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Chapter 4

A large-scale exploration of Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers' intercultural identities⁶

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Abstract

Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL teachers) have different ideas on teaching about cultures associated with the English language (ES cultures). To understand how EFL teachers worldwide respond to challenges in culture teaching, we explored how EFL teachers in different countries perceived themselves as teachers in relation to ES cultures: or, what characterizes their intercultural identities. We gathered data in two countries that were clearly either very distant from or very close to the cultures of English-speaking countries: China and The Netherlands. We designed a questionnaire to which 114 Chinese and 154 Dutch non-native EFL teachers responded. Underlying factors in teachers' intercultural identities were '*Openness to ES cultures*', '*Connection to ES cultures*', '*Disconnection from ES Cultures*', and '*Impartiality with respect to ES Cultures*'. We found significant differences between Chinese and Dutch teachers' intercultural identities.

4.1 Introduction

As communication across cultures becomes increasingly important, cultural diversity, exchange of meaning in interpersonal communication, and intercultural mediation are becoming priorities in foreign language teaching worldwide (Kramsch, 2014). Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL teachers) are expected to help their students to become world citizens who can not only understand English, and speak and write in English, but are also able to communicate with people from various cultural backgrounds and understand them as human beings with multiple identities and their own individualities (Byram et al., 2002). Such a trend poses new demands on EFL teachers, especially for ‘non-native teachers’ who do not speak English as their home tongue and teach in their own non-English-speaking countries. Non-native teachers of English make up the largest proportion of EFL teachers worldwide (Braine, 2010). These teachers were once language learners themselves and learned about, and now teach, the English language and cultures associated with the English language (ES cultures), in their own countries. While learning and teaching the English language and ES cultures in their home countries, they may unconsciously have formed their own opinions about and attitudes towards ES cultures (Byram et al., 2002). Consequently, EFL teachers in different cultural contexts may have different ideas about why, how, and what they should teach (Karabinar & Guler, 2013; Sercu et al., 2005), and they may have different notions of themselves as teachers in relation to ES cultures (Guerrero Nieto & Meadows, 2015; Menard-Warwick, 2008).

As stated in earlier chapters, the ways in which EFL teachers see themselves and perceive their roles in relation to ES cultures are referred to in the literature as ‘teachers’ intercultural identities’(cf. Menard-Warwick, 2008). To gain a better understanding of how EFL teachers worldwide respond to the challenges in teaching ES cultures, we explored on a larger scale how EFL teachers in two countries that are clearly either very distant from or very close to the cultures of English-speaking countries, i.e., China and the Netherlands, perceive their intercultural identities. As stated in Chapter 3, geographic and cultural distance are important variables in the formation of teachers’ intercultural identities (Drogendijk & Slangen, 2006; Schwartz, 2014). The smaller the distance between two cultures, the more imminent the need for intercultural communication, and the easier it is for teachers and students to get information about the other culture (Kachru, 1990). China is among the countries far from ES cultures,

while the Netherlands is among the countries which are close to ES cultures in terms of geographical distance, history, and culture (see also Chapter 3). We assume that exploration of the differences in distance between teachers' native cultures and ES cultures could enable us to find meaningful differences between teachers' perceptions of their intercultural identities and increase our understanding of their perspectives and roles in culture teaching in different countries.

On the basis of the interview findings presented in Chapter 3, we developed a questionnaire survey to investigate the identity perceptions of Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers on a larger scale and to explore common factors underlying their intercultural identity perceptions. Apart from nationality, we also explored whether other specific variables in teachers' personal backgrounds, such as gender and years of teaching, were related to their intercultural identities. We expected our findings not only to result in more insight into teachers' intercultural identities in different nations, but also to contribute to a better understanding of the perspectives of EFL teachers and the roles they play as cultural mediators in various cultural contexts.

4.2 Intercultural identities of non-native EFL teachers

In the current study, we focused on non-native EFL teachers' intercultural identities. Non-native teachers play an important role in language-and-culture teaching and, in particular, when facing dilemmas and conflicts in their teaching, these teachers may unconsciously develop very different ideas about the why, how, and what of teaching about ES cultures (e.g., Ortaçtepe, 2015). Language and culture are seen as inseparable in modern language teaching (Kramsch, 2014). In other words, culture is both content and context of EFL teaching, and this involves the various personal and professional experiences of teachers (Bukor, 2015; Gandana & Parr, 2013; Varghese et al., 2005). Teachers form and constantly negotiate their identities in the context of EFL teaching, as they keep receiving new cultural ideas (Newton et al., 2010). In recent studies of language teaching, identity theories have been used as a lens through which to view teachers' classroom practices (Norton, 2006). This means that the identity of a language teacher can be regarded as a crucial component not only in the teaching practice within the classroom, but also in understanding the sociocultural context of the language classroom (Varghese et al., 2005).

Four salient aspects of teachers' intercultural identities emerge from the literature (see also Chapters 2 and 3). First, in different sociocultural contexts, non-native teachers can have very different views of their relationships with ES cultures (e.g., Menard-Warwick, 2008; Ortaçtepe, 2015; Phan, 2007; Phan & Phan, 2006). Second, the personal and professional experiences of teachers help to forge teachers' intercultural identities (Moran, 2001; Nugroho Widiyanto, 2005). Third, with regard to having successful connections with more than one culture, the concept of intercultural sensitivity has been used, i.e., 'the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences' (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422). According to Hammer et al. (2003), a person's intercultural sensitivity develops through linear stages, from more ethnocentric (one's own culture is experienced as central to reality) to more ethnorelative (one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures; Hammer et al., 2003). Since intercultural sensitivity can be seen as an individual's ability to cope with intercultural experiences, it can be considered an important aspect of teachers' intercultural identities. Fourth, the attitudes of EFL teachers towards discussing ES cultures in teaching can be considered an important aspect of their intercultural identities (Byram et al., 2002; Menard-Warwick, 2008; Ortaçtepe, 2015).

4.3 Problem definition

Nowadays, integrating language and culture right from the start, fostering explicit comparisons between not only languages but also cultures, and emphasizing intercultural competence rather than just linguistic competence, are proposed as principles of language teaching geared to the new trend of teaching intercultural competence (Newton et al., 2010). Many nations adopt principles or guidelines for EFL teaching which list knowledge, attitudes, and skills in intercultural communication as expected learner competencies (e.g., Council of Europe, 2001; Ministry of Education of China, 2004). EFL teachers are expected to promote students' intercultural competence (Byram et al., 2002). However, no research into Dutch EFL teachers' intercultural identities was found in international peer-reviewed journals, while some case studies of Chinese EFL teachers' formation of their identities appear sporadically (e.g., X. Gao & Xu, 2014; Wu & Wurenbilige, 2012). The existing body of research on teachers' intercultural identities is far from sufficient, there are hardly any comparisons between different nations, though reviews and studies of teachers' identities defined by their

native tongue and general teaching competency are available (e.g., Aneja, 2016; Braine, 2010; Moussu & Llorca, 2008; Samimy & Kurihara, 2006).

Considering the need to examine teacher identity in depth, we aimed to explore how non-native teachers of English perceive their intercultural identities and what the common factors underlying their identity perceptions are. For this purpose, we developed a questionnaire and administered it among a large group of Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers. The participants in the survey were all secondary school EFL teachers, mainly because cultural content is more prominent in secondary education (Byram, 1997).

Our main research questions were:

1. How do Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers perceive their intercultural identities in relation to ES cultures?
2. What variables in the personal backgrounds of the teachers, apart from nationality, are related to their intercultural identities?

4.4 Method

4.4.1 Context of the study

To reiterate, we focused on Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers in secondary schools. The cultural distance between China (Confucian cultures) and ES countries is much greater than that between the Netherlands (West European cultures) and ES countries (Schwartz, 2014). Chinese EFL teachers have fewer opportunities than Dutch teachers to go to ES countries. Only a small portion of Chinese students have the opportunity to contact foreigners or travel to ES countries when at university or after graduation (CCTV, 2015); Dutch students have more opportunities to go on school trips in ES countries or study there after graduation from secondary school (OECD, 2016). Most Chinese people seldom use English to communicate (Wei & Su, 2012). In the latest EF ranking of countries by adult English proficiency, the Netherlands ranks first among 72 non-English-speaking countries and regions, while China ranks 39th (EF EPI, 2016). The English language, rather than the cultures associated with it, is seen in China as a utilitarian tool for science, technology, national development, and modernization; the idea that Chinese traditional ideology and values should take centre stage has long

dominated in EFL education; sometimes there are worries about Westernization: Chinese identity might be affected by too much emphasis on learning English (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Pan & Seargeant, 2012). In addition, the content and methods of English teaching in secondary schools are to a large extent decided by the focuses of college entrance examinations (Lo Bianco et al., 2009). Although the current national syllabus for EFL teaching and learning in Chinese secondary schools aims not only to develop students' knowledge about ES cultures, but also their communicative competence and their sensitivity to other cultures (Ministry of Education of China, 2004), mismatches have been observed between teaching aims in the syllabus and teaching methods in practice. The traditional Chinese views on teaching and learning still persist in EFL classes and sometimes coexist with modern student-centred teaching (Braine, 2005; Zhang & Liu, 2014).

In the Netherlands, cultural values and English education are very different from those in China. Values such as intellectual autonomy, egalitarianism, and harmony (meaning 'fitting into the world as it is') are appreciated in Dutch culture (Schwartz, 2006). In line with these values, Dutch schools and teachers enjoy a high degree of autonomy, and they are to a large extent free to determine the content and methods of their teaching: educational goals are only broadly defined and the Dutch education system allows these common goals to be achieved in various ways (Nusche, Deborah, & al, 2014). English has a high status in society and the education system in the Netherlands. As a consequence of the increased interrelations between European countries, English-language education has developed hugely since the 1980s (Dronkers, 1993), and has become the only compulsory foreign language for all students at primary and secondary levels (Drew et al., 2007). The Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (shortened in Dutch to SLO) currently lists learning about the role of English in different kinds of international communications as one of its targets (SLO, 2014).

4.4.2 Development of the instrument

We designed a questionnaire to measure the intercultural identities of the EFL teachers. The items were formulated using the findings reported in Chapter 3, based on semi-structured interviews about teachers' intercultural identities, in which five Chinese and five Dutch secondary school EFL teachers took part, all non-native speakers of English (see Chapter 3 for the interview protocol and the results). We used key words and key

phrases from the interview data to develop our questionnaire. Key words and phrases with similar meanings were combined into categories and a descriptive label was chosen for each. Based on our findings, we chose the following labels for the main categories: (a) feeling of connection with ES cultures, (b) influence of ES cultures on personal or professional identity, (c) intercultural sensitivity, and (d) attitude towards ES cultures in teaching. For each category, we summarized the teachers' expressions into statements, in which the teachers were described in the third person. For example, in the category 'Feeling of Connection', the item '*He is fascinated by the English language and the cultures of English-speaking countries*' describes a teacher who feels connected to ES cultures out of personal interest. We designed 19 questionnaire items in this way. Full details on the items are provided in Appendix 1. Each item was followed by six choices: *very much like me, like me, somewhat like me, a little like me, not like me, and not at all like me*. The statements were discussed within the team of authors and with a group of colleague researchers. We also asked native speakers of English to check the statements, and we consulted Chinese and Dutch native speakers to check if there was any misunderstanding to be clarified. When we considered the questionnaire to be finished, before gathering data on a larger scale, we first asked the interview participants to fill it in and comment on the plausibility, exhaustiveness, and readability of the items. This resulted in some minor rephrasing.

4.4.3 Participants

We invited teachers in both countries to participate in our survey. Of the 456 invited teachers, 268 (58.7%) fully completed the questionnaire: 114 Chinese and 154 Dutch EFL teachers (including the ten teachers previously involved in the interview study). All questionnaires were administered anonymously. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the general characteristics of the respondents.

The most striking difference between the two national groups is the extent of travel experience to ES countries. Only 11.4% of the Chinese teachers had been to ES countries, compared with 99.4% of the Dutch teachers. Another difference is that a larger proportion of the Chinese teachers had a bachelor's degree (which in China generally qualifies a person for teaching in secondary schools), while more than half of the Dutch teachers had a master's degree (which in the Netherlands is often required for teaching in the higher levels of secondary education). The distributions of gender and age groups within the national groups were comparable. As Table 4.1 shows, the typical

teacher in the Chinese group was female, with more than 10 years of teaching experience and without travel experience to ES countries; the typical teacher in the Dutch group was female, with more than 15 years of teaching experience and travel experience to ES countries.

Table 4.1

General characteristics of Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers who responded to the questionnaire

Characteristics	Categories	CN (n = 114)	NL (n = 154)	Total (N = 268)
Gender	Male	32 (28.1)	48 (31.2)	80 (29.9)
	Female	82 (71.9)	106 (68.8)	188 (70.1)
Nationality	Chinese (in CN)/ Dutch (in NL)	114 (100.0)	134 (87.0)	248 (92.5)
	Dutch and another nationality (in NL)	n/a	11 (7.1)	11 (4.1)
			9	9
	Other nationalities (in NL)	n/a	(5.8)	(3.4)
Final level of Education	Bachelor	106 (93.0)	69 (44.2)	174 (64.9)
		8 (7.0)	83 (54.5)	92 (34.3)
	Master	0	2	2
	PhD	(0)	(1.3)	(0.7)
Years of teaching experience	<5	33 (28.9)	31 (20.1)	64 (23.9)
	5-9	26 (22.8)	36 (23.4)	62 (23.1)
	10-14	20 (17.5)	27 (17.5)	47 (17.5)
	15 or more	35 (30.7)	60 (39.0)	95 (35.4)
Travel to ES- countries	Yes	13 (11.4)	153 (99.4)	166 (61.9)
	No	101 (88.6)	1 (0.6)	102 (38.1)

Note. Percentages in parentheses after the numbers of participants.

CN = Chinese EFL teachers; NL = Dutch EFL teachers. By Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers we mean non-native teachers of English in China and Netherlands.

4.4.4 Analyses

After collecting the questionnaire data, we ran a principal components analysis (PCA)

to search for factors underlying the items in the questionnaire. The factorability of the 19 items was examined first. We used PCA because one of our major aims was to identify factors underlying the teachers' intercultural identities as measured using the questionnaire. Three items were removed because they did not contribute to a simple factor structure in meaning and failed to meet the minimum criterion of having no cross-loading of .4 or above. The three items were:

- He looks at cultures of English-speaking countries from the perspective of his own culture.
- The reason why he became a teacher of English has nothing to do with cultures of English-speaking countries.
- He feels his teaching style is the same as that of his colleagues teaching other subjects in his school.

We ran PCA again with the remaining 16 items and found four factors. Initial eigenvalues indicated that the four factors thus obtained explained 56% of the variance (24%, 17%, 8%, and 7%, respectively). After varimax rotation, all items in this analysis had primary loadings over .45. We gave labels to the factors on the basis of a semantic analysis of the items in the factors, which were discussed by the team of authors. The factor loading matrix for the final solution with the four factors is presented in Figure 4.1 More details on the factors are presented in the results section.

Composite scores were created for each factor, based on the means of the items which had their primary loadings on that factor. Higher scores indicated greater agreement among the teachers in describing their intercultural identities. An approximately normal distribution was evident for the composite scores, thus the data were well suited for parametric analysis. Scales were composed, and internal consistency for each of the scales in the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha. The alphas were mostly moderate, and varied from: .59 to .76. For most of the scales, no increases in alpha would have been achieved by eliminating more items, except for one scale, where elimination of one item would have given an increase of

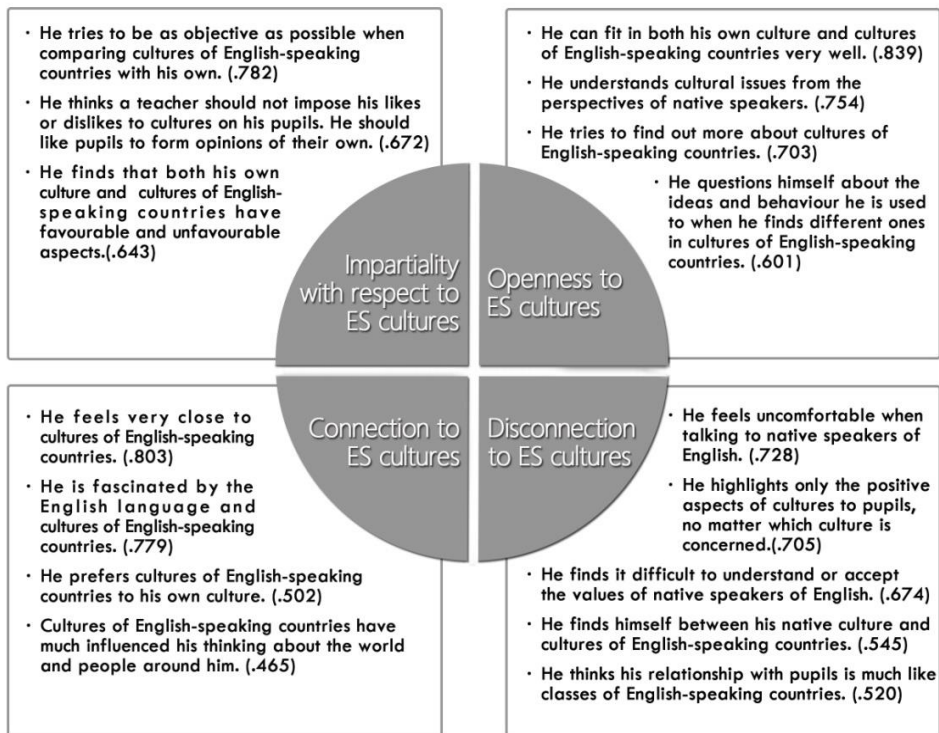


Figure 4.1. Factor loadings based on a principal components analysis with varimax rotation for 16 items from the questionnaire survey ($N = 268$)

Note. Factor loadings (in parentheses after each item) $< .45$ are suppressed.

about .01 in alpha. However, considering the connection in meaning between this item and the others in the scale, we kept it there. Independent-samples t tests were run on the composite scores of the factors to explore the differences in identity perceptions between the Chinese and Dutch teachers who had completed the questionnaire. We also used t -tests (for the gender variable) and one-way between-subjects ANOVA (for the teaching experience variable) to see if there were any differences in teachers' ideas related to these two personal background variables. Because amount of travel to ES countries and final level of education apparently differed between the two national groups, we consider and discuss them here as combined in the contextual variables for the two national groups. When comparing the questionnaire data for the two groups, we focused on the items that differed significantly ($p < .05$) between the groups.

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Teachers' intercultural identities: Descriptive statistics and underlying factors

Using PCA, we found that four factors underlie the teachers' intercultural identities as measured using the questionnaire. After a semantic analysis of the items in the factors, we chose the following labels for the four underlying factors: *Openness to ES cultures*, *Disconnection from ES cultures*, *Connection to ES cultures*, and *Impartiality with respect to ES Cultures*. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Descriptive statistics for the four factors of teachers' intercultural identities (N = 268)

	No. of items	M (SD)	Cronbach's Alpha
Openness to ES cultures	4	4.45 (.82)	.76
Disconnection from ES cultures	5	2.82 (.89)	.67
Connection to ES cultures	4	4.06 (.87)	.67
Impartiality with respect to ES cultures	3	4.87 (.76)	.59

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

The two factors *Disconnection from ES Cultures* and *Connection to ES Cultures*, which embedded 9 out of the 16 items, reveal how teachers regard their connections with ES cultures. Connection, on the one hand, reveals how close the teachers feel to the cultures of English-speaking countries, how fascinated they are by the language and cultures of English-speaking countries, and how much they appreciate the cultures of English-speaking countries (compared with their own native culture). The factor 'Connection' also concerns teachers' thoughts on influences from the cultures of English-speaking countries on their own thinking about the world and people around them. Disconnection, on the other hand, reveals whether teachers feel uncomfortable when talking to native speakers of English, experience a tendency within themselves to highlight only the positive aspects of all cultures to pupils, or have difficulties in understanding or accepting the values of native speakers of English. This factor also reveals whether the teachers regard themselves as being positioned between their own native culture and the

cultures of English-speaking countries, or think their relationship with pupils is much like it would be in an English-speaking country.

The factor of *Openness to ES cultures* reveals the extent to which teachers are sensitive to or aware of cultural differences and how they would cope with such differences. This factor contains items that concern the extent to which the teachers see themselves as being able to fit in both in the home culture and the cultures of English-speaking countries, the extent to which they are able to understand cultural issues from the perspectives of native speakers, try to find out more about the cultures of English-speaking countries, and question their own ideas and behaviours when confronted with different ones in the cultures of English-speaking countries.

The factor of *Impartiality with respect to ES cultures* reveals teachers' attitudes towards ES cultures when comparing them with their own cultures. This factor reveals whether the teachers see themselves as trying to be as objective as possible when comparing the cultures of English-speaking countries with their own native culture, finding that their own culture and the cultures of English-speaking countries have favourable and unfavourable aspects, and believing that teachers should not impose their likes or dislikes on their pupils, because as teachers, they would like pupils to form opinions of their own.

As Table 4.3 shows, among both Chinese and Dutch teachers, *Impartiality with respect to ES Cultures* and *Openness to ES cultures* scored highest, while *Disconnection from ES cultures* scored lowest.

4.5.2 *Similarities and differences in Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers' identities*

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare Chinese and Dutch teachers' scores on each of the scales. The results in Table 4.3 show that the two groups were significantly different in three of the four scales: *Openness to ES cultures*, *Disconnection from ES cultures*, and *Impartiality with respect to ES Cultures*. The difference in the scores for *Connection to ES cultures* was not significant. Table 4.3 shows that teachers in both China and the Netherlands considered themselves open to ES cultures, more connected to ES cultures than disconnected from them, and impartial while teaching about ES cultures. The differences in means suggest that when

considering their intercultural identities, Dutch teachers emphasised Openness to ES cultures and Impartiality with respect to ES Cultures more than Chinese teachers, and agreed less than Chinese teachers on Disconnection from ES Cultures.

Table 4.3

T-Test results comparing Chinese and Dutch teachers' intercultural identities (N = 268)

Item	CN (n = 114)	NL (n = 154)	df	t
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Openness to ES cultures	4.25 (.88)	4.59 (.74)	266	-3.46**
Disconnection from ES cultures	3.44 (.83)	2.36 (.60)	196	11.73***
Connection to ES cultures	3.97 (.92)	4.12 (.82)	266	-1.43
Impartiality with respect to ES cultures	4.65 (.88)	5.04 (.64)	201	-4.18***

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, *df* = degrees of freedom, *t* = *t* value. Standard deviations are in parentheses below the means. CN = Chinese EFL teachers; NL = Dutch EFL teachers. Scores for the items range from 1 (not at all like me) to 6 (very much like me).

* $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed. *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

4.5.3 Related Variables

In addition to the 'national group' variable, we also explored whether two other specific variables in teachers' personal backgrounds, gender and years of teaching, were related to their intercultural identities. We found that male teachers emphasised Openness to ES cultures and Connection to ES cultures more than female teachers. This difference was more apparent among Dutch teachers. In the Chinese group, no significant differences between male and female teachers were found. The results for the total group and the Dutch group are reported in Appendix 3. We did not find any significant differences in the means of the four factors related to the teachers' years of teaching experience.

4.6 Conclusion

The aim of our study was to explore how non-native teachers of English perceive their intercultural identities and what common factors underlie their identity perceptions. We

were looking for similarities or differences between Chinese and Dutch teachers' intercultural identities. We developed a questionnaire which was administered among a large group of Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers. Our results show four factors underlying the teachers' intercultural identities: 'Openness to ES cultures', 'Connection to ES cultures', 'Disconnection from ES Cultures', and 'Impartiality with respect to ES Cultures'. We found significant differences between Chinese and Dutch teachers' intercultural identities, which enriched our findings from the interview study. In the interview study, we found that Chinese and Dutch teachers saw their connection to ES cultures differently, and that their needs and purposes in culture teaching were different. It was apparent from the questionnaire survey that Chinese teachers felt more disconnected from ES cultures and agreed less than Dutch teachers on openness and impartiality with respect to ES cultures. Furthermore, Chinese teachers perceived more difficulties than Dutch teachers in communicating with English speakers and in understanding or accepting ES cultures. Some of our findings in the two phases of the study are in line with previous studies, such as: Phan and Phan (2006) and Phan (2007), who found that EFL teachers maintained affiliation to their own culture; the international surveys by Sercu et al. (2005) which showed various opinions of EFL teachers among different countries; and Byram et al. (2002), who sketched the difficulties that teachers may experience if they want to remain impartial in culture teaching.

An implication of our study may be that more ways need to be explored to enhance the roles of EFL teachers in promoting intercultural competence among learners. First, EFL teachers who teach about ES cultures from a 'non-native' perspective may find it difficult to present facts and opinions about cultural phenomena to students; they might need to be reassured that they do not need to know every aspect of ES cultures before being able to teach. Teachers could also give students more opportunities to explore or experience ES cultures for themselves, such as through doing peer interviews or making portfolios to promote intercultural understanding and reduce stereotyping (Su, 2008, 2011). Second, our findings might encourage EFL teachers and other practitioners in language teaching to reflect on their own intercultural identity and their own practice with regard to teaching about culture. The questionnaire that we developed to measure the four aspects of intercultural identity could easily be adapted for use in teacher education or in teacher professional development programs.

Although our findings have provided a better understanding of the perspectives of Chinese and Dutch EFL teachers and the roles they played in culture teaching, we have to acknowledge that our study has limitations. First, our exploratory study focused on teachers' intercultural identities at one moment rather than over a longer period. In future research, it would be interesting to use the instrument developed in our study to investigate how EFL teachers' intercultural identities develop over a period of time, especially when curricular innovations are underway that are aimed at promoting culture teaching and intercultural competence (e.g., Ilieva, 2010; Ortaçtepe, 2015). Second, the number of variables in our study was limited. In future research, in addition to gender and years of teaching experience, other variables such as teachers' beliefs and values, student characteristics, or society's expectations of the teaching profession could also be taken into account.

We could explore in future research how native and non-native EFL teachers can inform each other in this respect. Teachers who do not speak English as their mother tongue may acquire the language and develop their linguistic competence towards the level of native speakers. However, it is unlikely that non-native teachers will have the same feeling of connection to ES cultures as native speakers, due to their own cultural background. Speaking about the differences between Chinese and Dutch teachers in this respect, we should avoid deriving new stereotypes of Chinese or Dutch teachers from our findings, a danger also warned against in previous reviews and studies (e.g., Moussu & Llorca, 2008; Sercu et al., 2005). Teachers' identities keep developing along with their experiences, and within a national group there can be differences and variations among individuals, schools, regions, et cetera. In the future, therefore, we would welcome studies that use the approach developed in this study for further in-depth explorations of how non-native and native teachers in various cultures respond to questions about their intercultural identities and their opinions on culture teaching, and how these teachers can learn from each other.