

Enhancing Intercultural Awareness: Practical Applications in EFL Classrooms.

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Abstract	Article info
This research explores the awareness and integration of intercultural knowledge among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators in Algeria. Through a survey of 62 university instructors, the study reveals that while many are aware of intercultural awareness, there is a significant lack of formal training on how to apply it in the classroom. The findings highlight the need for professional development programs focused on intercultural competence. The study concludes by recommending comprehensive training modules and resources for teachers to create inclusive, culturally responsive teaching environments, ultimately improving the quality of language education.	Received 24 /11/2024 Accepted 29/04/2025 Keyword: ✓ Intercultural ✓ Awareness ✓ Practices

1. Introduction

English serves as the global lingua franca since it is utilized by nearly all countries around the globe. Even though it faces criticism as the language of linguistic imperialism, English has enjoyed widespread acceptance in foreign and additional language education for many years; it has been a mandatory subject in formal educational systems from primary through tertiary levels (Fenton-Smith, Humphreys, & Walkinshaw, 2017). This indicates that English is utilized in both Anglophone and non-Anglophone settings. The quantity of users and learners of English from countries where English is not the primary language surpasses that of those from countries where English is spoken natively (Galloway, 2017). This highlights the significance of English as a medium of intercultural communication among individuals from various nations whose first language is not English.

It is commonly accepted that language and culture are inextricably linked, as the application of language is socially connected to situational contexts (such as everyday conversations, personal discussions, and professional or academic environments) and cultural contexts (including ideas, perspectives, values, social practices, and artifacts). In essence, both situational and cultural factors influence how individuals utilize language across various communicative contexts (Halliday, 1978). Therefore, possessing intercultural competence is essential for

effective communication in English, instructors should incorporate

cultural elements into their curriculum materials (for instance, syllabi and textbooks) and teaching activities (Reni & Handoyo, 2018).

Although studies have stated that intercultural understanding plays an essential role in language education globally, little is known regarding its integration and effect on a specific context like Algeria. This study is therefore exploratory in that it looks at the state of intercultural awareness amongst EFL educators in Algeria, including their understanding of such a concept as well as where and how they are implementing related teaching strategies. It also discusses some potential impediments to intercultural communication faced by Algerian English teachers and what impact these factors have on student learning outcomes. Thus, the following study questions exist:

- 1.What is the level of familiarity and understanding of intercultural awareness among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Algeria?
- 2.What are the current practices of EFL teachers in Algeria regarding the incorporation of intercultural awareness into their teaching?
- 3.What challenges do EFL teachers in Algeria face when incorporating intercultural awareness into their teaching, and what kind of support and resources do they need?

By pinpointing the particular challenges encountered by Algerian educators and identifying the resources they find most beneficial, this study intends to offer tailored recommendations for enhancing support systems and materials. Furthermore, understanding how teachers currently weave intercultural awareness into their practices and its perceived effects on students will yield valuable insights regarding the efficacy of these methods and uncover opportunities for improvement.

2. Literature Review

Culture represents a remarkably intricate phenomenon. Kramsch (1998) characterizes culture as a membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings (p. 10). The connection between language and culture is both inseparable and mutually supportive. Mitchell and Myles (2004) assert that language and culture are not separate, but are acquired together, with each providing support for the development of the other (p. 235). The significance of the language-culture relationship emerges in language learning, as “the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool” (Bennett, Bennett & Allen, 2003, p. 237), as referenced in (Ho, 2009).

Intercultural language learning has emerged as a crucial aspect of language education. This has arisen from an acknowledgement and understanding of the links between language and culture as well as an understanding of how communication works across cultures (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000, p. 1) in (Ho, 2009). Ting-Toomy (1999) as cited in Schoeffel (2007) categorized the vital elements of intercultural communication into four categories, which are: (1) Two individuals

or two groups of individuals (2) originating from different cultures (with varied definitions of culture) (3) engaging in interactions (4) and negotiating meanings, as cited in (Boontharika & Atipat, 2018).

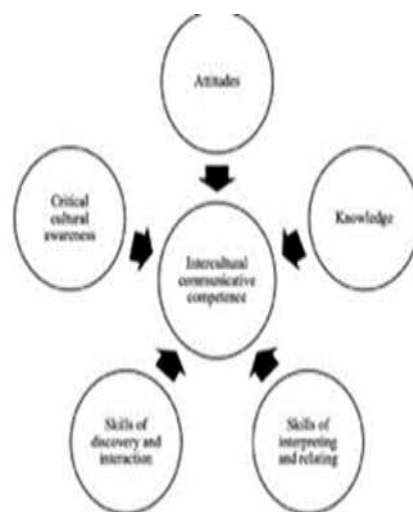
The most effective method for enhancing cultural awareness is Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC), as indicated by (Bapir, Abbas, & Rashid, 2024). In EFL classrooms, the majority of teachers' view ICC as the capacity to communicate successfully and appropriately with individuals from diverse cultures, as well as the awareness of cultural diversity. The desired outcomes, skills, knowledge, and necessary attitudes toward cultural differences are the elements of ICC that educators generally concentrate on. However, teachers hold varying perceptions of culture, leading to slightly different interpretations of ICC. The strategies predominantly employed by teachers to foster ICC include sharing personal anecdotes, encouraging students to read and engage in discussions, and facilitating role-play activities. According to the teachers, role-play is considered the most effective approach for promoting ICC (Boontharika & Atipat, 2018).

According to (Bapir, Abbas, & Rashid, 2024), Byram (1997) states that intercultural communicative competence is the capability of understanding shared by individuals of varying social identities to interact with others as multifaceted beings possessing their own uniqueness and multiple identities. Intercultural communicative competence comprises five essential elements: knowledge, attitude, skills for interpreting and relating, skills for discovery and interaction, and critical intercultural awareness (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). Chen and Starosta

(1998: p. 28) assert that intercultural competence is the ability to perform communication behaviors effectively and appropriately to produce the desired response in a specific context, which includes three interdependent dimensions: cognitive for fostering intercultural awareness, affective for nurturing intercultural sensitivity, and behavioral for enhancing intercultural skillfulness (Chen and Starosta, 1996; Gong et al., 2018). Fantini (2000: p.5) contends that intercultural competence comprises four dimensions: knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness.

As cited in (Bapir, Abbas, & Rashid, 2024), recognizing the importance of implementing ICC in foreign language classrooms, Byram (1997) developed a model of ICC, which was subsequently revised in 2020, featuring five "saviors." This model is widely utilized in foreign language education, enhancing both students' and teachers' understanding of the importance of valuing and fostering awareness of the differences and similarities between their own culture and others. Additionally, it underscores the inextricable link between language and culture. The essential elements, or "savoirs," of the model are illustrated in Figure 1.

Fig.1. Saviors Model



Source: Byram, 1997

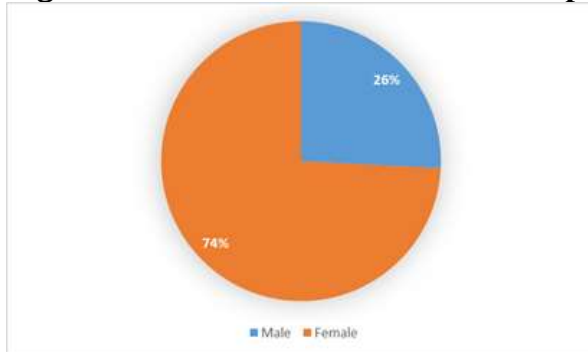
3.Sample of the Study

Random sampling is a crucial statistical method that involves choosing a representative subset from a larger population (Creswell, 2014). Every individual in the population is equally likely to be selected, which ensures impartial selection and reduces sampling errors (Thompson, 2012). Through the analysis of the sample data, researchers can make inferences and draw conclusions about the entire population, thereby improving the reliability and generalizability of research findings (Babbie, 2010).

The sample consists of 62 university instructors randomly chosen from various universities across Algeria. The researcher shared a survey within a Facebook group for university teachers, and 62 educators voluntarily participated in the research. Throughout the sampling process, the researcher took into account age and years of experience, with the goal of achieving a diverse representation of seasoned, intermediate, and novice educators, including adjunct, contractual, and permanent faculty. Of the participants, 46

(74%) were female, while 16 (26%) were male.

Fig.2. Gender Distribution in the Sample



Furthermore, as illustrated in Table 1, the teaching experience of the educators differs from one person to another; 12 (19%) possessed between 0 to 3 years of experience, 13 (21%) had between 4 to 7 years of experience, 26 (42%) had between 8 to 10 years of experience, whereas 11 (18%) had more than 11 years of experience.

Table 1. Teachers Years of Experience

Year of Experience	Number	%
0-3 years	12	19%
4-7 years	13	21%
8-10 years	26	42%
11 years or more	11	18%
Total	62	100%

These variations among the sample allowed for a wide range of perspectives to be gathered on competency-based formative assessment while presenting the primary themes in the analysis and discussion.

4. Data and Methods

The teacher bears the primary responsibility for imparting cultural knowledge and fostering students' intercultural awareness. Throughout this endeavor, teachers predominantly draw upon their convictions, methodologies, character, and prior experiences. Intercultural awareness is

essential in any language learning and acquisition process, significantly influencing students' effective communication in a specific language. This research explores teachers' methods in promoting learners' intercultural awareness within EFL classrooms, as well as the obstacles they encounter and the implications for improving cultural education and instruction.

A questionnaire featuring a blend of fourteen closed and open-ended questions was employed to gather descriptive and comparative data aimed at clarifying the methods used by tertiary level educators to enhance learners' cultural awareness in the EFL classroom.

The survey is structured into five distinct sections: the initial segment includes inquiries regarding teachers' personal information, their years of experience, and any prior teacher training they may have undergone. The second section explores teachers' comprehension of "intercultural awareness.". The third section focuses on the instructional practices teachers employ in the classroom to impart cultural knowledge. The fourth section primarily addresses the challenges perceived by teachers in integrating and fostering intercultural awareness, along with the support they believe would be most advantageous. The final section examines teachers' perceptions of the influence of intercultural awareness on improving students' English language acquisition.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were assessed using SPSS 20. Validity was established by analyzing teachers' responses in the questionnaire to compute the internal validity of the research instrument via the Pearson Correlation coefficient calculation. The resulting

validity coefficient of 0.77 was found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level, signifying a high validity coefficient for the instrument as demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Questionnaire's Internal Validity

	Correlation	Significance
Internal Validity of the tool	0.774	0.05*

***Significant at the $p = 0.05$ level**

Regarding the reliability coefficient, Cronbach's Alpha was employed for calculation. As displayed in Table 3, the reliability coefficient was notably high at 0.75, signifying a very high coefficient suitable for the study's objectives.

Table 3. Questionnaire's Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.75	14

5. Results and Discussion

This section will evaluate and interpret the findings derived from the administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of thirteen multiple choice questions along with one open-ended question.

Question 1: Have you received any formal training in incorporating intercultural awareness into your teaching?

According to the analysis illustrated in Table 4, it seems that a significant majority of teachers (90%) have not undergone training regarding the integration of intercultural awareness into their teaching practices, while 10% of the teachers reported having received such training previously. This suggests that in Algeria, many universities fail to provide essential training for educators prior to the start of their teaching responsibilities. Consequently, most teachers acquire their

knowledge of teaching, particularly in terms of intercultural awareness, through practical experience.

Table 4. Analysis of Question One

	Number	%
Yes	6	10%
No	56	90%
Total	62	100%

Question 2: How familiar are you with the concept of "intercultural awareness" in the context of language education?

As shown in Table 5, a substantial majority of teachers (89%) indicated that they are very well-acquainted with the notion of intercultural awareness within the realm of language education, while 11% stated that they are somewhat familiar with it. Notably, the responses for the categories of "not very familiar" and "not at all familiar" received no answers, resulting in a percentage of 0%. The analysis suggests that most EFL teachers in Algeria possess a strong familiarity with the concept of intercultural awareness.

Table 5. Analysis of Question Two

	Number	%
Very familiar	55	89%
Somewhat familiar	7	11%
Not very familiar	0	0%
Not at all familiar	0	0%
Total	62	100%

Question 3: In your opinion, which of the following is the most important aspect of intercultural awareness?

Table 6 reveals that every teacher, totaling 100%, asserts that "knowledge of different cultures" is the paramount aspect of intercultural awareness. Additionally, 62.9% of teachers believe that the "ability to communicate effectively across cultures" holds the greatest importance, while 38.7% of teachers consider "respect for cultural

diversity” as the most significant aspect of intercultural awareness.

Table 6. Analysis of Question Three

	Number	%
Knowledge of different cultures	62	100%
Respect for cultural diversity	24	38.7%
Ability to communicate effectively across cultures	39	62.9%

Question 4: Do you believe that promoting intercultural awareness is important in the EFL classroom?

As illustrated in Table 7, the response “strongly agree” garnered the highest percentage at 66%, while the response “agree” received 31%. The “Neutral” option had only 2 responses, accounting for 3%. The option of “Disagree” and “Never” gained the lowest percentage of 0%. This indicates that nearly all teachers recognize the importance of promoting intercultural awareness within the EFL classroom.

Table 7. Analysis of Question Four

	Number	%
Strongly Agree	41	66%
Agree	19	31%
Neutral	2	3%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	62	100%

Question 5: How often do you incorporate materials from different cultures into your lessons?

Table 8 indicates that 79% of teachers chose the response “often,” 15% selected

“sometimes,” 5% opted for “always,” and 2% indicated “rarely,” with no teachers selecting the option “never.” This suggests that the majority of university educators in Algeria frequently incorporate materials from various cultures into their lessons.

Table 8. Analysis of Question Five

	Number	%
Always	3	5%
Often	49	79%
Sometimes	9	15%
Rarely	1	2%
Never	0	0%
Total	62	100%

Question 06: Which of the following activities do you utilize to enhance intercultural awareness in your classroom? (Select all that apply)

As indicated by table 9, every teacher, accounting for 100%, employs “authentic materials (e.g., films, music, literature) from diverse cultures” as a means to foster intercultural awareness within the classroom. Additionally, 83.8% of the educators engage in “Projects involving research on various cultures,” while 58.06% incorporate “Role-playing scenarios centered on intercultural communication.” Furthermore, 22.5% of the teachers prefer “Discussions regarding cultural differences.” Lastly, 0% of the educators utilize “Guest speakers from different cultural backgrounds.” This illustrates that Algerian teachers predominantly rely on authentic materials, projects, and role-plays as effective tools to enhance intercultural awareness among their students.

Table 9. Analysis of Question Six

	Number	%
Discussions about cultural differences	14	22.5%
Projects	52	83.8%

involving research on different cultures		
Guest speakers from various cultural backgrounds	0	0%
Use of authentic materials (e.g., films, music, literature) from different cultures	62	100%
Role-playing scenarios involving intercultural communication	36	58.06%

Question 07: How frequently do you encourage students to share their individual cultural backgrounds and experiences during class?

As depicted in table 10, the option “Always” garnered a percentage of 63%, the option “Often” received 31%, the option “Sometimes” accounted for 6%, and finally, the options “Rarely” and “Never” both received a percentage of 0%. This suggests that the majority of Algerian teachers consistently motivate students to share their unique cultural backgrounds and experiences in class.

Table 10. Analysis of Question Seven

	Number	%
Always	39	63%
Often	19	31%
Sometimes	4	6%
Rarely	0	0%
Never	0	0%
Total	62	100%

Question 08: Do you modify your teaching methods to cater to students from various cultural backgrounds?

As revealed by table 11, the highest percentage (68%) corresponds to the answer “Sometimes,” followed by 27% favoring “Rarely,” and 5% for “Often.” The lowest percentage is 0% for the responses “Always” and “Never.” This implies that approximately half of the teachers occasionally adjust their teaching methods to accommodate students from diverse cultural backgrounds, whereas the other half do not.

Table 11. Analysis of Question Eight

	Number	%
Always	0	0%
Often	3	5%
Sometimes	42	68%
Rarely	17	27%
Never	0	0%
Total	62	100%

Question 09: What do you consider the most challenging aspect of integrating intercultural awareness into your teaching? (Select all that apply)

Table 12 indicates that 91.93% of the participants selected “Lack of resources,” while 74.19% pointed to “Lack of time.” The option “Resistance from the students” received a percentage of 45.16%, and the lowest percentage, at 25.80%, was for the option “Lack of support from the school's administration.” This implies that limitations in resources and time are viewed as significant barriers to cultural work or activities. Nearly half of the teachers recognize student resistance as a substantial challenge to integrate intercultural awareness, and while some may experience inadequate administrative support, it is not perceived as a major hindrance compared to the other issues.

Table 12. Analysis of Question Nine

	Number	%
Lack of time	46	74.19%
Lack of resources	57	91.93%
Lack of support from the school administration	16	25.80%
Resistance from students	28	45.16%

Question 10: What types of resources would be most beneficial for you in fostering intercultural awareness in your classroom? (Select all that apply)

Table 13 reveals that “access to authentic materials from various cultures” is overwhelmingly appreciated by all teachers (100%), emphasizing its vital role in intercultural education. “Opportunities for collaboration with educators from different cultures” are also highly valued, with 83.87% of participants recognizing this as a key necessity. “Workshops focused on professional development in intercultural communication and pedagogy” are deemed essential by 41.93% of respondents, indicating a moderate demand for structured training. Financial backing for intercultural initiatives, mentioned by 22.58%, ranks as the least prioritized, implying that while funding is advantageous, it is not as critical as having access to resources and collaborative opportunities. In summary, the focus is unmistakably on concrete materials and peer collaboration as fundamental elements for successful intercultural education.

Table 13. Analysis of Question Ten

	Number	%
Access to authentic materials from different cultures	62	100%

Professional development workshops on intercultural communication and teaching	26	41.93%
Collaboration opportunities with teachers from other cultures	52	83.87%
Financial support for intercultural activities and projects	14	22.58%

Question 11: Do you believe that your pre-service teacher education program sufficiently prepared you to promote intercultural awareness in the classroom?

As illustrated in table 14, a notable segment of respondents (50%) feels that their pre-service teacher education program only offered partial preparation for addressing intercultural awareness in the classroom. This indicates that even though certain facets of intercultural education were included, there are deficiencies that result in many educators feeling inadequately prepared. A smaller fraction of respondents, 19%, assert that their program provided adequate preparation, suggesting that only a few feel entirely ready to tackle intercultural challenges in their teaching. Meanwhile, 31% of respondents explicitly indicated that their program did not sufficiently prepare them, emphasizing a significant concern regarding the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education in this domain. This highlights a pressing need for enhancements in teacher education programs to better equip upcoming educators with the skills and

knowledge essential for nurturing intercultural awareness in their classrooms.

Table 14. Analysis of Question Eleven

	Number	%
Yes	12	19%
No	19	31%
Partially	31	50%
Total	62	100%

Question 12: To what degree do you believe that integrating intercultural awareness into your teaching positively influences students' language learning?

Table 15 demonstrates a strong agreement on the advantages of integrating intercultural awareness into teaching. A considerable majority of respondents (77%) assert that it has a "very positive impact" on students' language learning, underlining a clear acknowledgment of the importance of weaving intercultural elements into educational methodologies. Furthermore, 23% regard the impact as "somewhat positive," further reinforcing the idea that intercultural awareness plays a beneficial role in language acquisition. Remarkably, no respondents indicated "neutral," "somewhat negative," or "very negative" impacts, which signifies a unanimous belief in the overall positive influence of intercultural awareness on language learning.

Table 15. Analysis of Question Twelve

	Number	%
Very positive impact	48	77%
Somewhat positive impact	14	23%
Neutral	0	0%
Somewhat negative impact	0	0%

Very negative impact	0	0%
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Total	62	100%
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Question 13: Based on your observations, what is the typical response of students to activities and discussions focused on intercultural awareness?

Table 16 illustrates that a significant portion of teachers (56%) report that students react "somewhat positively" to such engagements, reflecting an overall appreciative stance towards these initiatives. Furthermore, 21% of teachers note that students respond "very positively," underscoring that a considerable number of students actively participate in and value intercultural activities. No teachers indicated that students reacted "somewhat negatively" or "very negatively," while only 23% observed a "neutral" response.

Table 16. Analysis of Question Thirteen

	Number	%
Very positively	13	21%
Somewhat positively	35	56%
Neutrally	14	23%
Somewhat negatively	0	0%
Very negatively	0	0%
Total	62	100%

6. Implications

The findings highlight a pressing need for extensive professional development in intercultural awareness for teachers in Algeria. Although most educators are quite familiar with the concept, a notable fraction has not undergone formal training, implying that they predominantly depend on practical experience. This absence of formal training may influence the depth and

uniformity with which intercultural awareness is incorporated into their instruction. The prevalent use of authentic materials, projects, and role-playing activities showcases a hands-on approach but also points to a potential deficit in formal, strategic training methodologies. Teachers' recognition of the significance of intercultural awareness aligns with their actual practices; however, obstacles such as resource shortages and time constraints continue to impede effective implementation.

7. Recommendations

- Educational institutions should emphasize the creation of structured training programs dedicated to intercultural awareness. This may encompass workshops, seminars, and collaborative initiatives with educators from various cultural backgrounds to enhance teachers' comprehension and practical application of intercultural concepts.
- Addressing the identified shortage of resources is essential. Providing access to a diverse array of authentic materials from multiple cultures can assist teachers in more effectively integrating intercultural components into their lessons. Moreover, prioritizing investment in resources that promote intercultural education should be considered.
- Teacher education programs must be updated to incorporate thorough training in intercultural awareness. Equipping new educators to adeptly navigate cultural diversity in their classrooms will foster a more inclusive and effective teaching atmosphere.
- Facilitating collaboration with international educators can yield valuable insights and resources. Schools and universities ought to nurture partnerships

and exchange programs to expose teachers to varied educational practices and cultural viewpoints.

- Finding strategies to ease the time constraints faced by teachers can enable more regular and effective integration of intercultural activities. This could involve modifying curricula to seamlessly incorporate intercultural elements or offering additional support to manage the demands of lesson planning.

8. CONCLUSION

The results emphasize the essential significance of intercultural awareness in improving language education and its beneficial influence on students' learning experiences. Nevertheless, the disparity between acknowledging its significance and actual practice indicates a necessity for systemic enhancements in teacher training and resource allocation. By tackling the recognized obstacles and committing to focused professional development, educational institutions in Algeria can better prepare their educators to cultivate a more inclusive and culturally attuned learning atmosphere. These initiatives will not only assist teachers in their professional advancement but also enrich students' language learning encounters by weaving diverse cultural viewpoints into the classroom. Future investigations might concentrate on several pivotal areas to deepen our comprehension of intercultural awareness in language education. Examining the effectiveness of various professional development initiatives designed for intercultural competence could uncover how different training modules influence teaching methodologies and student results. Long-term studies would shed light on the sustained impacts of integrating intercultural awareness on both

educators and students. Comparative analyses across diverse institutions or regions with differing levels of intercultural training could illuminate successful strategies and improvement opportunities. Delving into students' views on intercultural activities and evaluating the specific resource requirements of teachers could yield valuable insights for improving instructional methods. Furthermore, research into the effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches, the caliber of culturally diverse teaching resources, and the influence of administrative backing could further clarify optimal practices.

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