

Designing an Intercultural Communicative Competence Component for the First Year English Licence Curriculum: An Analysis of Students' Subjective Needs

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Received: 19/07/ 2022

Accepted: 10/11/2022

ABSTRACT:

Keywords:

Syllabus design ,
Needs analysis,
Intercultural
communicative
competence,
Learners'
subjective needs,
Intercultural
speaker,

As a preliminary step towards a principled design of the intercultural component of the first year English licence syllabus, the present paper attempted to analyze students' subjective needs. To achieve this aim, a questionnaire was designed and administered to eighty eight first year students of English. The results indicated students' preferences regarding the themes, the materials, the techniques, and the activities susceptible to foster them as intercultural speakers.

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Introduction

Learning the rules of usage is necessary but not enough to enable learners of English as a foreign language to transmit and understand messages in authentic communication. To participate effectively in real communicative settings, language speakers do not need to always produce grammatically correct sentences as much as they need to produce utterances that are suitable to the context. This conviction has led Hymes (1972) to coin the term ‘communicative competence’. This term has been embraced by language teachers and applied linguistics and, thus, led to the advent of a strong paradigm in language teaching, namely the communicative approach in the 1970’s of the last century. One of the direct consequences of the introduction of such a paradigm in language teaching has been the ever-growing awareness to the need to teach aspects of the culture of the target language alongside the teaching of the other linguistic aspects. To encode and decode messages successfully using the target language, learners need to combine a competency in the rules of the language system with ‘an awareness of cross-cultural pragmatic differences’ (Long, 2005, p. 4).

However, several factors like the rise of English as a lingua franca in the age of globalization and the Internet, and the expansion in the number of non-native English users in international communication that now far surpasses the number of native speakers has pushed a number of applied linguists to grow critical of the prevalence of native-speakers’ norms in the teaching of English language and culture (Alcon Soler, 2007). In this vein, Holliday (2005) dismissed ‘native-speakerism’ as a ‘racist ideology’ aimed at altering non-native English learners’ cultures and perpetuating native-speakers’ international dominance in the post-colonial era. Instead of attempting to assimilate learners of English as a foreign language to the norms of the target language culture through focusing on the deficit side of their proficiency, House (2007) argued in favor of recognizing non-native English learners’ emergent identities as new and empowering hybrid personalities, i.e., combining knowledge of both the mother tongue and the target language and culture. As such, learners deserve a new distinguishing concept—‘the intercultural speaker’. Therefore, developing and evaluating non-native English learners’ interculturality should become the goal of foreign language teaching.

1. Statement of the Problem

To foster learners’ intercultural communicative competence (ICC), the curriculum should allow for a systematic comparison between the defining elements of the mother tongue culture and those of the target language. The

selection and sequencing of those elements as well as the choice of the approach(es), method, techniques, and materials for their implementation cannot be effective unless it is carried out with ample consideration of learners' needs. Needs analysis is one of the innovations that has been developed by the English for specific purposes (ESP) movement and adopted later by modern language teaching pedagogy (McDonough, 2005). A valid and reliable needs analysis should rely on a variety of sources: "published and unpublished literature, learners, teachers and applied linguists, domain experts, and triangulated sources" (Long, 2005, p. 25).

As far as the validity of learners' views as sources for communicative needs is concerned, Long (2005, p. 20) rightly observed that it is "a complex and sensitive issue". According to him, "...they can identify their general reasons for language study". However, "this does not mean that...learners will necessarily constitute a reliable source, the best source, or the only legitimate source" (Long, 2005, p. 26). This implies that, while learners have the right to be given a say in the design of the syllabi intended for them, teachers and syllabus designers need to supplement this source with other sources to accomplish their task, especially in the case of young learners whose linguistic and cultural background knowledge of the field in which they aspire to use language is superficial. Concerning learners as a source for syllabus design, Nunan (1988) set a pertinent distinction between learners' subjective and objective needs. The former refer to fact-based knowledge about learners like age, language proficiency level, and education, while the latter refer primarily to learners' preferences in terms of learning style, language learning approach, types of activities, etc. It goes without saying that a syllabus that caters for learners' subjective needs in terms of a systematic and relevant cross-comparison between the mother tongue and target language cultures using a suitable teaching/learning methodology is susceptible to be more motivating to them and is likely to result in higher levels of knowledge intake and skills development. Catering for learners' subjective needs, Nunan (1988) further argued, would lead to bridging the gap between teachers' objectives and learners' goals thus increasing the effectiveness of instruction.

In the Algerian context of higher education, the three years English licence curriculum has been redesigned hastily more than twenty years ago to fit the credit-based (Licence, Master, Doctorate) LMD system. This architecture was adopted to offer the ever-growing student population a modern language education which is compatible with international standards. The reform, however, was mostly limited to aspects of form rather than language teaching methodology

and materials. As a consequence, teachers—including a large number of part-timers—found themselves struggling to live up to the challenges of both designing and teaching the different subjects without either adequate prior training or sufficient resources. This dire situation has impacted negatively students' achievements and raised suspicions about the potential of the reform to reach its set objectives.

Regarding the need to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence across the curriculum, despite the enthusiastic discourse promoting the teaching of this crucial dimension of language proficiency, little is really done in practice to design and implement effective courses that are susceptible to attain this challenging but rewarding goal. Hence, the present study is an attempt to identify the subjective needs of first year licence students in an Algerian English department in terms of ICC as a preliminary step towards designing an intercultural syllabus that caters for these needs. More specifically, it seeks to answer the following research question:

- What are first year English licence students' subjective needs in intercultural communicative teaching?

2. Literature Review

Syllabus design, in its broad sense, is concerned with both “the selection and grading of content” and the specification of the methodology—“the selection of learning tasks and activities” (Nunan, 1988, p. 5). Syllabus designers make decisions about the issues in question with reference to the current language proficiency paradigm. English language teaching has witnessed in recent decades a number of paradigm shifts due, on one hand, to developments in applied linguists' understanding of the construct of language proficiency, and, on the other, to a growing awareness about the inequalities and injustices that might result from the uncritical adoption of language materials and methodologies developed in the west by the ever-growing number of English language learners in non-native contexts. The most serious dangers of which are the shifting of learners' cultures and the fostering of an irreversible sense of self-denigration vis-à-vis native-speakers among these learners.

2.1. The shifting Role of Culture in Modern English Language Teaching

Although Lado and Fries (1957) entitled their book—that was at the inception of the influential contrastive analysis (CA) school in syllabus design and language teaching—‘Linguistics Across Cultures’, culture did not really play any significant role in the design of the resulting syllabi, which focused world-wide mainly on the systematic comparison between the different levels of the first

and target language structures. After its decline as a consequence of the Chomskyan attack on its behavioural underpinnings (Chomsky, 1959), CA was replaced by other forms of structural syllabi, which under the influence of the Chomskyan revolution and its pursuit of universalism, have also denied any role to culture teaching.

A major turning point, however, occurred when Hymes (1972) coined the term communicative competence in reaction to the Chomskyan competence, which he dubbed linguistic competence because he considered it to be limited only to the structural dimension of human language. Communicative competence refers to the ability of using the language correctly and appropriately through observing the sociolinguistic rules of language use. While acknowledging the contribution of structuralism, the Hymesian conception of communicative competence reinstated, at least in theory, the role of context, and hence, of culture as a defining dimension of human language. As a consequence, applied linguistics embraced the new concept to develop the communicative approach (Flowerdew, 2013). The advent of this strong paradigm in language teaching allowed applied linguistics to reclaim a tradition that goes back to the Sapirian roots of modern linguistics with their interest in cultural and social determinants of language use (Blommaert, 2015). Nevertheless, the construct of communicative competence has not yielded itself easily to an adequate operational definition of its constituents despite the plethora of models that have been proposed to achieve this goal (Celce-Mercia, 2007; Canale & Swain, 1980). Also, it has not been easy to develop a sound grading system that combines both the linguistic and cultural aspects similar to the former pattern of grading linguistic structures. To solve this puzzle, applied linguists and syllabus designers have been grappling up to the present with finding the appropriate formula for integrating language and culture teaching in language syllabi.

In this vein, applied linguistic research has witnessed a remarkable surge in interest in culture teaching in applied linguistic literature since the nineties of the last century. The proponents of this trend argued that language and culture represent two sides of the same coin and that language teaching cannot be effective without involving some form of culture teaching. According to them, developing learners' intercultural competence should be conceived as a natural extension of communicative language teaching. Indeed, the communicative approach has demonstrated serious limitations in enabling the majority of ESL/EFL learners to achieve native-like proficiency (House, 2007). Hence, a number of applied linguists proposed to abandon the unattainable aim of

promoting native-speakerism that characterizes communicative language teaching methodology in favor of adopting the more realistic aim of developing learners' intercultural competence (Byram, 2009; Byram, 2008, House, 2007; Holliday, 2005; Corbett, 2003). Instead of attempting to help learners assimilate to native linguistic and cultural norms, several models have been proposed to articulate the connection between language and culture in the field of English language teaching with the aim of fostering foreign language learners as intercultural speakers.

2.2. Definition of the Construct: Intercultural Communicative Competence

ICC emerged as a reaction to the concept of communicative competence (Fantini, 2020; Sercu, 2005; Byram, 1997). However, the model was highly criticized on several grounds (Byram, 2008; Kramsch, 1998; Byram, 1997). For example, one reason for which communicative competence has been judged to be inadequate is the fact that acquiring the native speaker's competence is a complex and frustrating goal the achievement of which falls far beyond the capacity of the majority of learners (Kramsch, 1998; Byram, 1997). Besides, the concept of the native-speaker has been considered problematic since learners' success or failure is measured with reference to the alien cultural norms of native-speakers (Kramsch, 1998). Another significant reason behind rejecting the model is that even if learners succeed in attaining the native-speaker's proficiency, this will pose a serious threat to their native language and culture, and will potentially result in some form of linguistic and cultural schizophrenia (Byram, 1997).

One of the major challenges that might face teachers and applied linguists attempting to align their syllabi designs and teaching practices with the principles of intercultural communicative competence is the large number of concepts that have been introduced in the literature to denote it (Alcon Soler, 2007); these terms include *intercultural competence*, *intercultural communicative competence*, *global competence*, *global citizenship*, *multicultural competence*, *cultural fluency*, *communicative competence*, *cultural competence*, *intercultural sensitivity*, *cross-cultural awareness*, *cultural intelligence*, *cultural literacy*, *cross-cultural capability*, etc. This plethora of terms attests to the interdisciplinary nature of interest in this issue. In addition to this, the lack of consensus amongst researchers over the use of these concepts is worthy of utmost consideration by teachers and researchers (Deardorff & Jones, 2012). ICC, for example, was defined as the capacity to communicate appropriately with and to ensure mutual comprehension among individuals whose social identities are different (Byram,

Gribcova, & Starkey, 2002). Parallel to this definition, Fantini and Tirmizi (2006, p. 12) referred to it as “a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself”. In the same vein, Byram (2006) offered an alternative definition which operationalizes ICC in terms of a set of abilities that an intercultural communicative speaker should possess. Examples of these abilities include respecting and valuing the otherness, being flexible and adaptable towards the difference, interpreting the others' cultures and relating them to one's own, critically judging the others' cultures, etc.

2.2.1. The Notion of the Intercultural Speaker

Central to the conception of ICC is the notion of the intercultural speaker. Byram and Fleming (1998; as cited in Alcon Soler & Jorda, 2007, p. 1) defined the intercultural speaker as “someone with knowledge of one or more cultures and social identities, and who enjoys discovering and maintaining relationships with people from other cultural backgrounds”. The main factor that led to the prominence of this notion in recent literature about ICC is attributed to the fact that “in a [the modern] multilingual world... [a learner's] main goal is not to become a native speaker of English, but to use this language as a tool of interaction among many other languages and cultures” (Alcon Soler & Jorda, 2007, p. 1). In this regard, House (2007, pp. 11-12-18) considered language to be a ‘collective knowledge reservoir’ constitutive of and constituted by culture and adhering to a pragmatic –discourse approach that views culture of a social group as ‘patterned, cohesive verbal actions’ the sharing of which among its members has become possible thanks mainly to the existence of a common language. She further argued in favor of a radical shift from communicative language teaching based on the idealization of the native speaker to an intercultural teaching based on the notion of the intercultural speaker. The latter notion is tightly dependent on two other interrelated core concepts: ‘hybridization’ and ‘inner dialogicity’. An intercultural speaker, according to this radical conception, is “a person who has managed to settle for the In-between, who knows and can perform in both his and her native culture and in another acquired at some later date”(House, 2007, p. 19). The fostering of an intercultural speaker thus conceived can only thrive in a sane educational environment imbued with humanistic values where learners are allowed to develop hybrid social and cultural identities through engaging in an intense, constant dialogue with ‘the other’ whom he treats as his equal.

2.2.2. Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence

To trigger and nurture this especially inner dialogue, the intercultural syllabus should opt for an adequate approach and a sound methodology that would involve learners in a systematic comparison between the defining features of the mother tongue and those of the target culture. Most importantly, the different elements of the guiding intercultural syllabus should be appealing to the learners.

To achieve this aim, Barrett, Byram, Làzàr, Monpoint-Gailard, and Philippou (2013) argued in favor of abandoning the old way of teaching culture where teachers transmit cultural knowledge to passive learners. Instead, several teaching approaches are proposed: *experiential learning*, *cooperative learning*, and *project work*.

Regarding the materials susceptible to develop ICC, the related literature recommends music, literature, and films (Gabrovec, 2007). Online communication tools or ‘tele-collaboration’ like emails and video conferencing have also been used to promote ICC (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). As far as techniques that might be used to promote ICC, Kackere, Làzàr, and Matei (2007) proposed a wide range of these: brainstorming, short presentations, quizzes, critical incidents, role plays and simulations, ethnographic tasks, etc.

2.3. Needs Analysis

The design of an intercultural syllabus geared towards fostering learners as intercultural speakers should strive first and foremost to accommodate their needs and preferences. Needs analysis, which was first introduced –though informally– by Michael West in 1920 in the field of second language acquisition (West, 1994), has been sharpened with the advent of the ESP movement starting from 1960s before it crossed over to main stream English language teaching methodology and syllabus design (McDonough, 2005). As a consequence, modern language pedagogy considers any language course as English for specific purposes course that should be designed with a particular kind of learners in mind (Richard, 2001).

2.3.1. Definition of Needs Analysis

Needs analysis refers to the process whereby data is collected about learners and about activities to inform syllabus design (Nunan, 1988). Similarly, Brown (1995) defined needs analysis as the procedure of gathering and analysing both subjective and objective data to determine the goals and objectives in the light of which decisions about teaching materials and activities, to be included in the course, are carried out. Hence, determining learners’ needs as the starting point of syllabus design has become an established principle in modern language

pedagogy (Long, 2005; Richard, 2001; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dubin & Olshtain, 1986).

2.3.2. Types of Needs

Different typologies of language needs are offered in the literature (Berwick, 1989; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Richterich, 1972). Each typology is underpinned by its authors' beliefs about the aspects that should be granted special importance during the specification of learners' needs.

2.3.2.1. Target Needs and Learning Needs

Regarding this issue, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) set a distinction between target needs and learning needs. While target needs refer to what is required to do by the learners in the target situation, learning needs refer to what is required to be done by the learners for the sake of learning. Moreover, target needs are subdivided into necessities, lacks, and wants. First, necessities refer to that kind of need which is identified by the requirements of the target situation, that is to say, the knowledge that the learners should have to guarantee a good functioning in the target situation. Second, lacks refer to the gap between what the learners know and what they need to learn. Finally, wants refer to the learners' subjective needs—learners' preferences regarding what need to be learnt (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The latter type —learners' wants or subjective needs—is allotted central importance by Graves (1996), Nunan (1988), and Richterich (1972) among others.

2.3.2.2. Objective Needs and Subjective Needs

Richterich (1972) was the first to draw attention to the importance of the objective vs. subjective needs dichotomy. The former, according to him, refer to the kind of needs that can be determined by teachers based on examining learners' personal information as well as to data about language level, patterns of language use, and problems related to language learning. The latter refer to learners' wants, desires, expectations, lacks, attitudes, learning styles and strategies (Berwick, 1989; Brindley, 1984, as cited in Nunan, 1988). Some proponents of this distinction assign objective needs to the domain of content identification and subjective needs to the domain of methodology identification. However, Nunan (1988) argued in favor of granting learners a say in decisions about content and methodology. Nunan (1988, p. 79) provided a strong reason for gauging learners' subjective needs as a first step towards effective syllabus design: “the teachers' ...and learners' ...‘agenda’ might differ...subjective needs analysis ...[strives] to involve learners and teachers in exchanging information so that the agendas of the learner and teacher may be more closely aligned”.

In an intercultural syllabus geared towards capitalizing on learners' identities, values, mother tongue 'savoirs', and preferences, the study of learners' subjective needs deserves a thorough consideration. Therefore, the present study has been designed to focus on the study of first year licence English Algerian students' subjective needs.

3. Data Collection

To answer the major research question stated in the introduction, the present study used a single research instrument, namely a questionnaire for students. The analysis of the data generated by the questionnaire was expected to lead to the generation of a working hypothesis about students' subjective needs in intercultural teaching (Nunan, 1992).

3.1. The Questionnaire

Based on the review of the literature, a questionnaire was designed. It was administered to first year students at the department of English at the university of Jijel. Prior to its administration, the questionnaire was piloted to seven first year EFL students at the University of Jijel, and as a result, some questions were modified.

The questionnaire comprises twenty one items of various question types (close-ended questions, questions that require responding to statements on a five-point Likert scale, and open-ended questions) divided into six sections. The sections, which solicit perceptual responses, address factors including general information about learners (questions 1-4), learners' learning preferences (questions 5-9), participants' attitudes and expectations (questions 10-13), learners' lacks and necessities (questions 14-17), areas of interest concerning the themes, the materials, and the activities and techniques (questions 18-20). The last section gave the respondents the chance to add any comments or suggestion (question 21).

3.2. The Sample

The questionnaire was administered to a random sample based on convenience comprising ninety (90) first year English licence students out of 270, the total number of the whole population. That is, the sample represents one third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of the first year licence population at the department of English. Out of the 90 paper-copies of the questionnaire that were distributed, 88 were returned, providing thus a high return rate (97.77 %).

3.3. Data Analysis

For analyzing the data, the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was used: mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) are used for questions that

require responding to statements on (a five-point) Likert scale questions to measure the average level of the learners' needs and the frequency (F) and percentages (%) for open-ended and close-ended questions.

The following degrees adopted from Prachanant (2012, p. 120) were used to compare the means:

Scale	Mean Average	Need Level
1	1.00-1.49	Very low
2	1.50-2.49	Low
3	2.50-3.49	Average
4	3.50-4.49	High
5	4.50-5.00	Very high

3.3.1. Results

3.3.1.1. General Information about the Participants

The sample is made up of 88 first year licence students at the department of English. Almost all of them (88. 6%) were females. The overriding majority of the respondents (77.2%)) spent seven years studying English, while the rest spent eight years or more. Also, the great majority of respondents (80.7%) declared that they have chosen willingly to study English.

3.3.1.2. Learners' Attitudes

The analysis of the results concerning learners' attitudes showed that learners have strong positive attitudes towards the need to develop the mother tongue culture in parallel with the target culture as the mean score is high (M=3.71). Also, they agreed on the importance of developing their ICC as demonstrated by the very high mean score (M=4.45).

3.3.1.3. Learning Preferences

Learning preferences included learning styles and learning approaches. The results revealed that a great deal of division among participants regarding learning styles with a slight inclination towards the auditory one: 'auditory' (36.3%), 'visual' (30%), and 'kinesthetic' (33.7%). The same pattern was also observed concerning learning approaches; the results indicated a slight preference for cooperative learning (39.7%). The remaining results indicated a preference rate of (31.2%) and (24.5%) for 'experiential learning' and 'project work', respectively.

3.3.1.4. Learners' Lacks

Lacks were investigated through measuring participants' perceptions concerning five competences they need to develop as intercultural speakers

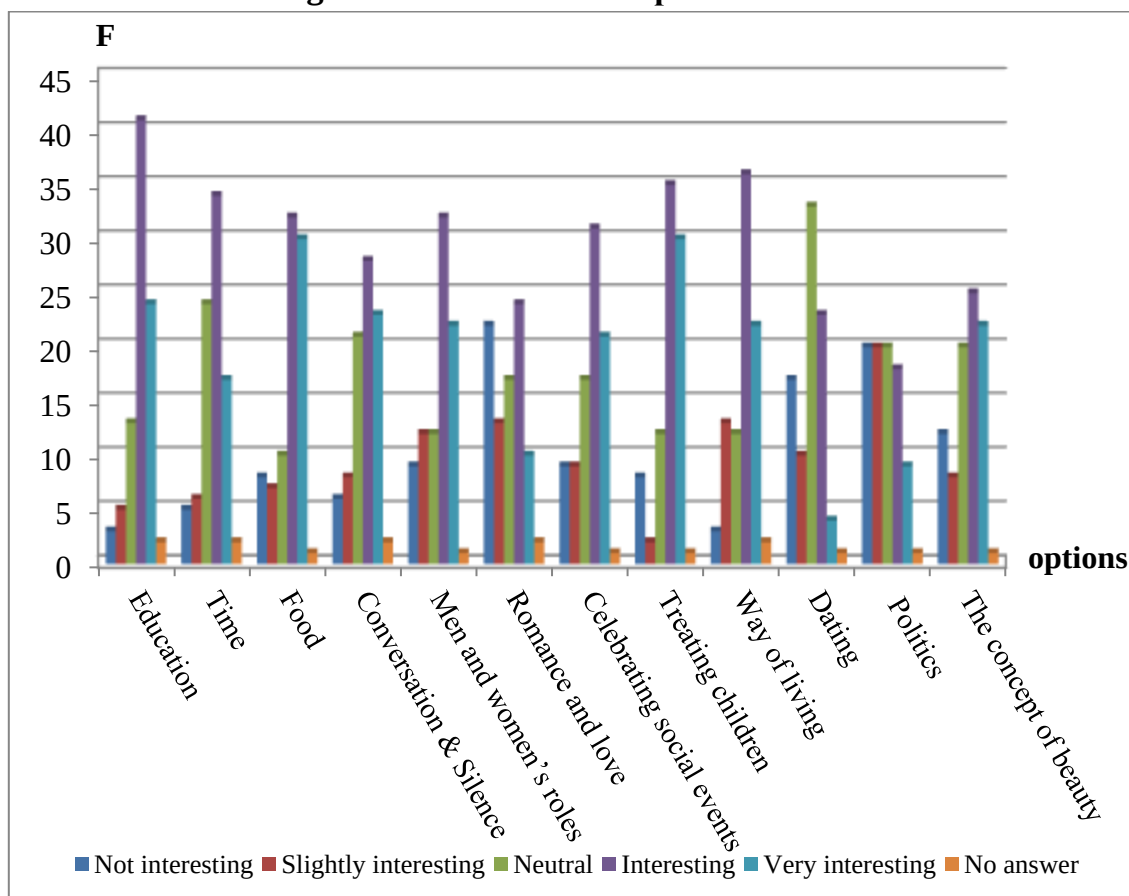
(Byram, 1997). Compared to the other competences, the participants demonstrated a slight preference for ‘skills of discovery and interaction’ (23.4%) as well as ‘knowledge’ (22.6%).

3.3.1.5. Learners’ Wants

Learners were asked about the topics of interest, the materials, and the techniques and the activities to be incorporated in the intercultural syllabus.

Regarding the topics of interests, students were asked to rate their degree of interest regarding certain topics susceptible to develop ICC (Huber-Kriegler, Làzàr, & Strange, 2003; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993).

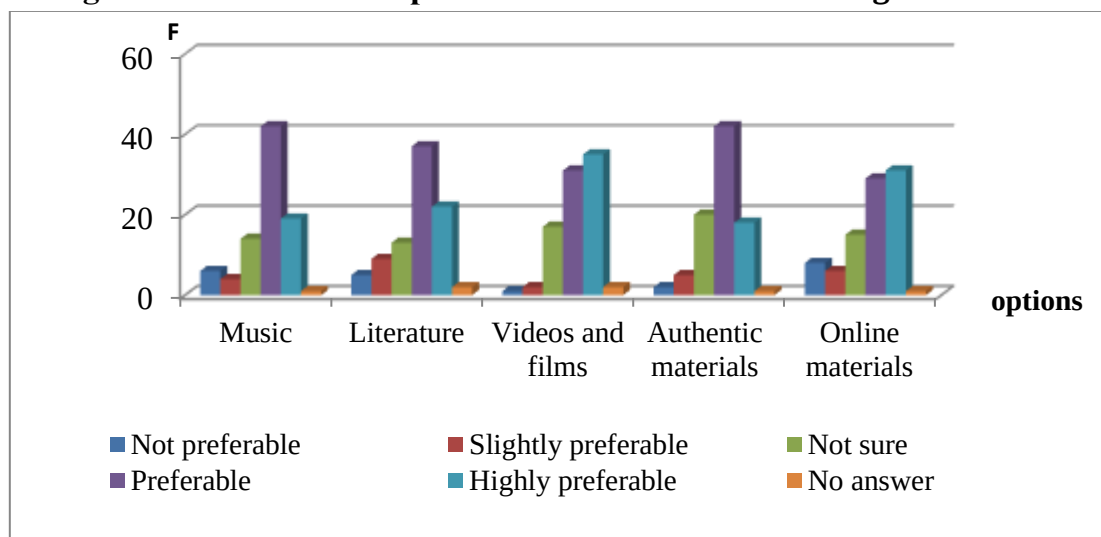
Figure n°01: Learners’ topics of interest



As shown in Figure 1, a great deal of division was observed among the respondents with regard to the suggested topics. A close examination of the results, however, indicates that, compared to the rest of the offered choices, the students have a slight inclination towards the topics of ‘education’ ($M=3.90$, $SD=0.99$), ‘raising children’ ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.18$), ‘food and eating habits’ ($M=3.7$, $SD=$), ‘way of living’ ($M=3.71$, $SD=1.11$), ‘conversation and silence’ ($M=3.63$, $SD= 1.18$), ‘time’ ($M=3.60$, $SD= 1.06$), ‘men and women’s roles’ ($M=3.53$, $SD= 1.29$), ‘the concept of beauty’ ($M=3.42$, $SD= 1.33$), and ‘celebrating social events’ ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.25$). On the other hand, the

participants adopted a neutral stand about some topics: 'politics' with a mean score of (2.72, SD= 1.31), 'dating' with a mean score of (2.85, SD=1.15), and 'romance and love' with a mean score of (2.85, SD=1.35).

Figure n° 02: Learners' preferences about ICC teaching materials



The above figure summarises learners' preferences towards certain materials used for developing ICC. It is found that respondents demonstrated a high level of positive attitudes towards the suggested materials. The pattern that emerged show that videos and films got the highest rate, with a mean score of (4.13, SD=0.89), followed by online materials, with a mean score of (3.84, SD=1.19). At a lower level, 'authentic materials', 'literature', and 'music' with mean rates of (3.79=0.92), (3.72, SD=1.13), and (3.69, SD=1.14), respectively.

Figure n° 03: Preferences about activities and techniques

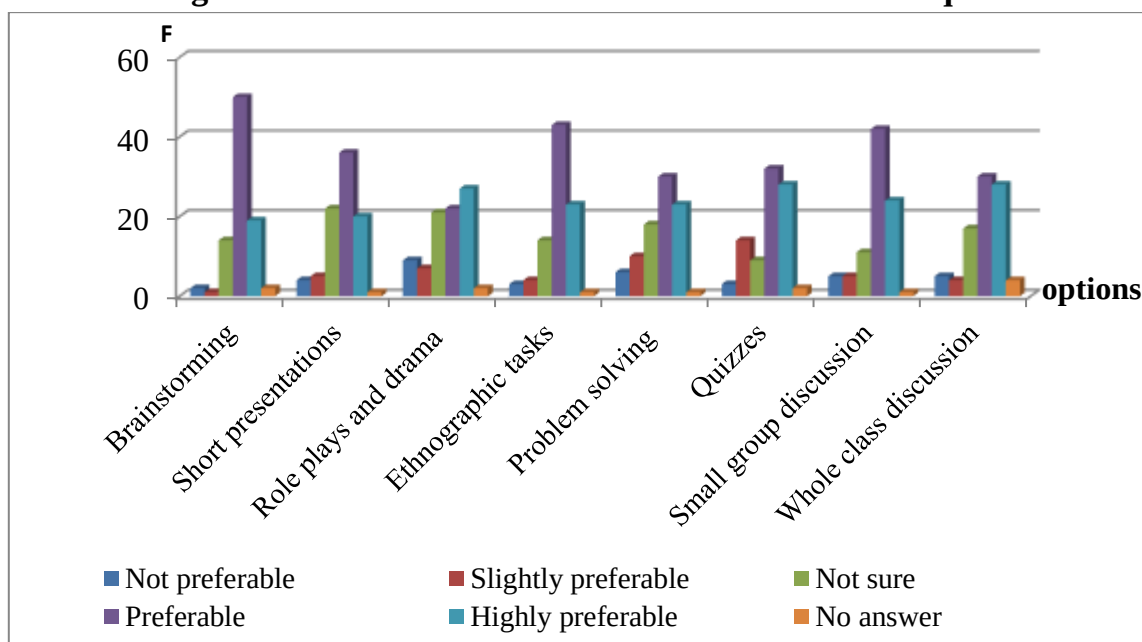


Figure 3 shows that the respondents have demonstrated the emergence of two levels of positive attitude towards the use of all the suggested techniques and activities. In this regard, the responses offered the highest rates to brainstorming ($M=3,96, SD=0,80$), ethnographic tasks ($M=3,91, SD=0,96$), small group discussion ($M=3,86, SD=1,07$), whole group discussion ($M=3,86, SD=1,12$). Then, the lower level offered quizzes ($M=3,79, SD=1,17$), short presentations ($M=3,72, SD=1,03$), problem solving activities ($M=3,62, SD=1,19$), and role plays and drama ($M=3,59, SD=1,29$). A close examination of these results reveals that the only difference between first level techniques and activities (brainstorming, ethnographic tasks, small group discussion, and whole group discussion) and those of the second level is, most probably, the degree of perceived difficulty. Hence, it is perhaps more adequate to use the techniques and activities pertaining to the first level to the initial stages of the syllabus, and incorporate those of the second level to subsequent stages.

3.3.2. Discussion and Findings

The analysis of respondents' preferences with regard to learning styles and learning approaches show that learners had a slight inclination towards two learning styles: the visual and the auditory. This finding is compatible with theories about learning styles which assert that learners can have more than one learning style (Ehrman, 1996). Compared to the other two, the auditory style appears to be slightly more preferred. As far as the learning approaches are concerned, the cooperative approach was slightly more preferred by the respondents.

An effective intercultural syllabus that aims at fostering learners as intercultural speakers whereby their intercultural competence is developed in tandem with their linguistic capacity should first and foremost cater for learners' subjective needs. In addition to enhancing learners' motivation, a course which is compatible with learners' subjective needs aligns teachers and students around the same learning agenda. In the light of this, the results of the present study show that the majority of learners demonstrated a positive attitude towards the need to study the target language culture as part of studying the English language. Moreover, the respondents declared the need to integrate the native culture along with the target culture in EFL classes. As regards learners' lacks, the respondents put special emphasis on both knowledge and skills of discovery and interaction. Regarding the topics that attract learners' interests, the results reveal that the topics which attracted most of their interest included education, raising children, food and eating habits, way of living, conversation and silence, time, men and

women's role, the concept of beauty and celebrating social events. However, learners adopted a neutral stance vis à vis three topics namely, romance and love, dating, and politics. This neutral stand might be attributed to the influence of the learners' native culture as they feel ashamed to discuss topics as love and romance in front of their teachers. Given that the overwhelming majority of the participants are females is perhaps another cause for the declared low interest in politics.

Regarding intercultural language teaching methodology, the respondents indicated especially the need to use videos and films, and online materials, which is compatible with the findings of other studies in the literature (Gabrovec, 2007; O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006).

Concerning techniques and activities, it was found that learners expressed a slight higher preference towards brainstorming, ethnographic tasks, pair or small group discussion, whole class discussion compared to the other options. This finding is compatible with the results of other studies in the literature (Kackere, Làzàr, & Matei, 2007). It is worth noting that these techniques can be used following this order within the same lesson. Hence, the lesson may start with a brainstorming task about the topics, then require the students to take ethnographic tasks to search the topic from an ICC perspective, discuss the findings within a small group, before, finally, sharing the results with the whole group.

Conclusion

Needs analysis is a vital stage in syllabus design. Findings obtained from the process should be regarded by teachers, syllabus designers, and curriculum developers. The current study, which aimed at exploring the learners' subjective needs, constitutes an essential step towards the design of an intercultural syllabus for first year English majors. The results obtained from the questionnaire suggest that an intercultural communicative competence component of the first year English licence which uses mostly audio-visual materials like movies and videos, which focuses on the systematic comparison between the mother tongue and target language cultures regarding topics including education, raising children, food and eating habits, way of living, conversation and silence, time, men and women's role, the concept of beauty and celebrating social events, and which follows a cooperative approach to implement various techniques like brainstorming, ethnographic tasks, small-group discussion, and whole-group discussion may adequately cater for students' subjective needs in intercultural learning and may, therefore, enhance these students' intercultural communicative competence.

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