherently aligned. Institutional efforts are required to incorporate intercultural priorities into curriculum guidance, sustain them through supportive leadership, and cultivate innovation via professional learning communities. A lack of institutional support can hinder teachers' ability to sustain intercultural approaches, regardless of their high level of motivation.

Finding 4: Teacher Motivation Mediates the Effectiveness of Both Training and Institutional Support

The final conceptual findings emphasise the significance of teacher motivation in sustaining intercultural competence development. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory as proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000), the analysis suggests that intrinsic motivation, shaped by autonomy, perceived competence, and personal relevance, leads to greater engagement with intercultural learning. Teachers who regard intercultural competence as important to their professional role are more inclined to participate actively in training, engage in reflective practice, and incorporate intercultural activities into their classroom teaching. Figure 1 highlights teacher motivation as a mediating force that strengthens or constrains the influence of training and institutional support on intercultural competence development.

The findings further indicate that motivation interacts with institutional and developmental factors. Even when institutions provide resources, teachers may resist intercultural approaches if they lack confidence or do not perceive intercultural competence as necessary. Similarly, training programmes may be ineffective if teachers participate only to satisfy institutional requirements. In the Jilin context, constrained exposure to cultural diversity may influence teachers' motivation and how they understand the relevance of intercultural pedagogy. Therefore, conceptual findings show that professional development must intentionally address motivational dimensions by emphasising the significance of intercultural teaching for learners' global readiness and teachers' professional growth.

Summary of Findings

In general, the conceptual evidence suggests that strengthening intercultural competence among foreign language teachers in Jilin Province cannot be achieved through isolated training alone, but instead requires a holistic framework combining developmental models, experiential learning, systemic support, and teacher motivation. The synthesis shows that intercultural competence develops through the interaction of reflective growth, experiential learning, supportive institutional structures, and teachers' intrinsic motivation. These findings guide the conceptual framework proposed in this study and emphasise the conditions necessary for intercultural pedagogy to thrive within culturally homogeneous educational settings.

Discussion

The conceptual framework presented in this paper (Figure 1) demonstrates that intercultural competence among foreign language teachers emerges from the dynamic interaction between cross-cultural training, experiential learning, institutional support, and teacher motivation. This model illustrates how theoretical insights from Byram, Deardorff, and experiential learning are reshaped by institutional structures, personal motivational factors, and the contextual realities of teaching in Jilin. Although each element contributes to a different aspect of intercultural development, their effects are closely interconnected. Cross-cultural training serves as the initial entry point by equipping teachers with foundational knowledge about cultural systems, communication differences, and core theoretical concepts (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Fantini, 2009). Still, knowledge on its own is inadequate for achieving transformation. Teachers must have opportunities to apply their learning, confront discrepancies between expectations and real experiences, and engage in reflective practice that leads to deeper transformation. This highlights the significance of experiential learning in enabling teachers to apply intercultural principles within real or simulated settings. As discussed previously, experiential learning supports the transformation of theoretical understanding into intercultural practice without requiring direct overseas experience.

Institutional support reinforces these developmental processes by creating the conditions necessary for sustained intercultural practice. The exploration of innovative teaching strategies by teachers is more likely when institutional conditions ensure time allocation, resource provision, administrative backing, and coherence between curricular expectations and intercultural objectives (Fullan, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2020). In settings where exam-oriented expectations dominate or where intercultural goals are not explicitly prioritised, teachers may feel reluctant to implement activities that diverge from standard instructional routines. Thus, institutional support acts as both an enabler and a protective factor, ensuring that teachers can apply what they have learned without facing structural or cultural constraints. Ultimately, motivation serves as the internal force that influences how teachers engage with training and sustain effort when faced with challenges. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), teachers who feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relevance are more inclined to engage in intercultural growth with authentic commitment.

Overall, these four elements provide an explanation for the observed differences in intercultural competence among foreign language teachers in Jilin Province. Access to high-quality training that combines theoretical insight with experiential learning, particularly within institutions committed to intercultural education, helps teachers develop stronger intercultural sensitivity, adaptability, and confidence in their teaching. As a result, these teachers are more inclined to adopt intercultural approaches, engage students in reflective discussion, and promote critical awareness of cultural issues. Conversely, teachers with limited access to training, minimal institutional support, or low motivation often struggle to apply intercultural principles despite recognising their importance.

The framework deepens understanding of how teacher education programmes can be more effectively organised to sustain intercultural growth over time, while also building confidence. First, the findings suggest that training should not be confined to lectures or short workshops but should be designed as broader learning contexts enriched with experiential practices. Programmes need to incorporate cultural simulations, case analyses, virtual exchanges, reflective journals, and collaborative tasks that enable teachers to develop intercultural

competence in a progressive manner. Second, institutions must demonstrate a visible commitment to intercultural goals by embedding these objectives in curriculum frameworks, assessment policies, and professional development plans. In addition, effective leadership practices enable school leaders to strongly influence teachers' viewpoints while fostering organisational cultures that encourage innovation and intercultural engagement instead of constraining these practices (Fullan, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Another important implication drawn from the framework is that teacher motivation must be purposefully nurtured. Teacher education programmes should underscore the relevance of intercultural competence to teachers' personal development and professional effectiveness, while also highlighting its potential to open wider career pathways. Reflective approaches that include guided discussions, critical incident analysis, and peer supported learning communities help teachers to examine their assumptions, clarify their goals, and develop a stronger sense of purpose. Internally motivated teachers are more inclined to engage constructively with intercultural pedagogy and continue their efforts despite challenges that emerge in practice.

Additionally, the framework emphasises the unique challenges faced by teachers in culturally homogeneous areas such as Jilin Province, where limited opportunities for natural intercultural encounters require greater emphasis on mediated approaches to building intercultural skills. In situations where mobility is constrained, virtual exchanges, digital storytelling projects, international collaborative online learning environments, and partnerships with foreign institutions provide effective means of fostering intercultural engagement. Existing research demonstrates that virtual intercultural interactions play a significant role in enhancing perspective taking, empathy, and communicative flexibility, and these findings correspond with the approaches outlined in this study (O'Dowd, 2020). Accordingly, the framework suggests that digital and mediated strategies should be treated as integral to intercultural development within teacher education programmes in Jilin.

In essence, the framework emphasises that intercultural competence cannot be attained through isolated efforts; rather, it requires an integrated and long-term approach encompassing knowledge, experience, institutional structures, and motivational factors. Focusing on a single element in isolation, without accounting for the others, is unlikely to result in meaningful transformation. For example, carefully structured experiential training may yield modest outcomes if teachers do not feel supported by their institutions or fail to recognise intercultural competence as part of their professional role. Therefore, without appropriate training to support them, institutional demands may produce only superficial implementation. When these elements are considered as interconnected, policymakers, teacher educators, and school leaders are better able to develop professional development strategies aligned with the realities of foreign language teaching in Jilin.

In summary, this discussion demonstrates that intercultural competence development requires a systemic, context-sensitive approach. The proposed framework offers a pathway for enhancing teacher readiness and strengthening intercultural pedagogy in educational environments where cultural diversity is limited. By combining cross-cultural training, experiential learning opportunities, institutional support, and motivational strategies, teacher education systems can cultivate educators who are better equipped to meet the demands of globalised communication and to guide students toward deeper intercultural understanding.

Conclusion

Intercultural competence is now widely recognised as a fundamental component of foreign language education in an increasingly interconnected world. The findings of this paper indicate that developing intercultural competence among foreign language teachers is a multifaceted process shaped by the interaction of cross-cultural training, experiential learning, institutional support, and teacher motivation. As presented in the proposed conceptual framework, these elements operate in tandem rather than in isolation, influencing how teachers engage with intercultural pedagogy in different ways. The proposed model synthesises theoretical insights and contextual considerations to explain how intercultural competence can be developed and sustained among foreign language teachers in Jilin Province.

This study demonstrates that while foundational training is important for raising awareness of cultural systems and communicative norms, meaningful intercultural development requires opportunities for teachers to move beyond theoretical knowledge and engage in reflective classroom experimentation. When supported by institutional structures that value intercultural aims and provide time, resources, and flexibility, teachers are better positioned to translate conceptual awareness into adaptive classroom practices. Teacher motivation further sustains this growth by reinforcing agency, commitment, and openness to new pedagogical approaches, especially in contexts where external constraints limit intercultural exposure.

Institutional support was identified as a key influence on the development of intercultural competence. Nevertheless, even teachers who are well trained and highly motivated may find it difficult to implement intercultural pedagogy when constrained by examination-driven systems, inflexible curricula, or insufficient administrative support. Effective institutional support extends beyond the provision of material resources to include the cultivation of a professional culture that values intercultural learning, leadership that encourages pedagogical innovation, and policies that formally embed intercultural competence within curriculum standards. According to Fullan (2007) and Leithwood et al. (2020), meaningful systemic change occurs when institutions are well aligned, creating conditions in which teachers can develop effectively through coherent structures, supportive practices, and future-focused goals. For foreign language teachers in China, especially those working in Jilin, such structures are crucial for turning intercultural concepts into practical teaching realities.

Institutional support was identified as a pivotal factor enabling teachers to translate conceptual understanding into classroom practice. Beyond resources, effective support depends on coherent policies, administrative encouragement, and a school culture that values intercultural learning. Teachers are more likely to innovate when institutional structures remove barriers rather than reinforce examination-driven expectations. Teacher motivation further sustains growth by reinforcing agency and commitment over time. When teachers experience autonomy and professional purpose, intercultural pedagogy becomes part of their teaching identity rather than an optional extension. This is particularly significant in culturally homogeneous settings, where motivation can compensate for limited naturally occurring intercultural experiences.

The framework presented in this study offers practical insights relevant to teacher education, curriculum development, and institutional policy contexts. Central to this contribution is the call for teacher education programmes to move beyond theory-heavy practices by adopting sustained, scaffolded, and experiential approaches to intercultural development. Institutional responsibility centres on fostering conditions that encourage teachers to take pedagogical risks and pursue innovation. Policy responsibility, in turn, involves embedding intercultural

competence within national and regional curriculum reforms to maintain consistency between curricular expectations and classroom implementation.

Further research can advance this framework by undertaking empirical studies that analyse how its components interact within diverse educational environments and how they affect measurable dimensions of teachers' intercultural competence. Longitudinal research may offer valuable insights into the ways intercultural competence develops across time, how teachers maintain their professional learning, and which institutional strategies yield the most meaningful impact. Cross-regional or cross-national comparative studies have the potential to clarify the ways in which sociocultural contexts inform levels of intercultural teaching readiness.

To conclude, enhancing intercultural competence among foreign language teachers calls for an integrated, context-sensitive, and systemic approach. When cross-cultural training, experiential learning, institutional support, and teacher motivation are aligned, educational institutions especially those operating in culturally homogeneous contexts such as Jilin are better positioned to prepare teachers to enhance students' intercultural understanding and communicative effectiveness. Growing global interconnectedness suggests that sustained attention to intercultural competence development will be central to enhancing foreign language education in China and beyond.

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