

Exploring Intercultural Communication in EFL Classrooms Case Study: B02 learners of English Language, University of Bechar

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Abstract

Intercultural communication stands as a core aspect of foreign language teaching in EFL classrooms, as these environments serve as significant contexts for learners to acquire cultural knowledge and develop intercultural communication skills. The research examines how B2 learners deal with diverse cultural perspectives in the classroom and the challenges they encounter while developing intercultural competence. Using a case study methodology, the study investigates classroom interactions, learners' perceptions, and teaching practices that promote intercultural understanding. Data was collected through learner interviews, teacher feedback, and experiential activities providing an overarching view of the role of intercultural communication in EFL learning. The findings reveal that although learners exhibit a solid grasp of linguistic skills, they frequently struggle with subtle cultural nuances. The study stresses the need for adopting more targeted pedagogical approaches to enhance intercultural competence, suggesting that integrating cultural content into language instruction can significantly ameliorate learners' communicative competence in various contexts. These insights contribute to the ongoing discourse on fostering effective intercultural pedagogy in EFL classrooms.

Key words; Intercultural; communication; communicative competence; language

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Introduction

The increasing interconnectedness of contemporary societies has made communication across cultural boundaries an integral part of everyday life. Advances in technology, mobility, and international communication have created opportunities for individuals from different cultural backgrounds to interact more frequently. These developments have also influenced foreign language education, where linguistic proficiency alone is increasingly recognized as insufficient for effective communication in culturally diverse contexts.

Language and culture are closely interconnected. Learning a foreign language involves more than acquiring grammatical structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation; it also requires learners to understand how meanings are shaped by cultural values, social norms, identities, and communicative practices. Consequently, contemporary EFL pedagogy has increasingly emphasized the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), enabling learners to communicate appropriately and effectively with people whose cultural backgrounds may differ from their own.

In this perspective, the EFL classroom can provide an important environment in which learners encounter cultural perspectives, examine their own assumptions, and develop strategies for negotiating cultural differences. Rather than presenting culture as a collection of facts about target-language communities, intercultural language teaching encourages learners to compare perspectives, interpret cultural meanings, and reflect critically on their own cultural positions. Such an approach is particularly relevant in contexts where learners may have limited opportunities for direct intercultural encounters outside the classroom.

The Algerian EFL context provides a valuable setting for investigating these issues. Although English education traditionally places considerable emphasis on linguistic competence, the development of intercultural competence remains an area requiring further pedagogical attention. Learners may possess adequate linguistic knowledge while still experiencing difficulties interpreting culturally embedded meanings, communication styles, attitudes, and non-verbal behaviours. These difficulties may become particularly visible when learners encounter perspectives that differ from their established cultural expectations.

Previous research has established the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language education and has proposed several models for understanding its development. Byram (1997), for example, emphasizes attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Fantini (2007) similarly conceptualizes intercultural competence as involving attitudes, skills, knowledge, and awareness. Deardorff (2006) further emphasizes the importance of effective and appropriate communication in intercultural contexts. While these frameworks provide valuable theoretical foundations, there remains a need to examine how intercultural competence is experienced and developed in specific EFL classrooms, particularly within the Algerian context.

The present study therefore focuses on B2 learners of English at the University of Bechar. It examines learners' perceptions of intercultural communication, their responses to classroom activities designed to promote intercultural awareness, and the challenges encountered by teachers and learners during the integration of intercultural content into EFL instruction. Particular attention is given to experiential activities because such activities can provide learners with opportunities to move from theoretical knowledge about cultures towards practical engagement with cultural differences.

Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What role does cultural awareness play in the language learning process of EFL learners?
2. What strategies can effectively foster intercultural communicative competence among EFL learners with diverse cultural backgrounds?
3. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of integrating intercultural communication content into EFL instruction?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on intercultural language teaching and to provide practical implications for EFL teachers working in the Algerian context.

1.Literature Review

1.1 .Definition of Culture

Culture represents a paramount issue in the context of foreign language learning. the complex nature of culture makes it challenging to define it accurately but it is generally associated with all aspects of human life as Brown stated (2007a, p.122) culture might be defined as: "... the ideas, customs, skills, arts, tools which characterize a given group of people in a given period." He (Brown, 2007b) further describes culture as the "glue" that binds a group of people together. Culture, a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life, shapes people's thoughts, lifestyles, history, religion, tradition, and norms as social habits, and arts (Çakir, 2006). Regarding the complex nature of culture, Hua (2014) has articulated four approaches to understanding culture, namely the compositional approach, viewing "culture as a collection of things," the interpretive approach, considering "culture as symbols that can only be captured through detailed description," the action approach, viewing "culture as a meaning-making process," and the critical approach, regarding "culture as a site of power and ideological structure". In the same line of thought, Trinovitch (1980, p. 550) defines culture as "an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behaviour of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behaviour starting from birth, and this "all-inclusive system" is acquired as the native culture" (as cited in Afrin, 2013). From these definitions, it can be deduced that culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, norms, and customs; it is the way people think, live, and behave.

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999) Culture can be explored in three categories. The first category is the source culture, which refers to the learners' native culture. The second category is the TC used as a first language, e.g., American or British culture. The third category is the international TC, which refers to different TC varieties from English and non-English-speaking countries, e.g., Turkey, Spain, etc.

1.2 . Culture and EFL Teaching

Language and culture are so closely interwoven that one cannot be conceived without the other. In this context, Brown (1994, p. 164) states "... a language is a part of culture, and a culture is a part of a language. Both culture and language are intricately intertwined FL teaching which integrates an intercultural dimension combines between the two following objectives:

1. Assisting learners to acquire the communicative competence needed to communicate in

speaking or writing, to convey their messages in correct and appropriate ways.

2. Developing the learners' intercultural competence i.e. their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities and cultural backgrounds .

As stated earlier, teaching culture will not be limited to the transmission of information about the people of the target culture and their general attitudes, as traditional thought in FL education suggests.

Instead, drawing on Byram's model and Fantini's, EFL teachers should be concerned with following goals:

1. To help learners see relationships between their own and other cultures

2. To help them acquire interest in and curiosity about 'otherness', and an awareness of themselves and their own cultures seen from other people's perspectives.

3. To help learners to understand how intercultural interaction takes place.

4. How social identities are part of all interactions.

5. How their perceptions of other people and others people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication.

1.3. Intercultural Competence Vs Intercultural communication

In an increasingly globalized world, communication across cultural boundaries has become a common experience in education, business, and social interaction. However, engaging with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds requires not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural adaptability. This distinction lies at the heart of the difference between **Intercultural Communication (IC)** and **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)**. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they formulate two distinct yet interrelated concepts that are critical in understanding how people from different cultural backgrounds communicate effectively.

1.4. Intercultural Communication (IC)

Intercultural communication abbreviated as IC refers to the process by which individuals from different cultural backgrounds undertake, interact and communicate with one another. The study field is centred around the idea that individuals from diverse cultures tend to use both verbal and nonverbal cues inherent to their respective cultures to exchange information (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Hall (1976) being one of the early researchers to tackle intercultural communication emphasized that IC involves not just the spoken language but also non-verbal signals such as gestures, body language, and eye contact. These non-verbal elements often differ widely across cultures and can significantly affect the way a message is understood.

IC implies careful attention to the contextual atmosphere an intercultural interaction takes place, as a means of illustration, a meeting between an American business executive and a Japanese counterpart may illustrate the challenges of intercultural communication. Americans may prioritize directness and brevity but the Japanese cultural context often emphasizes politeness and indirect communication, leading to unperceived misunderstandings if both parties are not attuned to these cultural differences (Hinkel, 2011). This interaction highlights the fact that simply having a common language (e.g., English) does not guarantee successful communication; the cultural contexts in which the communication occurs are equally important.

Hence, intercultural communication focuses primarily on the **act of communication** which refers to how different cultures approach dialogue, the norms that govern communication, and the potential misunderstandings that arise from cultural differences (McKay, 2002). IC encompasses both verbal and non-verbal communication and stresses the role that cultural background plays in shaping interactions. For instance, in certain cultures, prolonged eye contact is a sign of confidence and attentiveness, while in others it may be perceived as confrontational and a sign of disrespect (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009). While intercultural communication describes the process of interacting across cultures, **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)** refers to the **ability** to navigate these interactions effectively and appropriately. ICC involves not just the mechanics of communication but also the deeper skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable an individual to communicate successfully in intercultural contexts (Byram & Risager, 1999). According to Byram (1997), ICC is more than just linguistic proficiency. It involves the ability to engage with the values, beliefs, and practices of different cultures, while also reflecting critically on one's own cultural perspective.

Fantini (2007) emphasizes that ICC consists of several interrelated components, which he defines as **awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge** often referred to as the A+ASK model. The **attitudes** aspect refers to openness, curiosity, and a willingness to engage with other cultures without preconceived biases. **Skills** involve the ability to interpret cultural differences, negotiate meaning, and adapt communication strategies to suit different cultural contexts. **Knowledge** encompasses an understanding of both one's own cultural background and the cultures of others, while **awareness** involves being conscious of how culture shapes communication (Fantini, 2007). Together, these elements enable individuals to handle the complexities of intercultural communication with greater effectiveness.

Deardorff (2006) further refines this definition by stressing that ICC is about **effective and appropriate** communication in intercultural settings. This means not only being able to speak another language but also using that language in culturally sensitive ways that respect the norms, values, and communication

styles of the people with whom one is interacting. For instance, a teacher in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom who possesses ICC would not only teach the linguistic aspects of English but also help students understand the cultural nuances that inform how English is used in different settings. This might involve teaching students how to interpret tone, politeness strategies, and even how certain gestures might be perceived in different English-speaking cultures (Kramsch, 1998).

1.5. Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence

According to Byram, an intercultural competent learner displays a range of affective, behavioral, and cognitive skills that encompass five key elements (Byram, *ibid*):

1.6 Attitudes (*savoir être*): The concepts of curiosity and openness imply a readiness to dangle preconceived notions about other cultures and a willingness to eschew a self-righteous attitude.

1.6.1. Knowledge: (*savoirs*) of social groups and their products and practices in one's own culture and the interlocuter's. This perspective emphasizes the conceptualization of knowledge as comprising two primary components the abstract knowledge of social dynamics and concrete knowledge derived from interactions with social groups.

1.6.2. Skills of interpreting and relating: (*savoir comprendre*): the ability to interpret a document or an event from another culture to elaborate on it and connect it with relevant documents from one's cultural backgrounds. It and relate to documents from one's own.

1.6.3. Skills of discovery and interaction: (*savoir apprendre/faire*) ability to acquire new insights into a culture and its associated practices moreover, these competencies involve the capability to effectively utilize knowledge, attitudes, and skills while navigating the limitations imposed by real-time communication and interaction.

1.6.4. Critical cultural awareness, or *savoir s'engager*, is defined as the capacity to critically assess perspectives, practices, and products within one's own culture as well as those of other cultures and nations, based on explicit criteria. This competency underscores the necessity for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to develop an understanding of both their own culture and that of others (Kramsch, 1993). It involves recognizing the interconnections between diverse cultures and engaging in a critical analysis of one's behaviors, values, and beliefs (Byram, *ibid*). In essence, this framework posits that EFL learners should function as mediators who are cognizant of their viewpoints and the extent to which their cultural background shapes their perceptions. In this construct of ICC, there are also five dimensions.

These are awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge (A+ASK), and proficiency in the host tongue..." This definition is Presented as follows:

A = attitudes (affect)

S = skills (behavior)

K = knowledge (cognition)

A+ = awareness

Fantini's A+ASK model underscores the multidimensional nature of ICC, stressing that intercultural communication is not merely about linguistic proficiency but also about emotional, behavioral, and cognitive factors. Each dimension is interconnected, meaning that, for example, one's attitudes (openness and respect) can affect the ability to acquire intercultural knowledge or develop appropriate communication skills. In an educational context, this model serves to provide educators and teachers with a framework where learners engage thoughtfully in multicultural environments.

1.7. Constructivism and Active Learning in ICC Development

Constructivism, which emphasizes the learner's active role in constructing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978), provides a solid basis for fostering intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Unlike conventional models that focus on passive reception or transmission of knowledge, constructivism transforms EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms into dynamic spaces where learners can

actively explore and understand cultural materials, make meaning, reflect on their experiences, and develop critical thinking skills. (Brooks & Brooks, 1993)

This constructivist approach aligns well with Byram's (2008) model of ICC, which underscores the importance of not only acquiring knowledge about cultures but also developing the skills, attitudes, and dispositions necessary for effective intercultural communication. EFL activities informed by Constructivism can take various forms. Analyzing cultural artifacts like advertisements or films that would encourage learners to decode cultural symbols and uncover underlying values (Becher & Byram, 2008). Participating in simulations allows learners to experiment with different communication styles and navigate potential cultural misunderstandings in a safe environment (Paige & Ploughman, 2005). Engaging in discussions about cultural differences, facilitated by open-ended questioning and respectful dialogue, fosters critical reflection and a deeper understanding of one's cultural lens (Yashima, 2008). Through these activities, learners become active participants in their ICC development, constructing their own knowledge about the target culture and building the confidence to interact effectively in intercultural contexts.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A mixed-method research design was employed in the current study. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Therefore, closed-ended and open-ended data were collected (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative phase involved a questionnaire addressed to B02 learners of English language at Bechar University. This phase aimed to gather structured data on their perceptions and experiences with English as a medium of intercultural communication. The qualitative phase included semi-structured online interviews with EFL learners from the intensive foreign languages learning center at the University of Bechar. These interviews were designed to delve into the subjective experiences and attitudes of these learners, providing detailed insights into the subject matter.

During the data integration phase, results from both quantitative and qualitative sources were merged and compared through triangulation aiming to gather structured data to answer the following research questions:

What role does cultural awareness play in the language learning process of EFL learners?

1. What are the most effective strategies for fostering intercultural competence among EFL learners with diverse cultural backgrounds?
2. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of integrating intercultural communication content into the EFL?

2.2. Sample and Population

The process of selecting participants, along with the methodology and tools utilized, significantly impacts the quality and credibility of any research study. In this investigation, upper intermediate level EFL learners from the University of Bechar were selected purposefully to align with the study's requirements as well as to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences, thereby enriching the research findings. The participants' cultural diversity played a vital role in exploring the dynamics of intercultural communication within the EFL classroom context. Their varied backgrounds provided an extensive array of cultural insights and intercultural interactions, making them ideal subjects for examining the impact of intercultural communication strategies on language learning. In this study, EFL learners were not just participants but were actively engaged in several structured intercultural communication activities. These activities served as both a learning tool and an experimental context, allowing learners to directly experience and reflect on intercultural interactions. The purpose of including these experiences was to evaluate their impact on the learners' intercultural communication skills and overall English proficiency.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

For this study, a comprehensive data collection approach was employed to assess the impact of intercultural communication activities on EFL learners. The data collection process involved three key components: a questionnaire, interviews, and an experimental immersion in targeted activities. A

structured questionnaire was administered to all participating EFL learners to gather quantitative data on their experiences and perceptions of intercultural communication. The questionnaire included questions designed to gauge students' baseline understanding of cultural norms, confidence in interacting with people from different cultures, and general attitudes toward intercultural communication. Interviews, on the other hand, served to capture detailed qualitative insights into learners "s experiences who were actively using the foreign language as a communication tool in their travels and daily interactions through social media with people across borders.

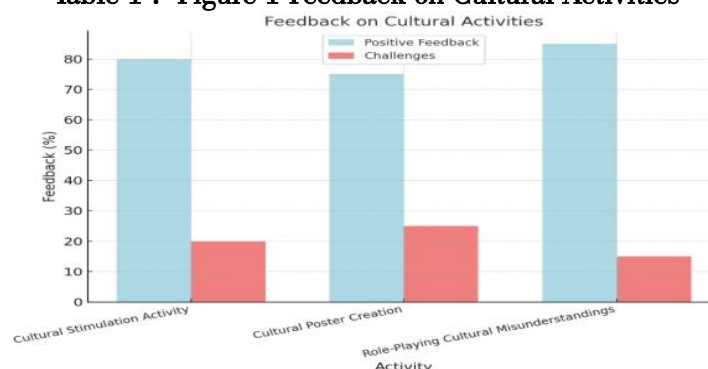
To reinforce the methodologMical aspect of this investigation, an EFL teacher was asked to implement a series of intercultural communication activities in their classes with upper-intermediate students. These learners engaged in hands-on activities that aligned perfectly with the notion of experiential Learning Theory (ELT) outlined by Kolb 1984 ; these activities are listed below ;

2.3.1. Cultural Stimulation Activity: Students participated in role-playing scenarios to simulate interactions with individuals from various cultural backgrounds. The activity simulated real-life interactions, allowing students to explore cultural norms and etiquette to improve their ability to understand cultural norms and etiquette. As the graph illustrates 80% felt more confident and prepared for real-world interactions while 20% found it difficult to handle unexpected cultural cues.

2.3.2. Cultural Poster Creation and Presentation: This activity was designed to deepen their knowledge of global cultures and enhance their presentation skills as learners portrayed the role of a researcher; They researched and presented on a chosen country, focusing on its cultural aspects. The graph indicates that 75% enjoyed researching and sharing their findings; and felt more knowledgeable about other cultures. On the other side of the coin, 25% of learners faced some difficulties related to public speaking anxiety.

2.3.3 Role-Playing Cultural Misunderstandings: The primary focus of this activity was to raise sensitivity to cultural norms and develop conflict resolution skills; Students were actively engaged in role-playing exercises where they intentionally breached cultural norms to analyze and discuss the resulting misunderstandings, as indicated in the graph, 15% of students felt uncomfortable with role-playing and discussing mistakes while The majority of student 85% found the activity insightful for understanding cultural sensitivities.

Table 1 : Figure 1 Feedback on Cultural Activities



2.4. Discussion

The findings of the current study provide substantial evidence that experiential learning, when approached through an intercultural perspective , serves not only to reinforce communicative competence but to expose the frquently unexplored ties between language use and cultural interpretation. While learners generally reported higher confidence and awareness after engaging in structured intercultural activities, the nature of that awareness undercovers subtle complexities that deserve further scrutiny.

First and foremost, the success of activities such as role-plays and cultural poster presentations highlights to the importance of shifting away from passive, text-based instruction toward performance and reflection. Nevertheless , the data further indicate that students' engagement was often dependent on cultural familiarity with the material . Learners were more motivated when the content involved cultures

geographically or linguistically similar to their own. This indicates that intercultural learning does not occur on a level playing field. It is filtered through learners' existing perceptions, biases, and affective filters. Thus, what appeared as "success" in terms of engagement might simultaneously reveal reluctance to deal with a more cognitively dissonant content.

This raises a significant pedagogical implication: intercultural communication training must go beyond celebrating diversity or transmitting facts. It must push learners to face their own assumptions and stereotypes, even when uncomfortable. A considerable portion of students expressed discomfort during the cultural misunderstanding role-play activity not simply due to public speaking, but because the scenarios highlighted moments of failure in communication. This discomfort is pedagogically valuable. According to Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, such "disorienting dilemmas" often trigger deeper cognitive restructuring. Therefore, the role of the teacher is not to shield students from discomfort, but to frame it as an essential component of intercultural growth.

Furthermore, while learners demonstrated knowledge of cultural "facts," their ability to interpret ambiguous or context-dependent cultural behaviors was somehow limited. This distinction aligns with Byram's (1997) differentiation between knowledge of a culture and the ability to **interact within** it. For instance, a student may know that direct eye contact is perceived differently in various cultures, yet still misinterpret or struggles to navigate it in real-time conversation. This gap between factual knowledge and situational competence indicates that successful ICC integration requires not only exposure but ongoing practice and reflective thinking.

Another key takeaway drawn from both teacher and student feedback relates to **power and identity**. Several students admitted feeling hesitant to share their own cultural viewpoints during activities involving cultural comparisons. This silence may not stem from lack of knowledge, but from perceived power asymmetries, interacting with culturally dominant norms like those of American or British societies. This echoes Kramsch's (1993) assertion that language learning is tied to symbolic power relations, where learners may feel culturally inferior or uncertain about their legitimacy in voicing "local" perspectives. Such dynamics must be deliberately addressed and acknowledged.

Teacher interviews revealed a tension between the desire for innovation and institutional limitations. Many expressed willingness to foster intercultural activities but cited curriculum overload and lack of administrative support as barriers. Interestingly, some teachers also expressed certain doubts about their own roles in teaching culture. This points to a deeper identity challenge in teacher development: intercultural instruction is not just a methodological shift, but a philosophical and ethical one. Educators must navigate their own cultural biases and expand their conception of language teaching beyond grammar and vocabulary.

The findings also highlight a paradox of "integration." While the study aimed to embed culture meaningfully into EFL teaching, some students perceived the activities as separate from their "real" language learning. This perception stems from a traditional perspective that treats language and culture as separate entities. It signals the need to restructure how language learning outcomes are framed not just as linguistic fluency but as intercultural agility. Cultural content in this case should not be introduced only as an addition but as the **context** in which language functions.

In summary, the findings illustrate that while experiential learning can greatly contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) development, its effectiveness is contingent upon a supportive educational environment. This includes teacher training, curriculum flexibility, emotional safe classrooms. The Algerian EFL context, like many others, stands at a pivotal juncture either framing language education merely as a technical skill or embracing it as a culturally embedded act. The evidence from this study suggests that learners are ready for the latter approach but only if the systems around them evolve to sustain that shift.

2.5. Challenges of Incorporating IC in EFL classrooms

The process of integrating intercultural communication in the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education carries within a number of significant challenges, educators often struggle

with. One major issue is the **insufficient resources and training** available for educators. Many teachers report a lack of adequate materials and professional development opportunities that would enable them to effectively incorporate intercultural communication into their teaching practices. Another challenge is the **risk of cultural stereotyping**. Teachers often grapple to avoid reinforcing stereotypes while presenting intercultural content. One of the major barriers to intercultural learning is student resistance given their role as the centre of the educational process. The challenges of engaging students in meaningful discussions regarding cultural differences are compounded by resistance that can arise from preconceived assumptions, unfamiliarity with cultural norms, and limited exposure to foreign cultures. In addition to the critical need to simplify cultural concepts to accommodate students' levels, teachers are compelled to fulfill what is termed **curriculum balancing**. Allocating time and resources for intercultural topics can be challenging within the constraints of a full curriculum, necessitating careful consideration to ensure that it does not compromise the delivery of other instructional content. Teachers are also required to remain neutral and display objectivity when stating their cultural perspectives to avoid falling into a personal bias. Lastly, the challenge of **curriculum integration** arises as teachers seek to embed intercultural communication into their existing EFL curricula. Finding ways to incorporate these topics seamlessly into regular lessons requires careful planning and innovation. It is noteworthy to mention that the aforementioned challenges, despite most being generated from interviews with EFL teachers' perspectives, other challenges, and obstacles are to be further explored and investigated as the process of adopting an intercultural pedagogy is considered to be an ongoing process.

2.6. Instructional strategies for enhancing intercultural communication in EFL classrooms

2.6.1. Cultural Awareness Training: aligning with the literature review on intercultural competence, Teachers suggested integrating more professional development opportunities focused on cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills.

2.6.2. Incorporation of Authentic Materials: reflecting recommendations from the field, The use of authentic materials, such as articles, videos, and case studies from various cultures, exposes students to real-world intercultural scenarios. This approach resonates with the work of Kramsch (1993), who advocates for the use of real-world materials to provide learners with meaningful intercultural experiences and improve their cultural understanding.

2.6.3. Interactive Activities: They advocated for the use of interactive and experiential learning activities, such as role-playing and simulations, to provide students with practical experiences in navigating cultural differences.

2.6.4 Peer Learning and Collaboration: Teachers proposed creating opportunities for peer learning and collaboration, where students can share and learn about each other's cultural backgrounds through group projects and discussions.

2.7 Suggested Activities for enhancing Intercultural communication in EFL classrooms

Certain classes in EFL contexts are culturally homogeneous, while others consist of students of different cultural backgrounds; in the case of the former, there is no pressing need to raise cross-cultural awareness so multicultural education is rather passive. Heterogeneous classes, on the other hand, necessitate ongoing exposure to cross-cultural situations due to the nature of the classroom atmosphere. The following proposed activities have been designed, adapted, and adopted for culturally homogeneous classes, however, this doesn't exclude heterogeneous classes from the equation. These activities have been used with beginner to upper-intermediate-level students of the English language.

2.7.1. Activity One

The teacher Starts off the activity by writing the word **CULTURE** in the center of the board. Students are encouraged to brainstorm and share any associations or ideas they have related to the word. As students contribute, all their ideas are noted on the board. Following this, the teacher leads an in-class discussion, diving deeper into the different cultural dimensions represented. During this discussion, the teacher should also introduce any relevant cultural aspects the students may not have mentioned, such as

traditions, values, customs, communication styles, and norms. Next, the class is divided into small groups. Each group works together to categorize the different aspects of culture that emerged from the brainstorming session. They create a **mind map** using large sheets of paper, organizing and visually representing their ideas. Once completed, each group presents their mind map to the class, explaining how they categorized the various cultural aspects. As a homework, students are asked to closely observe their environment. They take notes on different aspects of their native culture, focusing on things like social practices, local customs, traditions, or any other cultural elements they notice in their daily lives. The homework can be delivered online through a Telegram, or WhatsApp group and discussed online with the teacher. Certainly, this phase can be adjusted according to the availability of the teacher and the accessibility of students to the Internet.

2.7.2. Activity Two

Following Activity 1, The teacher groups students and provides them with brochures that include detailed cultural etiquette from various countries around the world. Each group is tasked with choosing one country from the brochure to focus on. They must then create a scenario that illustrates several key aspects of the selected country's etiquette. In their scenario, groups will demonstrate specific cultural practices and norms related to interactions, manners, and social customs from the chosen country. The rest of the class will observe these scenarios and engage in a guessing game to spot which country is portrayed based on the depicted etiquette. After all the scenarios have been presented, the teacher will facilitate a concluding session where observations are shared and discussed. Students will analyze the similarities and differences in etiquette between the various countries showcased. This discussion will help them conclude cultural commonalities and differences in social practices around the world.

2.7.3. Activity Three

In this activity, students will collectively watch a video that shows cultural traditions from a given country. During the initial viewing, students are tasked with taking notes to identify and observe key cultural norms and practices showcased in the video. After the first viewing, the video will be re-watched with the specific cultural norms deliberately omitted or misrepresented. Students will then be asked to adjust these practices into segments to accurately reflect the cultural traditions and norms discussed. Following these adjustments, students will compare the corrected cultural practices from the video with their native cultural norms. By so doing, students will be able to detect both the differences and similarities between the cultural traditions depicted and their own cultural context, thus fostering a deeper appreciation of intercultural dynamics and practices.

2.7.4. Activity Four

In this activity, students engage in a role-playing exercise where they assume the roles of tourists visiting a specific country. The scenario is designed such that the tourists frequently encounter misunderstandings and cultural faux pas due to their lack of familiarity with the local customs and etiquette. Each group of tourists is accompanied by a guide who is well-versed in the cultural norms of the country being visited. The guide's role is to correct the tourists when they make cultural mistakes and to introduce them to important cultural norms and practices. This includes demonstrating how body language and sign language are used and interpreted in the host country. Throughout the activity, guides will explain the significance of various gestures and symbols and how they should be appropriately used to avoid misunderstandings. The guides will also provide real-time feedback on the tourists' interactions, helping them adjust their behavior to align with the local customs. After the role-play, a debriefing session will follow, where students reflect on their experiences, discuss the cultural norms they learned, and compare them with their cultural practices. This reflective discussion aims to deepen their understanding of intercultural communication and enhance their ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts.

2.7.5. Activity Five

In this activity, students will engage in a practical intercultural exchange by interviewing a guest from another culture who has spent time in their native country. The guest will share their personal experiences and observations about various aspects of the students' culture, including what they found to be most

annoying, shocking, funny, or interesting. During the interview, students will prepare and ask questions designed to elicit detailed insights from the guest. Following the interview, students will write a detailed report based on the guest's responses. This report should summarize the guest's perspectives, highlighting notable observations about the student's culture and reflecting on how these observations contrast with their cultural norms. Students are required to submit their reports for correction, focusing on content accuracy and writing style. They will either submit the report as a formal document or as an email, depending on the preferred format.

3. Findings

3.1. Learners' Responses to the Intercultural Classroom Activities

The classroom activities provided the clearest quantitative evidence concerning learners' engagement with intercultural communication. Three activities were implemented: cultural stimulation through role-playing, cultural poster creation and presentation, and role-playing cultural misunderstandings. Overall, the results indicate a predominantly positive response to experiential intercultural learning, although a minority of learners experienced difficulties related to unexpected cultural cues, public speaking, and participation in role-playing situations.

The first activity, Cultural Stimulation, required learners to participate in simulated interactions involving individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The activity was intended to expose learners to cultural norms and possible communication difficulties in a controlled classroom environment. The results show that **80% of learners reported feeling more confident and prepared for real-world intercultural interactions**, whereas **20% experienced difficulties in dealing with unexpected cultural cues**. This finding indicates that simulation can provide learners with an opportunity to practise responding to culturally unfamiliar situations before encountering them in authentic communication.

The second activity involved Cultural Poster Creation and Presentation. Learners researched a selected country, identified relevant cultural characteristics, and presented their findings to their classmates. The results indicate that **75% of learners enjoyed researching and sharing their findings and reported increased knowledge about other cultures**, while **25% experienced difficulties associated with public speaking anxiety**. The activity therefore appeared to combine intercultural learning with opportunities for language production, research, collaboration, and oral presentation.

The third activity, Role-Playing Cultural Misunderstandings, focused specifically on cultural sensitivity and the consequences of inappropriate or misunderstood behaviour. Learners participated in situations involving deliberate cultural misunderstandings and subsequently discussed the reasons for the communication problems. The results show that **85% of learners found the activity insightful for understanding cultural sensitivities**, whereas **15% reported discomfort with role-playing and discussing mistakes**. This activity produced the highest positive response among the three activities.

3.2. Comparative Results

The results of the three activities are summarized in Table 1.

Table 2. Learners' Responses to the Intercultural Classroom Activities

Activity	Positive response	Reported difficulty
Cultural Stimulation	80%	20%
Cultural Poster Creation and Presentation	75%	25%
Role-Playing Cultural Misunderstandings	85%	15%

The comparative results reveal a generally favourable pattern across all three activities. The highest positive response was recorded for Role-Playing Cultural Misunderstandings (85%), followed by Cultural Stimulation (80%) and Cultural Poster Creation and Presentation (75%). Conversely, the lowest proportion of reported difficulty was observed in the role-playing activity (15%), while the highest was associated with the poster presentation activity (25%).

Although the percentages cannot by themselves demonstrate a long-term increase in intercultural competence, they indicate that learners responded positively to activities requiring active participation, interaction, interpretation, and reflection. The findings also demonstrate that positive engagement did not eliminate all difficulties. A proportion of learners experienced affective or communicative challenges, suggesting that intercultural classroom activities need to be carefully structured and supported by appropriate teacher guidance.

3.3. Questionnaire and Interview Evidence

The study also employed a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to obtain information about learners' perceptions and experiences of intercultural communication. The questionnaire was designed to examine learners' understanding of cultural norms, confidence in communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, and general attitudes towards intercultural communication. The interviews were intended to provide more detailed accounts of learners' experiences and perceptions.

However, the numerical questionnaire responses and verbatim interview data were not retained in the version of the research record available for the present analysis. Consequently, no numerical questionnaire findings or participant quotations are reported here. Reporting invented percentages or quotations would compromise the validity of the study.

The available classroom evidence nevertheless provides a clear indication of learners' responses to the implemented activities. The questionnaire and interview findings should be incorporated into this section once the original response sheets, statistical output, or interview transcripts are available. In particular, questionnaire frequencies and percentages should be reported alongside selected anonymized participant quotations so that the qualitative interpretations in the Discussion can be directly connected to empirical evidence.

4. Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to a rigorous code of ethics to ensure the protection of participants' rights, confidentiality, and the overall integrity of the research:

Informed consent: Participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, their role, and the voluntary nature of participation.

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants.

Confidentiality: All data collected, including interview transcripts, were anonymized and kept confidential. Participants' identities will not be disclosed in any publications or reports resulting from the study.

Respect for autonomy: Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing consequences or pressure to continue.

Privacy: Interviews were conducted in private settings to ensure the privacy of participants. All recorded data were stored securely and accessible only to the research team.

Non-discrimination: The study did not discriminate against participants based on gender, age, ethnicity, or any other personal characteristics.

Conclusion

Together, language and culture form the most fundamental human paradigm; together, they mediate all that we think, all that we do, all that we are. To conclude, it is worth stressing that FL teachers should be foreign culture teachers as well. Fundamentally, teaching a foreign language is incomplete without the study of the related culture. The topic of teaching and learning culture has been a matter of considerable interest to language educators and much has been written about the role of culture in foreign language instruction. The clear and unique indissoluble relationship between a culture and its language is based on the work of educators from various disciplines.

In light of the above-mentioned dynamic view of culture, culture learning is taken to be the process of acquiring general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental process that engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally, and effectively, as observed with Byram's model. Incorporating intercultural communication in EFL teaching is an attempt to develop learners' cultural awareness and to help them transcend traditional ethnocentrism and explore new relationships across cultural boundaries. Though many scholars have already presented several valuable models and definitions of ICC that lend themselves

to the integration of language instruction and intercultural learning, there is often only a random exposure to culture in the EFL classroom. FL teachers cannot avoid culture teaching by rigidly holding to the traditional values of classroom behavior, for culture is intimately bound to language. EFL teachers therefore need to shift from a traditional stance to an inter-cultural one to develop both linguistic and intercultural competencies of learners.

The approach the teacher engages in will depend greatly on his or her attitude towards the target culture and perspective on the teaching of culture in the language classroom. Yet one recommended approach is characterized by the treatment of cultural issues openly and directly in a comparative cross-cultural manner. Besides, EFL teachers should avoid teaching culture as facts, but rather as cultural understanding, intercultural competence, and an awareness of the importance of dialogue when trying to understand another culture. Central to the teaching methodology suggested here is to provide opportunities for interaction so that the students can impart their way of seeing things. Meta-awareness and cross-cultural the comparison lies at the heart of such cultural pedagogy.

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