AI-Assisted Material Design for TEIL: Enhancing Learners’ Metacultural Competence

Linh Ngoc Truong Pham[[1]](#footnote-1)

Abstract

This study explores the potential application of AI, specifically ChatGPT, in the design of instructional materials for teaching English as an International Language (TEIL). The primary objective is to foster learners’ metacultural competence, which encompasses three key dimensions: (1) the ability to recognize English as a medium for expressing diverse systems of cultural conceptualization (i.e., World Englishes); (2) the capacity to actively acquire knowledge about other cultural conceptualization systems while articulating their own; and (3) the competence to make contextually appropriate choices regarding cultural conceptualizations embedded in English during intercultural communication. Grounded in the theoretical framework of Cultural Linguistics, the study examines cross-cultural variation in cultural pragmatic schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors among different speech communities. The findings illustrate the processes through which TEIL materials can be developed or adapted using AI-driven tools like ChatGPT to effectively support the development of metacultural competence across varieties of English.

***Keywords*:** ChatGPT, TEIL material design, metacultural competence, cultural conceptualization

1. Introduction

Due to extensive economic, social, and cultural exchanges globally, English has evolved into diverse localized forms that reflect the identities of different communities, leading to a shift in how English is taught and understood. Rather than emphasizing native-speaker norms, English language teaching now prioritizes fluency in cross-cultural communication and embraces global varieties of English (e.g., Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Kong & Sung, 2021; Corbett, 2022; Liu & Fang, 2022). Hence, English is increasingly seen as an international language (EIL), functioning as a shared tool for expressing culturally embedded meanings across speech communities, rather than a uniform global standard. Consequently, English language teaching requires an intercultural approach that goes beyond fostering cultural awareness to developing learners’ ability to recognize and work with diverse cultural conceptualizations embedded in language—what Sharifian (2013, 2017), a respected pioneer in the emergent Cultural Linguistics, terms “metacultural competence,” which is often incorporated into the practice of teaching English as an international language (TEIL) with a view to developing learners’ conceptual awareness, explication, and negotiation.

To key learners to such next phase of English, cross-cultural contexts are necessary. Xu and Sharifian (2017) argue that it is in the cosmopolitan spaces that the EIL learners have more chances of getting aware of different cultural conceptualizations encoded in English and engaged in the intercultural communication. Unfortunately, in some countries or communities lacking the continuous contact with other cultures, such condition is hardly fulfilled. The TEIL practice in those places thus mainly depend on a well-designed curriculum with the contents and procedures related to the varieties of English and the acquisition of different cultural conceptualization systems. While the contents can be found from various sources, the adaptation and integration into the TEIL curriculum remains as a challenge due to a serious lack of previous research on the approach.

In the digital era, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool in English language teaching and learning, offering unprecedented opportunities for personalization, efficiency, and engagement. By leveraging natural language processing and machine learning algorithms, AI can generate contextually relevant content, adapt to learners’ proficiency levels, and provide real-time feedback, thus supporting differentiated instruction. Moreover, AI enables the dynamic integration of multimodal resources—such as voice recognition, chatbots, and interactive simulations—that enhance communicative competence in authentic scenarios. As language education increasingly shifts towards learner-centered approaches and digital literacy, AI-supported material development represents a critical innovation in reshaping pedagogical practices for globalized, intercultural communication.

This study aims to explore how AI can assist the adaptation process of cultural conceptualization contents into the TEIL curriculum with the purpose of enhancing learners’ metacultural competence. The objectives of the study include (1) gaining deeper insights into the contents, procedures, and strategies of AI-assisted material design for TEIL, (2) contributing to the existing body of research on AI implementation in developing TEIL curriculum, and (3) providing a foundation for EIL teachers and researchers to develop more effective strategies for enhancing learners’ metacultural competence. By shedding light on this overlooked perspective, the study seeks to encourage conceptual approaches to language curriculum design and inform future research on AI adoption in intercultural communication settings.

Building on the discussions above, the next section of this article refers to the framework of Cultural Linguistics by Sharifian (2017) to clarify the term “cultural conceptualization” as a key element in the theory and analysis of the so-called EIL and World Englishes with variations in cultural pragmatic schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors. Such theoretical ground is also discussed in the context of TEIL, intercultural communication, metacultural competence, and AI-assisted education, revolving around the cultural conceptualization systems. Following this, the research objectives are restated, accompanied by key research questions that guide the study. The subsequent section details the research approach, outlining the study design, and data collection procedures. Finally, the article presents and analyzes the qualitative findings across different speech communities, addressing the research questions while offering insights into potential applications for AI implementation in TEIL material design and metacultural competence.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural Conceptualization

Cultural conceptualization refers to a process of constructing concepts through the choices among a variety of stimuli, reflecting the experiences of focal attention that are shared and passed down in a speech community (Langacker, 1987). Cultural conceptualization, therefore, is a central tenet in the theoretical and analytical framework of Cultural Linguistics suggested by Sharifian (2011, 2015, 2017). In terms of theory, cultural conceptualization is a product of cultural cognition that is constructed beyond human perception during social and linguistic interactions through space and time. In other words, cultural conceptualizations as well as cultural cognition are derived from human experiences, unevenly distributed and negotiated among members of a speech community, and hardly segmented into utterly separate components. In terms of analysis, Sharifian affirmed that many aspects of language structure and language use are formed based on cultural conceptualizations, and the language itself is also an environment for cultural cognition to be (re)structured through human language interaction, thereby creating the development of cultural conceptualizations and the language in which they are entrenched. To evaluate cultural conceptualizations in the relationship with language (or linguistic features), Sharifian (2014, 2017) proposed such analytical tools as “cultural schema,” “cultural category,” and “cultural metaphor.”

Cultural schema is a concise presentation of knowledge underlying the structure, practice, and analysis of encyclopedic meanings that are culturally constructed and expressed through the lexical system. For example, the act of ‘greeting’ associated with the cultural schema of politeness in Vietnamese is often associated with the schema of real-time action. To be specific, Vietnamese people every time meeting around mealtime often say *Anh/Chị đã ăn gì chưa?* ‘Have you eaten anything yet?’, and when accidentally seeing someone at the market often say, *Anh/Chị (cũng) đang đi chợ hả?* ‘Are you (also) going shopping?’. Unlike Vietnamese, the cultural schema of politeness in English for the act of ‘greeting’ is often expressed in the form of a wish or an inquiry associated with health or work schemas. Accordingly, native English speakers when meeting often say *Good morning*, *Good afternoon*, *Good evening*, *How are you? How are you doing? How are things?*.

Cultural category (or cultural categorization) is intrinsically a cultural conceptualization. Cultural category is often analyzed through its subcategories or prototypes that vary from one speech community to another in terms of semantic and pragmatic meanings and frequency of use. For example, Vietnamese categories of kinship include *dì* (referring to mother’s sisters) and *cô* (referring to father’s sisters); these are also commonly used with categories of proper name or ordinal number such as *Dì Lan* ‘Aunt Lan’, *Dì Tám* ‘Aunt the Eighth’, *Cô Hoa* ‘Aunt Hoa’, *Cô Ba* ‘Aunt the Third’ to indicate a close and affectionate relationship. The equivalent of these in English is *aunt* (referring to mother or father’s sisters) that is sometimes followed by a name (as in *Aunt Susan*) but rarely by a number.

Cultural metaphor is a kind of conceptual metaphor rooted in community elements, constructed and shared among members in the form of traditional and cultural experiences such as history, religion, beliefs, folklore, folk medicine, and folk knowledge. For instance, the Vietnamese cultural metaphor heaven as a judge underpins such expressions as *Trời sẽ không tha người bất nghĩa* ‘the heaven will not spare the devil,’ *Ông trời có mắt* ‘Mr. Heaven has eyes’ meaning that all good and bad things will be fairly judged by the ‘heaven’. In English, the cultural metaphor heaven as a powerful god is presented in *Heaven forbid* (indicating things that seem impossible), *Heaven help* (indicating difficult things), *Heaven knows* (indicating facts that are hard to prove). Sharifian (2017, p.18) argued that conceptual metaphors of later generations are also often deeply explained from cultural base and many Cognitive Linguists who study conceptual metaphor theory have gradually transformed into research directions of Cultural Linguistics.

In summary, cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors are specific modes of cultural conceptualizations as part of cultural cognition; and simultaneously are the tools that Cultural Linguistics uses to approach and process language. In other words, cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors are central objects that help link both theoretical and analytic base for the relationship between language and cultural cognition, between linguistic expressions and cultural conceptualizations. The subsequent section will continue to explain the role of cultural conceptualizations in TEIL and metacultural competence.

2.2. TEIL and Metacultural Competence

From the perspective of Cultural Linguistics by Sharifian (2017), cultural conceptualization is a key to approaching English as an international language (EIL). Theorectially, cultural conceptualization reflects the varying process of constructing meanings embedded in the use of language from different speech communities. Accordingly, English in global contexts is taken as a mutual tool to manifest different systems of cultural conceptualization derived from different cultural cognition. Analytically, cultural conceptualization in the form of cultural pragmatic schema, cultural categeory, and cultural metaphor provides models to describe the English language features that vary from one speech community to another. In short, EIL is not only accessed based on the variations in linguistic expressions and entrenched cultural meanings but now can also be analyzed from various patterns, which is easier for symtematic interpretation, computation, comparison, adaptation, and integration.

Therefore, the English language teaching (ELT) of this new era after all requires another intercultural approach. It is not just about raising learners’ knowledge of different cultural values reflected through the contents of ELT materials for the purpose of enhancing their positive attitudes and exchanges with others in globalized contexts as advocated in previous intercultural communication studies (e.g., Byram, 1997; Canagarajah, 2006; Kramsch, 2008). Due to the abovementioned consideration over the cultural conceptualizations entrenched in EIL, the intercultural competence should also need more skills of dealing with the ways cultural values are instantiated in the language. Sharifian (2013, 2017) defined such proficiency as “metacultural competence,” which is considered as a core framework, objective, requirement, and assessment to make EIL feasible and the practice of teaching EIL (i.e., TEIL) valid and successful.

Metacultural competence revolves around the manipulation of cultural conceptualizations during intercultural communication. The competence includes (i) the ability to be open to cultural differences reflected through English as a tool to encode different cultural conceptualization systems of different speech communities, (ii) the ability to request the interpretation of cultural conceptualizations belonging to other speech communities as well as the ability to explicate cultural conceptualizations of one’s own speech community, and (iii) the ability to decide on the appropriate choices of cultural conceptualizations in varied intercultural contexts (Sharifian, 2013, 2017; Xu, 2017b). Therefore, metacultural competence is always one of the objectives in the TEIL curriculum. For example, Xu and Sharifian (2017) explored cultural conceptualizations in Chinese English to distinguish, compare, interpret, and negotiate between other English varieties. Xu (2017a, 2017b) also analyzed aspects of metacultural competence based on cultural conceptualizations entrenched in the use of English by international students in discussions. Such research then serves as a practical foundation for the evaluation and development of the TEIL curriculum in Australia and China to develop metacultural competence in the era of globalization (Xu, 2018).

To sum up, with the advances in the field of Cultural Linguistics, EIL is now approached not only from the surface expressions but also from the deeper levels of meaning construction, that is, cultural conceptualizations. This leads to a demand for the acquisition of metacultural competence in which the handling of cultural conceptualization systems is concerned. In other words, the practice of EIL and TEIL is not without the awareness, explication, and negotiation of cultural conceptualizations entrenched in the English language features. To achieve the goals, one of the most innovative approaches in the digital era is inevitably the utilization of AI. The next section will discuss how AI implementation might contribute to the transformation from ELT to TEIL, from intercultural communicative competence to metacultural competence.

2.3. AI in ELT Curriculum Design

AI is playing a pivotal role in transforming ELT by promoting inclusivity, personalization, and instructional efficiency. AI-powered adaptive learning systems can customize content and pace according to individual learners’ needs, offering targeted support and fostering learner autonomy (Kannadhasan, 2024). In regions like South Asia, where language barriers and limited resources challenge traditional ELT practices, AI presents innovative solutions that broaden access and improve quality (Gyawali & Mehandroo, 2022). Furthermore, AI-assisted curriculum development facilitates the creation of dynamic, learner-centered materials aligned with 21st-century educational demands (Kasztelnik, 2024). Recent studies emphasize AI’s capacity to enhance various aspects of English instruction, including personalized learning pathways, adaptive assessment, and automated feedback—especially valuable in writing instruction (Zhang & Iliško, 2025; Huang, 2024). In Vietnam, AI and machine learning are being applied to design curricula aligned with learning outcomes and to personalize instruction across diverse educational settings (Le et al., 2025). Despite its promise, the integration of AI in ELT raises concerns about data privacy, algorithmic bias, curriculum alignment, and equitable access, particularly in under-resourced contexts (Kasztelnik, 2024; Zhang & Iliško, 2025). Nevertheless, AI continues to offer transformative potential in reimagining ELT material design, empowering educators to deliver more responsive, inclusive, and effective language instruction.

Beyond instructional innovation, AI also holds significant potential for advancing the goals of TEIL and fostering metacultural competence. By drawing from diverse linguistic databases and culturally varied input, AI can support the development of materials that reflect global Englishes and localized cultural conceptualizations. This enables learners to engage with English not as a fixed native-speaker model but as a dynamic tool for intercultural communication. AI-assisted tools can help design tasks that promote awareness of cultural variation, encourage conceptual negotiation, and enhance learners’ sensitivity to different worldviews expressed through English. As such, AI can be instrumental in cultivating metacultural competence—an essential skill in preparing learners to navigate complex, multicultural communication landscapes in the globalized world.

2.4. Research Gaps and Research Questions

The increasing impact of globalization has brought widespread recognition of EIL, shifting the focus of English language education from native-speaker norms to diverse, context-sensitive uses of English across cultures. This paradigm shift has significant implications for curriculum design, material development, and pedagogical approaches in ELT. However, several research gaps remain underexplored. First, while the theoretical foundations of EIL and World Englishes are well established, there is limited empirical research on how these concepts are operationalized in classroom materials and instructional practices, particularly in non-Western contexts. Second, the integration of cultural conceptualizations and the development of metacultural competence through English teaching materials remain insufficiently addressed. Although intercultural communicative competence has been widely promoted, less is known about how metacultural competence—learners’ ability to reflect on and navigate culturally embedded meanings—is effectively fostered through instructional design. Third, the emerging role of AI in ELT material development presents both opportunities and challenges, yet few studies have examined how AI can be strategically employed to support EIL-oriented and culturally responsive pedagogy.

In light of these gaps, the following research questions are proposed to guide further investigation:

1. How is the concept of EIL reflected in TEIL materials?
2. How can AI such as ChatGPT assist the TEIL material design to foster metacultural competence in English language learners?
3. How can AI such as ChatGPT be utilized to assess the metacultural competence among learners with the TEIL materials?

Addressing these questions will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how English teaching can align with the realities of global communication, and how technology can be harnessed to support more inclusive and culturally sensitive language education.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study explores an AI-assisted material design for TEIL, focusing on developing metacultural competence as the primary learning goal which shapes both the content of the language learning and the methods used (see Figure 1). As part of the research, the study details the contextual factors involved in designing the TEIL materials, aiming to establish foundational theories for the incorporation of cultural conceptualizations to meet the research objective with the help of AI, specifically ChatGPT, one of the most favored tools in language teaching and learning. The outcome of the research will be a broad, theoretical framework with examples that illustrate the content selections and processes grounded in the perspectives of Cultural Linguistics and ELT (i.e., explicit rule-giving and awareness-raising tasks).

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework of the Study*

Conceptual awareness

Conceptual explication

Conceptual negotiation

***3.2. Research Methods***

This qualitative research focuses on cultural conceptualizations embedded in English contents for the TEIL materials to enhance learners’ metacultural competence. Therefore, a variety of qualitative data related to cultural conceptualizations in World Englishes, teaching strategies, and observable impacts are gathered from previous studies. The data collection and analysis are carried out in three models (i.e., cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors), each of which is then constructed and examined according to the tenets of metacultural competence (i.e., cultural conceptual awareness, cultural conceptual explication, and cultural conceptual negotiation). The contents are presented in the form of texts and/or visuals followed by several explicit rule-giving or awareness-raising tasks thanks to the ChatGPT implementation. The criteria for each component of the conceptual framework can be briefly described as follows.

Firstly, the use of English in the TEIL materials is selected from varied cultural backgrounds such as American English, Australian English, Arabic English, Indian English, Chinese English, Korean English, Vietnamese English, etc. as suggested by Sharifian (2013).

Secondly, the metacultural competence outcome is assessed from three dimensions, including learners’ awareness of cultural conceptual variation embedded in EIL, learners’ ability to explain their own cultural conceptualizations, and learners’ strategies and chances to practice negotiating the cultural conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2018).

Thirdly, the sample contents are based on objects that have been explored in previous cross-cultural studies and adapted by ChatGPT with the following prompts.

1. *Write an interesting and funny 200-word paragraph for an English textbook from the following information:* [inserted text extracted from previous studies];
2. *How can you title this text?*;
3. *Can you give me some visual illustrations for the text?*;
4. *Write some discussion questions based on the text. The purposes of the questions are to raise learners’ awareness of English varying in different cultural communities, encourage them to explain the differences, have positive attitudes towards the different cultures, and know how to use similar expressions to match the target listeners in various intercultural contexts*;
5. *Write the suggested answers to all the questions given in the task*;
6. *Redesign the assignment into an indirect, discovery-based activity where the learners explore the idea without being given the text first. The flow is: picture → eliciting questions → learners infer meaning → discussion for intercultural purposes;*
7. *[Backup prompt for more options] Give me another totally different version regarding* [e.g., style and structure]*?.*

Lastly, the processes include procedures related to explicit rule-giving and awareness-raising tasks of direct and indirect methods respectively. Both techniques are widely favored in ELT settings to provide learners with thorough knowledge or encourage them to discover and construct the knowledge themselves (Ellis, 2008). This is also a simulation of real-life intercultural contexts in which learners are supposed to observe the cultural differences (implicitly or explicitly) and know how to embark on an adventure into them (Sharifian, 2018).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Question 1: How is the concept of EIL reflected in TEIL materials?

The concept of EIL is quite different from that of World Englishes. While the latter is often presented with varieties of English in terms of accents and cultural knowledge included in the ELT materials, the former is mostly demonstrated with the description and explanation of how the English language features are constructed and used differently between speech communities (i.e., cultural conceptualizations), thus being what the TEIL materials would be focused on (Pham, 2025). Some examples of the potential contents for TEIL extracted from the book “Cultural Linguistics and World Englishes” edited by Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2021) are briefly summarized and presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Examples of Cultural Conceptualizations in World Englishses as Chosen Contents for EIL*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Speech Communities | Cultural Conceptualizations |
| Cultural Pragmatic Schemas | Aboriginal Australian English | In Aboriginal Australian English, greetings may not be given, but orientation questions may be used as the way of initiating communication. For example, in areas of South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales, and possibly beyond, phrases such as “Where are you going?”, “Where did you come from?” are interactionally equivalent to ‘Hullo,’ ‘Hi,’ ‘Gidday,’ etc. in Australian English (p. 28). **[text 1]** |
| Korean English | Mealtime in Korea is often considered a central event within the family and across other groups with which one is allied where various social relationships are built, fostered and maintained, thus dining together signifies belonging and bonding. The Korean diet is conventionally omnivorous, thus, eating a vegetarian meal during group mealtime is considered deviant. This can also be seen as a conscious refusal of the bonding process with the other meat-eating group members disrupting group harmony during mealtime. Therefore, the remark like “I don’t eat meat” and, “I won’t eat it” causes discordance at the dinner table with others who are meat-eaters. The behaviour of keeping to a vegetarian diet can be interpreted as, “I am not interested in joining these activities with you and I don’t mind not being a member of ‘your’ group” (pp. 90-91). **[text 2]** |
| Cultural Categories | Arabic English | Arabic English uses the verb ‘present’ with the word ‘presentation,’ which could sound strange and redundant to an L1 speaker of English. The word presentation is often collocated with the verbs ‘give’ or ‘make.’ This could be because in Arabic the two words meaning ‘present’ and ‘presentation’ are not as similar as they are in English, so they can be collocated without the same sense of redundancy. In Arabic, the verb ‘give’ when collocated with ‘presentation’ often  means ‘passing the presentation materials and slides to someone,’ and the verb ‘make’ when collocated with ‘presentation’ means the preparation stage before the actual presentation (pp. 181-182). **[text 3]** |
| Indian English & American English | Yoga in Indian English tends to abound with words of Sanskrit origin such as *guru*, *Patanjali* and *sutras* as well as lexical items associated with religion like *God* and *bible*, thereby instantiating the conceptualisations ‘yoga as tradition’ and ‘yoga as religion.’ *Yoga* as an uncountable noun in Standard English is given the plural suffix (i.e., *yogas*) in Indian English to reflect the various subcategories of yoga. On the other hand, collocates of *yoga* in American English like *pants*, *mat*, *Pilates* and *studio* underpin the conceptualisations ‘yoga as sport’ and ‘yoga as commodity/business.’ Furthermore, the conceptualisation ‘yoga teaching as a profession’ (as evident in the co-occurrence of *yoga*, *instructor/teacher* and *certified/registered*) is much more prevalent in American English (p. 239). **[text 4]** |
| Cultural Metaphors | Hong Kong English | In Hong Kong English, ‘banana’ can denote a social stereotype of a Westernised Chinese person  while ‘boiled egg’ can denote a stereotype of a Chineseised Western person (p. 102). **[text 5]** |
| Chinese English & Vietnamese English | In Chinese English and Vietnamese English, ‘fate’, ‘karma’, and ‘destiny’ are reciprocal concepts having origins in Buddhism sense that stands for the sum total of all conditions in the natural world. All that we are at the present moment is the result of the karma that we have produced in the past (p. 163). **[text 6]** |

Extracted and adapted from the book “Cultural Linguistics and World Englishes” edited by Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2021).

According to Sharifian (2014, 2017), cultural pragmatic schemas are approached as ground knowledge to understand certain speech acts/events associated with some general pragmatic acts underlying the typical linguistic expressions. Cultural categories are assessed in terms of semantic expressions, pragmatic meanings, generative capabilities (i.e., abilities to get chained with other categories and schemas), and frequency of use (Rosch, 1978; Lakoff, 1986). Finally, cultural metaphors are introduced and analyzed through cognitive models (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The processes embody different cultural conceptualization systems that vary across different speech communities, reflecting distinct underlying cognitive principles, known as cultural cognition (Sharifian, 2017). Such a theorial and analytical framework may enable educators, teachers, and curriculum designers to navigate the potential contents for TEIL from a wide range of sources in cultural conceptualization, cultural linguistics, cultural knowledge, and World Englishes.

4.2. Research Question 2: How can ChatGPT assist the TEIL material design to foster learners’ metacultural competence?

After the cultural conceptualizations in World Englishes are chosen from previous cultural studies, the contents for TEIL can be designed with the help of AI such as ChatGPT. Regarding the direct approach of ELT, the contents include the input followed by some discussion questions. The sample below illustrates how certain prompts were used to create the contents from the collected cultural conceptualizations (e.g., Table 1).

Prompt 1: *Write an interesting and funny 200-word paragraph for an English textbook from the following information:* [inserted **text 1**]

Result 1: In some Aboriginal Australian English varieties—especially in parts of South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales—greetings can sound very different from what you might expect. Forget “Hello,” “Hi,” or “G’day.” Here, people may start a conversation with a friendly, “Where are you going?” or “Where did you come from?” Now, if you’re new to the area, you might wonder if you’ve just been stopped by a security guard. But don’t worry—no one is checking your travel plans! In these communities, such questions are simply a warm way of saying “Hi” and showing interest in you. Imagine walking along a dusty road and hearing someone call, “Where did you come from?” You might reply, “From the shop,” and then ask in return, “Where are you going?”—and just like that, you’re in a friendly chat about family, the weather, or the day’s plans. This style of greeting isn’t about getting personal details; it’s about connection, belonging, and keeping the conversation flowing. So if you’re ever asked where you’re heading in these parts, don’t feel interrogated—feel welcomed. You’ve just been greeted in true Aboriginal Australian English style: with curiosity, warmth, and maybe a hint of cheekiness.

Prompt 2: *How can you title this text?*

Result 2: Here are some good options:

1. “Where Are You Going?” – A Different Kind of Hello
2. Greetings the Aboriginal Australian English Way
3. No ‘Hello’? No Problem!
4. Where Did You Come From? (And Other Ways to Say Hi)
5. Curious Questions as Warm Welcomes

Prompt 3: *Can you give me some visual illustrations for the text?*

Result 3:

A cartoon of two women talking

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Prompt 4: *Write some discussion questions based on the text. The purposes of the questions are to raise learners’ awareness of English varying in different cultural communities, encourage them to explain the differences, have positive attitudes towards the different cultures, and know how to use similar expressions to match the target listeners in various intercultural contexts.*

Result 4: Here’s a set of discussion questions designed to match those purposes:

1. In the text, how do people in some Aboriginal Australian English communities greet each other?
2. How is this style of greeting different from the way people usually greet each other in your culture?
3. Why do you think “Where are you going?” or “Where did you come from?” can be seen as friendly rather than intrusive in these communities?
4. Can you think of other examples (in English or other languages) where a question is used instead of “Hello” to start a conversation?
5. How might misunderstandings happen if someone from another culture hears this greeting for the first time?
6. What could you do to respond politely if you are greeted in this way while visiting such a community?
7. Why is it important to adapt your way of greeting to match the cultural expectations of the people you are speaking to?
8. How can learning about different greeting styles help you in intercultural communication?
9. Share a personal experience when you used (or heard) an unusual greeting. How did it make you feel?
10. What positive attitudes should we have when encountering different cultural ways of speaking English?

Prompt 5: *Write the suggested answers to all the questions given in the task*.

Result 5: [see Appendix A]

Regarding the indirect approach of ELT, one can continue with prompt 6: *“**Redesign the assignment into an indirect, discovery-based activity where the learners explore the idea without being given the text first. The flow is: picture → eliciting questions → learners infer meaning → discussion for intercultural purposes.”* (see Appendix B for ChatGPT results). With **texts 2-6** (Table 1) and prompt 7 “*Give me another totally different version regarding* [e.g., style and structure]*?*”, the contents can be even more varying for different educational purposes and contexts. However, all the items should be double-checked and flexibly adapted and chosen to make sure they align with the verified input and the learners’ needs, interests, learning styles, and capabilities. Generally, the explicit model might be more suitable for learners of lower levels as the rules are all given out in the first place (Ellis, 1994; Khamesipour, 2015; Pianpadungporn, 2024), whereas the implicit model are often preferred for advanced learners who have already been prepared to conquer any new knowledge (Ellis, 2008; DeCarrico, 2001).

Whichever approach to be taken, the models are theoretically proved to be effective in developing learners’ metacultural competence. Firstly, in terms of cultural conceptual awareness, learners have chances of getting exposed to English varieties in various cultural communities. From this outcome, there is no “best” English but a system of linguistic features used as a mutual tool to carry many local identities (i.e., local cultural conceptualizations). As a result, the type of English that we used to know is now transforming into EIL or World Englishes, each of which is equal from the cultural perspective, thus together leads to globalization and a peaceful intercultural communication. Secondly, in terms of cultural conceptual explication, through the questions about their own community, learners are continually encouraged to share their cultural conceptualization system in the comparison with others’. This is in line with Sharifian (2017)’s processes of conceptual-associative analysis and story recounts to elicit cultural conceptualizations from emic sources. If the class is composed of learners from different cultures, then such activities will bring about a cosmopolitan setting for the learners to get involved and become more open-minded (Xu, 2017a). Finally, in terms of cultural conceptual negotiation, learners are given some simulation contexts where they are required to make their own cultural decisions. To do this, they must take all the known cultural conceptualizations into consideration before jumping to the conclusions on the linguistic expressions to fit an intercultural context (Xu, 2017b). The choices can be of showing their own cultural identity, adapting to others’, or balancing between the cultures (Pham, 2021).

4.3. Research Question 3: How can ChatGPT be utilized to assess the metacultural competence among learners with the TEIL materials?

Concerning the assessment of metacultural competence after the practice, content analysis method can be utilized. Content analysis is often taken in qualitative research of social sciences to identify and interpret conceptualizations embedded in recorded forms of communication such as texts, images, sounds, etc. (Krippendorff, 2018). The method includes the steps of (1) identifying units of meaning, (2) labeling equivalent units with a code, (3) grouping equivalent codes into a category, and (4) describing related categories with a theme (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). Accordingly, the learners’ metacultural competence can be assessed based on their responses to the tasks (see Appendix A and Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Framework of Metacultural Competence Assessment with Content Analysis Method*

**Units of meaning Codes Categories Themes**

When ChatGPT was asked to analyze the sample answers with the framework, the results showed accurate tags for most of the responses (see Appendix A). However, there were some interpretations that did not seem to be tagged correctly. For example, the response *“in my culture, greetings are usually short phrases such as ‘Hello,’ ‘Good morning,’ or ‘Hi,’ without asking about someone’s movements”* should have been analyzed as ‘self-reflection’ rather than just ‘variety recognition’ since the answer accounts for how the English language is used from the learner’s speech community. Likewise, the response *“someone once greeted me by saying ‘Long time no see, where have you been hiding?’ I was surprised but felt they cared about me”* should have been tagged as ‘active adaptation’ instead of ‘self-reflection’ because it illustrates how the learner applied the competence to approach the difference and chose a way to rationally accept it during the intercultural communication. Therefore, although AI (e.g., ChatGPT) might effectively assist the assessment of learners’ metacultural competence based on their responses, double-checking is strongly required.

5. Conclusion

At the international level, English speakers who aim to reflect local cultural values must develop metacultural competence. This study proposes AI-assisted models for enhancing metacultural competence in TEIL materials, highlighting it as an emerging trend to equip learners with essential intercultural communication skills needed in the era of globalization. The models, designed around awareness-raising tasks with the help of AI ChatGPT, are grounded in the cultural conceptualizations encoded in EIL with the representation of World Englishes. Consequently, learners will realize that English serves as a tool for encoding cultural conceptualization systems of various speech communities, including their own. This insight emphasizes that learning English in today’s globalized context requires awareness and exploration of these systems to achieve successful intercultural communication. By fostering an understanding of English as an international language, learners gain confidence in expressing their own community’s cultural conceptualizations in English, as well as in navigating various English varieties. This approach motivates learners to explore additional cultural systems that emerge in intercultural communication, while simultaneously encouraging them to interpret and convey the cultural meanings of their own communities during exchanges with others.

Despite certain success on the research objectives, the study has some limitations that need further investigations. Firstly, the contents are exemplary but rather limited. Although being easy to explore, they cannot cover all the cultural conceptualizations presented in our daily life. The future materials should take into account other domains such as everyday activities (e.g., greetings, saying goodbye, inviting, saying sorry, breaking the ice, etc.), emotions, kinship, colors, plants, animals, symbols, etc. Secondly, although the activities follow the two most favored approaches of ELT, they are not varied in designs and levels. It is necessary that the activities be updated with more formats such as interactive games, video games, or short clips. Also, they would be more effective and adaptable when designed at different levels. Thirdly, the suggested models in this study lack real practice and responses; therefore, further research should conduct more empirical approaches to investigate the effectiveness of the models so that they can be appropriately modified. Finally, since diverse cultural conceptualization systems form the core of the TEIL approach and metacultural competence, it may be challenging for AI to fully adapt to and evaluate all related content on its own. Therefore, manual adjustments and careful revisions of AI (ChatGPT)-assisted outputs and recommendations remain essential.

References

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Canagarajah, S. (2006). Changing communicative needs, revised assessment objectives: Testing English as an International Language. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 3*(3), 229–242. <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15434311laq0303_1>

Corbett, J. (2022). *An intercultural approach to English language teaching* (Vol. 36). Multilingual Matters.

DeCarrico, J. S. (2001). Vocabulary learning and teaching. In M. Celces-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 285–299). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition (2nd ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Galloway, N., & Numajiri, T. (2020). Global Englishes language teaching: Bottom‐up curriculum implementation. *Tesol Quarterly, 54*(1), 118-145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.547>

Gyawali, Y. P., & Mehandroo, M. (2022). Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching: Navigating the Future with Emerging Perspectives. *Journal of Language and Linguistics in Society*, *2*(06), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.55529/jlls.26.21.27>

Huang, N. (2024). Research on AI in the School-Based Curriculum of University Education: A Case Study of English Writing Instruction in Zhanjiang Marine Culture. *International Journal of New Developments in Education, 6*(10), 72-78. <https://doi.org/10.25236/IJNDE.2024.061012>

Iweuno, B. N., Orekha, P., Ojediran, O., Imohimi, E., & Adu-Twum, H. T. (2024). Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for an inclusive and diversified curriculum. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, *23*(2), 1579-1590. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.2.2440>

Kannadhasan, M. (2024). The function of artificial intelligence in inclusive English language teaching: strategies for diverse learners. *Int. J. Teach. Learn. Educ*, 3(4), 16-20. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijtle.3.4.4>

Kasztelnik, K. (2024). Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Curriculum Development: Innovations in Designing Educational Content for the 21st Century Learner. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, *24*(11). <https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v24i11.7367>

Khamesipour, M. (2015). The effects of explicit and implicit instruction of vocabulary through reading on EFL learners’ vocabulary development. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 5*(8), 1620-1627. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0508.11>

Kleinheksel, A. J., Rockich-Winston, N., Tawfik, H., & Wyatt, T. R. (2020). Demystifying content analysis. *American journal of pharmaceutical education*, *84*(1), 7113. <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7113>

Kong, Ji Eun, & Sung, Kiwan. (2021). English teachers’ views on culture teaching through analyzing cultural background in middle school English textbooks. *Studies in Foreign Language Education, 35*(3), 167-190. <http://dx.doi.org/10.16933/sfle.2021.35.3.167>

Kramsch, C. (2008). Ecological perspectives on foreign language education. *Language Teaching, 41*(3), 389–408. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444808005065>

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology.* Sage publications.

Lakoff, G. (1986). Classifiers as a reflection of mind. *Noun classes and categorization, 7*, 13-51. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tsl.7.04lak>

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Langacker, R. W. (1987). *Foundations of cognitive grammar: Volume I: Theoretical prerequisites.* Stanford: Stanford University Press. <https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=2203>

Le, T. T. H., Dang, V. U., Dang, H. K., & Nguyen, T. T. (2025). Applying AI tools to develop a curriculum based on expected learning outcomes and personalize learning program for students at the university of languages and international studies. *European Journal of Educational Research, 14*(2), 415-427. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.14.2.415>

Liu, H., & Fang, F. (2022). Towards a Global Englishes-aware national English curriculum of China. ELT Journal, 76(1), 88-98. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccab040>

Pham, L. N. T. (2021). American English and Vietnamese use in public signs: a pragmatic cultural comparison and translation. *International Journal of TESOL & Education, 1*(3), 14-36. <http://eoi.citefactor.org/10.11250/ijte.01.03.002>

Pham, L. N. T. (2025). Cultural Conceptualizations in Linguistic Landscapes: Theory and Practice for Emergent EIL and Intercultural Communication. In N. Vu, H. Dinh, T. Nguyen, & H. Minh Nguyen (Eds.), *Intercultural Competence in Higher Education English Language Instruction* (pp. 141-190). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-3506-2.ch005>

Pianpadungporn, S. (2024). The Development of English Grammar Learning Skills by Using Explicit Teaching Method of University Students: The Case Study of Thai University Students. *Higher Education Studies*, *14*(2), 70-78. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v14n2p70>

Rosch, E. (1978). Principles of categorization. In E. Rosch, & B. B. Lloyd (Eds.), *Cognition and Categorization* (pp. 27-48). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032633275>

Sadeghpour, M., & Sharifian, F. (Eds.). (2021). *Cultural linguistics and world Englishes* (pp. xii-399). Berlin: Springer.

Sharifian, F. (2011). *Cultural conceptualisations and language: Theoretical framework and applications.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/clscc.1>

Sharifian, F. (2013). Globalisation and developing metacultural competence in learning English as an International Language. *Multilingual Education, 3*(7), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2191-5059-3-7>

Sharifian, F. (2014). Cultural schemas as common ground. In K. Burridge, & R. Benczes (Eds.), *Wrestling with words and meanings: Essays in honour of Keith Allan* (pp. 219-235). Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing.

Sharifian, F. (2015). Language and culture: Overview. In F. Sharifian, *The Routledge handbook of language and culture* (pp. 3-17). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Sharifian, F. (2017). *Cultural Linguistics*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/clscc.8>

Xu, Z. (2017a). Developing Metacultural Writing Competence for Online Intercultural Communication: Implications for English Language Teaching. *Tesl-Ej, 20*(4), n4.

Xu, Z. (2017b). Developing metacultural competence in teaching English as an International Language. In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *Advances in Cultural Linguistics* (pp. 703–720). Singapore: Springer Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4056-6_31>

Xu, Z. (2018). Exploring English as an international language–curriculum, materials and pedagogical strategies. *RELC Journal*, *49*(1), 102-118. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0033688217753848>

Xu, Z., & Sharifian, F. (2017). Unpacking cultural conceptualizations in Chinese English. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, 27*(1), 65–84. <https://doi.org/10.1075/japc.27.1.04xu>

Zhang, W., & Ilisko, D. (2025). AI for enhancing English lesson design and pedagogy in Chinese middle schools. *Environment. Technology. Resources. Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference, 3*, 397-403. <https://doi.org/10.17770/etr2025vol3.8562>

**Bionote**

Dr. Pham Ngoc Truong Linh is currently a lecturer in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Vietnam Aviation Academy, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He majors in TESOL and Linguistics. His research interests include ELT, cultural linguistics, English-Vietnamese contrastive analysis. He has more than 10 years of experience in EFL teaching at high schools, language centers, and universities in Vietnam.

Appendix A – Suggested Answers and Coding from AI ChatGPT

1. They may greet each other with questions like “Where are you going?” or “Where did you come from?” instead of saying “Hello” or “Hi.” → **variety recognition** → **variety awareness**

2. In my culture, greetings are usually short phrases such as “Hello,” “Good morning,” or “Hi,” without asking about someone’s movements. → **variety recognition** → **variety awareness**

3. Because in these communities, such questions are a traditional and culturally accepted way of showing interest, care, and friendliness—not a way of seeking personal information. → **variety acceptance** → **conceptual awareness**

4. Examples: In some Asian cultures, people might ask “Have you eaten?” as a greeting. In some Arabic-speaking cultures, “Where are you going?” is also common. → **active exploration** → **conceptual analysis**

5. They might think the speaker is being nosy or trying to check on their actions, rather than just being friendly. → **active exploration** → **conceptual analysis**

6. Smile, answer briefly and naturally (e.g., “Just heading to the market”), and return the question to keep the conversation friendly. → **active adaptation** → **conceptual contact**

7. It shows respect for their culture, helps build trust, and makes communication smoother and friendlier. → **variety acceptance** → **conceptual awareness**

8. It prepares you to avoid misunderstandings, connect better with people from different backgrounds, and show cultural sensitivity. → **active exploration** → **conceptual analysis**

9. Someone once greeted me by saying ‘Long time no see, where have you been hiding?’ I was surprised but felt they cared about me.” → **self-reflection** → **conceptual explication**

10. We should be open-minded, curious, respectful, and willing to learn from these differences. → **flexible adaptation** → **conceptual negotiation**

Appendix B – Indirect Approach to the Sample Material from AI ChatGPT

Step 1 – Picture Prompt

Show the class a colourful picture of two Aboriginal Australians chatting on a street/beach path. One is smiling and saying, *“Where are you going?”* while the other is replying, *“Just to the shop.”*

Step 2 – Eliciting Questions *(for observation and guessing)*

* What do you see happening in this picture?
* What words do you think the first person is saying?
* What is the second person’s reply?
* Do you think they know each other well, or are they strangers? Why?
* Does “Where are you going?” sound like a greeting to you? Why or why not?
* Can you guess in which part of the world this greeting might be common?

Step 3 – Guided Discovery *(teacher leads to the key point)*

* In some Aboriginal Australian English communities, people greet each other by asking “Where are you going?” or “Where did you come from?”
* These questions are not meant to be nosy; they’re just warm ways of saying “Hi.”
* This greeting style is common in parts of South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales.

Step 4 – Discussion for Intercultural Purposes

* How is this greeting different from greetings in your culture?
* Can you think of any greetings in your language that involve a question instead of “Hello”?
* Why might someone from another culture misunderstand this style of greeting?
* If you visited this community, how would you respond politely?
* How can learning about such greetings help us in intercultural communication?
* What attitudes should we have towards different ways of speaking English?

Step 5 – Role-play Extension

Students pair up and greet each other using different cultural greeting styles (e.g., Aboriginal Australian English, their own language, other examples like “Have you eaten?” from some Asian cultures). Then discuss which felt most friendly, surprising, or unusual.

1. Corresponding author, Lecturer, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Vietnam Aviation Academy, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; *Email: truonglinhpham101@gmail.com* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)