Assessing Iraqi Post-graduate EFL Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence

A B S T R A C T

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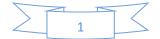** Corresponding author: E-mail* :
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The current research attempts to investigate Iraqi post-graduate EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Four questions are asked in correspondence with Byram's (1997) four basic factors of (ICC); namely, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness. To answer these questions, a self-reported questionnaire is conducted. The questionnaire is part of Fantini's (2012) model for assessing ICC. It consists of 40 items;10 for each component. The responses are scored according to a numerical scale from 1-5;1 is not at all, 5 is extremely high. The scores are statistically treated using the T-test for one sample formula. The participants are 34 MA EFL learners in the Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul. The responses for each part and the total scores are statistically treated to test whether the differences between the mean scores of the students and the hypothetical test value are significant or not. The results reveal insignificant differences for each part as well as the total scores of the questionnaire. The insignificance indicates a deficiency in each component in addition to a general intercultural communicative incompetency.

تقويم كفاءة تعدد الثقافات لدى طلبة الدراسات العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية

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الخلاصة:

يهدف البحث الى تقويم كفاءة تعدد الثقافات لدى طلبة الماجستير في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية. صيغت أربعة أسئلة حسب أنموذج بايرم المتكون من أربعة مجالات ، وهي المعرفة والتوجهات والمهارات والدراية. اعتمد البحث على الاستبانة التي صاغها فانتيني لقياس هذه الكفاءة. شارك ٣٤ طالبا في التجربة. تحتوي الاستبانة على أربعين سؤالا، عشرة أسئلة لكل مجال. أما الإجابة فمكونة من مقياس رقمي من ١-٥ حيث يمثل الرقم ٥ اعلى مستوى. تم معالجة الإجابات إحصائيا وتبين عدم وجود فرق ذي دلالة إحصائية لكل مجال على حدة إضافة الى مجموع درجات الاستبانة ككل.

troduction:

In today's world, different languages and different cultures may interact at any moment. The efficiency of communication and interaction is no longer measured in terms of accuracy or even contextualized appropriacy. For the cross-cultural interaction of today's reality, communicative competence is dramatically insufficient unless it is broadened to include the various dimensions of cultural awareness. An awareness that is crucial for constructing a relationship of acceptance and common grounds among various and different backgrounds. The world is changing rapidly and the need to appreciate aspects of diversity is growing. Developing skills of adaptation and adjustment to sustain the cross-cultural relationships is the new era in language teaching and learning. Such skills are not only necessary for crossing cultural and educational borders, but they are invaluable for appreciating one's own culture. Culture, in its broad notion, should take its full capacity and significance within language learning and teaching as it is the environment in which languages grow and prosper. It is from the womb of such reflections and observations, the notion of intercultural communicative competency has been materialized.

Statement of the problem:

Under globalization, the world is indeed turned into a small village. Consequently, cross-cultural issues are evident in today's interactions and cultural clashes are inevitable. Yet, the cultural impact on language learning is not only underrated in Iraqi EFL settings, I might say, it is totally neglected. Throughout my 12 years of teaching EFL at the College of Education for Humanities, Department of English, I noticed that there is no integration of cultural-related practices whatsoever whether in curricula design or even in teacher's activities. In terms of *competencies*, EFL learning and teaching at college-level in Iraq is still hovering in the domain of linguistics competence, although it claims otherwise. The educational long-terms aims of EFL curricula in Iraq are set to produce communicatively competent outcomes hypothetically. Never the less, these aims are far from being achieved. In the authors' opinion, the neglect of culture is one of the major reasons leading to this failure.

Aims of the research:

The current research aims at assessing Iraqi post-graduate EFL Learners' intercultural communicative competence (hereafter ICC) in terms of the following questions which are asked in accordance with Byram's model (1997) of ICC that are related to cross-cultural issues and communication:

1. How much knowledge do our post-graduate learners have about ethnocentric aspects and cross-cultural issues?
2. What are their general attitudes towards other cultures, especially those of English-speaking countries?
3. Are they equipped with sufficient skills to interact appropriately with other cultures?

4. Are they aware of the cross-cultural issues like attitudes, their own social identities, and ethnocentric aspects?

The Concept of culture?

To comprehend and grasp the meaning of the term culture is of crucial significance. A common sense of this concept involves defining it in terms of its common ingredients. Teachers and learners along would define culture in terms of geography, literature heritage, politics, history, and arts. Despite how common and logical this interpretation is, it is rather general, confusing, and misleading as far as language teaching and learning are concerned.

> *"Although these subjects are all extremely important ingredients, it seems that there are other equally significant components of culture that should find their way into second and foreign language classrooms"* (Lazar, 2007:7).

These other dimensions, as Bennett (1998) claims, include "elements that are perhaps less visible and less tangible and have no traditional subjects assigned to them in schools". Therefore, a distinction should be made between *civilization* (which is defined in terms of geography, literature heritage, politics, history, and arts) and *culture* (which has more subtle dimensions within its boundaries). Levine and Adelman (1993: 43) compare the concept of culture to the structure of icebergs whereas the visible tip comprises the obvious elements of *civilization* and the larger invisible part comprises much more difficult-to-see elements such as communication style, beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, etc.

Culture in language teaching:

According to the above, culture, within its broad realization, should be taken into consideration when it comes to language communicative competency. Many scholars reject the narrow view of culture that restricts it to the traditional list of *compulsory items*. In other words, they define culture in terms of more than just the mere civilization of the target culture/s. For instance, Hofstede (1994) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p:5); "culture is an inherited wealth in which we share memories, metaphors, maxims and myths" (Bowers, 1992); "socially acquired knowledge is organized in culture-specific ways which normally frame our perception of reality such that we largely define the world through the filter of our world view" (Alptekin, 1993,:p136) and finally, "a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting" (Kramsch,1998,p:10). In this sense, culture in language education should be perceived as a "collective noun referring to both facts about civilization and information about beliefs, customs, social practices, values and behavior" (Lazar2007:7). Moreover, it is of great importance for

language teaching to present culture as a dynamic organism rather than a static and rigid set of principles in any particular country.

> *One of the defining characteristics of a social group is the shared world which its members accept, and they in turn are accepted as members because they subscribe to the beliefs, behaviours and meanings of that shared world. This is however not a static condition. (Byram, 1997:17)*

Finally, a distinction should be made between inter-vs-intra-culture. "The FL learner needs a particular kind of socio-cultural competence in addition to what they may have already acquired in their own country and language community" (ibid: 42).

Intercultural communicative competency (ICC):

Hymes's critique of Chomsky's linguistic competency yielded the notion of communicative competency which opposes the abstract nature of linguistic competence and asserting the fact that performance is socially-situated. A communicative era followed inducing a plethora of scientific quests in search for communicative competency. Although Hymes recognizes the social impact on communication. The efficiency of any interaction should not be only be measured in terms of successful exchange of information but in terms of establishing and maintenance of human relationships. He points out a deficiency of neglecting the socio-cultural property of an utterance which he refers to as the "appropriateness" to any given context. Never the less, he did not pay particular attention to the cross-cultural communication setting simply because he was not concerned with pedagogy (Byram, 1997:32). ICC is perceived by many as an extension of communicative competence. For instance, listed components of communicative competence would include linguistic, discourse, strategic, and sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Two more components were added later; namely, socio-cultural competence as the capacity to function within other cultures, and social competence, as being familiar with the similarities and differences within social customs, empathy, and motivation to interact with different cultures (Van Ek,1986). However, efficient language teaching and learning in today's world should be perceived in terms of efficient ICC. in other words, equipping the learners with sufficient tools by which they can develop a critical conceptualization of their own culture and society as well as those of others. A shared world is what distinguishes one social group from any other and it is accepted by its members. Consequently, those members are accepted in turn as they "subscribe to the beliefs, behaviors, and meanings of that shared world" (Byram, 1997:17).

So, what is meant by ICC? Beneke (2000:108) argues that ICC "is to a large extent the ability to cope with one's own cultural background in interaction with others". In any given cross-culture interaction, the participants would definitely
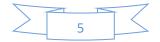
engage their own unique set of values, behaviors, … etc., and even a different set of linguistic codes. ICC would show as the capacity to succeed in this interaction properly and appropriately. In this sense, ICC can be perceived as "the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts" (Bennett & Bennett,2004:9). Chen and Starosta (1999) view ICC as "the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other's cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment" (p. 28).

Rationale for Enhancing ICC

Why teaching, developing, and enhancing ICC to EFL learners? A simple, and comprehensive answer would be "communication is never culture-free". Hennebry (2014) states that "it has been argued that culture is the marginalized sister of language" (p. 135). Bennett (1998) summarizes the role of culture in language learning in an amusing yet elegant statement "to avoid becoming *a fluent fool*, we need to understand more completely the cultural dimension of language" (p:16). I cannot even imagine a language learning process without cultural foundations. We can find cases where the sole purpose of learning a foreign language is to explore the culture of the target language countries. Moreover, the necessity for ICC also rises as an attempt against stereotyping and prejudice towards other cultures. In a world governed and controlled by media, many cultures have been subjected to fact distortion. The ability to use language to explore cultures and establishing cultural common ground is what ICC is about.

Components of ICC:

It is of significant importance for pedagogical purposes to understand the constituents of ICC. Language teachers should be aware of these components as they plan their intercultural communicative activities, materials, and plans. Many attempts have been made to crystalize the notion of ICC in terms of its constituents and accordingly in terms of pedagogical objectives. I chose the model suggested by Byram (1997) as it is the most popular and it appeals to me as concise, clear, and easy to establish a program for the development of ICC. Moreover, as he argues for his model, Byram introduced the concept of the *intercultural speaker*. This term describes interlocutors engaged in an intercultural communicative interaction. He argues, first, in any intercultural communication, the participants bring their knowledge of the target culture whether the amount of this knowledge is substantial or even minimal. Hence, "we cannot describe such an interaction as if there were two 'native-speakers' of the language involved, one of whom is a true native and the other attempting to be so". Second, those participants have different social identities. Consequently, they would follow a different kind of participation than that they follow when interacting with their countrymen who use the same language (ibid: p 32).

Therefore, using the term of the *intercultural speaker* provides the opportunity for this model to be applicable in any context no matter what the target culture is. Obviously, this would suit the needs of foreign language learning settings in general and EFL settings in particular.

The crucial components of ICC can be acquired "through experience and reflection, without the intervention of teachers and educational institutions" (ibid: p33). Yet, the integration of ICC within the philosophy of political education is of an undeniable necessity. Byram proposes four basic factors of ICC, one of them (skills) is divided into two. I will try to account for them as well as the objective related to each in brief as follows:

A. Attitudes (*savoir être*):

Byram describes attitudes as the "pre-condition for successful intercultural interaction". Whether we like it or not, people have attitudes towards others who are perceived as different from their own culture (social values, behaviors, beliefs, etc.). The dominant features of these attitudes are usually stereotyping and prejudice. Subsequently, would hinder the success of any interaction. For efficient interaction, the attitudes should be those of "curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs and behaviors". Besides, the willingness to "suspend belief in one's own meanings and behavior's, and to analyze them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (Byram et al, 1994:20-24).

Objectives
For a learner to develop ICC, he should be:
1- Willing to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality.
2- Interested in exploring different interpretations of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena whether in one's own culture or in that of others.
3- Willing to question his own values, cultural practices, products, and, presuppositions.
4- Ready to experience the various levels of adaptation in the process of interacting with different cultures.
5- Ready to engage the conventions and customs of verbal and non-verbal communications and interactions.

B. knowledge (*savoir*):

As an interaction takes place, interlocutors bring in two kinds of knowledge; social and procedural knowledge. The presence of social knowledge is inevitable whether it is of one's own culture or the interlocuter's no matter how refined this knowledge is. Acquiring social knowledge occurs within the process of socialization. Byram refers to the process of socialization resulting in knowledge of one's own culture as the primary socialization (with family and society); whereas the one resulting in knowledge of other's cultures is the secondary socialization (formal educational settings). The nature of social knowledge is abstract and therefore, insufficient. The conceptualizations about

the processes of interaction are essential. Participants should be aware of the mechanism of interacting and acting in particular contexts "procedural knowledge".

Objectives

For a learner to develop ICC, he should be attentive of:

1. The past and present mutual affairs and the relationship between his own and the interlocutor's country.
2. The suitable means to achieve contact with others "at a distance or in proximity" such as agencies or institutes that facilitate and provide solutions for problems that might hinder such contact.
3. The issues that can cause any misunderstanding among participants of different cultural backgrounds and origins.
4. The national events and symbolism that are identified as elements and markers of national identity such as sites of significance, myths, cultural products … etc. as well as how these markers are perceived from other country's viewpoints.
5. The perceptive of his own country towards the above-stated markers of the national identities of other's countries.
6. The national regional identity and language varieties related to geographical boundaries as well as landmarks of significance in his own region and how these are perceived by others.
7. The perception of his own country towards the above stated regional identities and language varieties related to geographical boundaries as well as landmarks of significance.
8. The process of primary socialization and the organizations responsible for shaping the national identity of his own country such as the education systems and religious institutes.
9. The social distinctive markers of his own and other societies such as religion, social classes, gender as well as the phenomena that make such markers *visible* such as food, clothing, accents that are socially associated, and so on.
10. The institutions in his own country and those of others that have a direct impact on daily life such as educational, health, financial, and media.
11. The mechanism of social interaction in his own country and those of others such as verbal and non-verbal behaviors of interaction, levels of formality, conventions, and, taboo, and so on.

C. Skills to interpret and relate (*savoir s'engager*):

Byram identifies four skills necessary to develop ICC; skills to interpret and relate (*savoir s'engager*) and skills to discover and interact (*savoir apprendre*). He uses the term document, in its widest sense, to explain the first two skills. He argues that the skill of interpretation means the ability to figure out the connotations of any document from another country that the learners come

across. The skill is based upon the knowledge that is acquired through formal or informal means. Never the less, this knowledge is consciously applied in interpretation. The interpretation of a document from the learner's own environment is usually based on a taken-for-granted knowledge. This kind of knowledge may obscure the connotations and ethnocentric values and would make it difficult to access for people from other countries. Therefore, for someone to interpret a document for another from a different country requires the ability to identify relationships between documents from the latter's country. The ability or the skill to relate, again, necessitates knowledge of both societies which allows dealing with contradictions for solving them or even to identify them in the first place.

Objectives

For a learner to develop ICC, he should have the skills to interpret and relate to allow:

1. Identifying the ethnocentric aspects of a certain culture and analyzing their origins and resources. These aspects are usually implicit and presupposed.
2. Identifying domains that may cause misunderstanding and dysfunction within an interaction. Such as the concepts that seem similar yet they have different connotations and the responses to *unfamiliar* interactional functions or paralinguistic interactional phenomena.
3. Explaining sources of misunderstanding and dysfunction so that it would be accessible for others through identifying common grounds between conflicting interpretations of certain phenomena

D. Skills to discover and interact (*savoir apprendre*):

When the learner has no, or limited knowledge, the skill of discovery comes into action. It involves understanding constructing particular knowledge about ethnocentric aspects that are inherent in particular phenomena. "The skill of discovery is the ability to recognize significant phenomena in a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations, and their relationship to other phenomena" (Byram, 1997:37); whether in a document or interaction. Yet, the process of discovery within interaction might add some restrictions such as mutual perceptions and attitudes. In such cases, the skill of interaction is activated to overcome these restrictions. "The skill of interaction is above all the ability to manage these constraints in particular circumstances with specific interlocutors" (ibid). The ability to manage such constraints requires a certain set of sub-skills such as managing dysfunctions, sustaining sensitivity towards others who might be extremely of different origins and identities, establishing relationships between their own and other's identities, and, mediating between others. Hence, the skills of discovery and interaction can be defined as follows:

> *"ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction"* (Byram,1997:38)
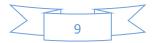
Objectives

For a learner to develop ICC, he should have the skills to discover and interact to allow:

1- Using certain means to elicit the interlocuter's concepts and values concerning a certain event; then applying the elicited information to other events or documents. Such means would include varieties of questioning techniques, consulting other informants, consulting related literature, applying logical relations; for instance, cause and effect or consequence of conditions. The main idea is to extract the interlocutors' connotations and presuppositions about a certain phenomenon, then generalize them to other phenomena and signify the relationships between them.

2- Identifying implicit connotations and shared values within, and/or, across cultures to establish similarities and differences between them.

3- Identifying conventions of the process of interaction to construct a common procedure as a combination of different cultures as he draws upon his knowledge of verbal and non-verbal interaction.

4- Estimating the level of familiarity of his own culture to that of others. Are they closely related? Do they share the same language? Drawing upon this knowledge, he would activate skills of relating, interpreting, interacting, and discovering to guarantee a successful exchange of meaning.

5- Identifying the historical relationship between his own culture and that of others relying on reference books, experts, and even layman information.

6- Identifying the institutions that facilitate and maintain contact whether private or public institutes and organizations.

7- Estimating the extent of interactional dysfunctions in a given situation and taking the suitable measures and interventions that keep the interaction intact and satisfactory for all interlocutors.

E. Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*)

The critical evaluation of one's own cultural practices and products, and those of others, involves a critical cultural awareness. Not only this awareness is crucial for improving communication efficiency, it is of great significance in illustrating ones' ideology when engaging with others. We just need to keep in mind that this ideological awareness is not necessarily conflicted free. *"Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate, critically and on basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries"* (Byram,1997:108).

Objectives

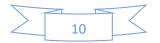For a learner to develop ICC, he should develop critical cultural awareness that helps him:

1- Identifying and interpreting values and connotation whether implicit or explicit through applying some analytical approaches to place the even or document in its context.
2- Analyze events and documents that are related to specific standards and be aware of his own ideological values.
3- Be aware of potential conflicts so that he can meditate in intercultural interactions and negotiating to a degree of acceptance.

Data collection:

As stated earlier, the questions asked in this research are in accordance with Byram's model for ICC. In other words, the questions correspond to the four basic components of ICC as suggested by Byram (1997). For eliciting data, a self-reported questionnaire (appendix 1) is applied to get deeper insights into Iraqi post-graduate learners' ICC. The questionnaire is a part of Fantini's model for assessing ICC (Fantini, 2012). There have been some slight modifications within the questionnaire to suit the needs of the current research. The questionnaire is of two major parts. The first one is a quick background check, while the second comprises four sub-categories in correspondence to the four basic factors of ICC. The total items are 40 Likert-scale; closed-item questions;10 for each category. For the sake of rating, a numerical scale from 1-5 is used; 1 is not at all, 5 is extremely high. The questionnaire is conducted online using Google forms. The total number of the participants is 34, who are current first-term MA students in the Department of English. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic situation, MA students are attending classes physically. This offered a face-to-face opportunity for providing instructions concerning the questionnaire and how to respond to its items. It is worth mentioning that in assessing ICC, language proficiency assessment usually takes place along with the four basic earlier stated factors of ICC. The current study sample is considered the most advanced level of language learners; hence, proficiency assessment is not accounted for.

Results and discussion:

The level of the sample's homogeneity (in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, native language, and, other languages) is tested through the first part of the questionnaire (background check). Responses to the background check items reveal that the age of the participants ranges from 24 to 35 with one exception of 44. As for gender, 73.5% of the participants are females while the rest (26.5) are males. Out of the 34 participants, one is Assyrian, one is Kurdish, and, one is Turkman; while the rest of them are of Arabic ethnicity. Accordingly, the native languages of those three are Assyriac, Kurdish, and Turkish successively.
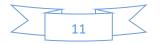
Of course, all participants speak Arabic as a first or second language in addition to English as a foreign language. The cultural fabric of the City of Mosul is famous for its diversity. Different ethnic groups had co-existed for hundreds of years. A shared cultural platform amongst Arabs, Kurds, Shabak, Turkmen, Yezidis, and Assyrians is the logo of Mosul. No other city in Iraq has this opportunity for culturally diverse yet harmonic interaction. These varieties of cultural backgrounds are of great value to this study as the concept of cross-culture interaction is not totally new to our students. In other words, they are aware of such cross-cultural issues. Moreover, despite such harmonic co-existence, among those ethnicities, ethnocentric aspects such as identities, cultural heritage, customs, history, costumes, food, etc. are well preserved.

Statical means have been applied to analyze the results obtained from the self-reported questionnaire conducted in this study. As mentioned earlier, a numerical scale from 1-5 is used; 1 is not at all, 5 is extremely high to rate the participants' responses. The collected data are analyzed using a one-sample T-test. The mean scores have been calculated and compared to the hypothetical mean value of each component of ICC to investigate if there is a statistically significant difference. Then the total mean score of the four components is calculated and statistically treated to check for ICC in general. It is worth mentioning that the treatment is conducted under 33 degrees of freedom and a 0.05 level of significance. The below table shows the results of the total statistical treatment in addition to the treatment for each part of the questionnaire.

The mean and standard deviation of students' responses

Items	N	mean	S.D.	Test value	T cal.	T tab.	Sig.
Total		119.6471	14.42826	120	0.143		0.887
Knowledge	34	30.2941	4.73241	30	0.362	2.035	0.719
Attitudes		31.1765	7.33803	30	0.935		0.357
Skills		28.5000	4.69203	30	1.864		0.071
Awareness		29.6765	4.88486	30	0.386		0.702

The table shows, for each part of the questionnaire; knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness, that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of students' responses and the test hypothetical value since the value of the T tabulated is higher than that of the T calculated.

It is mentioned earlier that the questions of this study are asked in response to the four basic factors of Byram's model of ICC. The statistical treatment provides insights to students' self-evaluated capacity concerning each of these factors and consequently, provides answers to the research questions as follows.

Question One:

> How much knowledge do our post-graduate learners have about ethnocentric aspects and cross-cultural issues?

The statistical insignificance reveals that our post-graduate students have limited knowledge of culture, cultural issues, and ethnocentric aspects.

Question Two:

> What are their general attitudes towards other cultures, especially those of English-speaking countries?

The insignificant statistical difference shows that our post-graduate students have poor general attitudes towards interacting with other cultures especially those of English-speaking countries. Positive attitudes are of crucial importance in motivating students to explore the culture and appreciate its aspects, significance, and impact on their learning.

Question Three:

> Are they equipped with sufficient skills to interact appropriately with other cultures?

Byram classifies the skills required skills for developing ICC into two parts; each of two related skills; namely, interpret and relate, discover, and interact. The questionnaire items in this part attempt to investigate students' capacity regarding these skills. Again, students' responses show a general lack of their abilities and skills.

Question Four:

> Are they aware of the cross-cultural issues like attitudes, their own social identities, and ethnocentric aspects?

Unexpectedly, the results show a lack of awareness of cultural aspects such as social identities and ethnocentric aspects. Being members of such a diverse community of the city of Mosul is expected to provide the students with an awareness of general outlines for cross-cultural issues. Obviously, the students' responses are provided in terms of the English-speaking countries' cultures.

Finally, the total insignificant statistical difference regarding the whole four basic factors suggests that our students lack competence as far as intercultural

communicative competency is concerned despite being the advanced level of learners as MA students.

General remarks:

The general deficiency in ICC is anticipated yet shocking. The lack of interest in culture is obvious in our curricula and teaching activities. The results of the current research had an impact on me. Therefore, I took a two-hour class with our MA students. The theme was language and culture. I prepared some discussion questions about culture and cross-cultural issues in terms of cultural domains such as history, holidays, traditions, politics, myths…etc. A simple 101 question about the geography of the UK and what does it consist of had very wrong and contradicted answers. A comprehensive and sophisticated definition of the term "culture" was like mission impossible. I realize now, more than ever, the necessity of raising cultural awareness in our students. Ethnocentric aspects should be the center of language teaching especially in teaching conversation for instance. Raising teachers' awareness is a must. Integrating cross-cultural activities in our teaching methods and syllabi are crucial and urgent. "The intercultural experience tends to be described as an uncomfortable one, requiring the revision of beliefs, concepts, and attitudes that one has hitherto taken for granted. The process includes changes in attitudes, beliefs, identity, and values" (Berry et al., 1992).

Therefore, it is the teachers' responsibility to endorse raising awareness of cross-cultural issues and ethnocentric aspects that underly language learning. Moreover, they have a duty to encourage language learners to become "cultural observers" and "cultural analysts" and open the doors for them to explore and discover the domains of culture themselves. Another important issue is related to the choice of materials. Materials should be selected and prepared in advance.

Teachers should evaluate, process, and, relate these materials. The use of authentic materials is advised. Chunks of songs, scenes from movies or series, TV shows, news and newspapers and, and such are socially and culturally loaded. The next step would be constructing language activities that are culturally based. Teachers may consult references in designing activities that show ethnocentric aspects of a given community. Culture should be integrated into all aspects of language teaching and learning. Finally, teaching culture and ICC pre-assumes teachers' training.
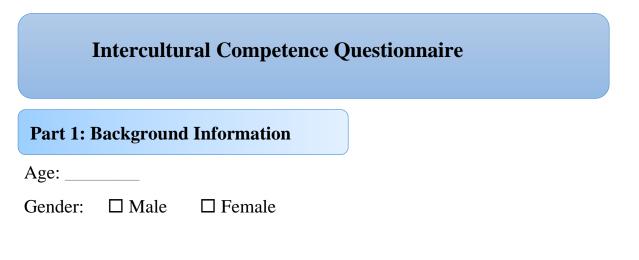
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Appendix One

Intercultural Competence Questionnaire

Part 1: Background Information

Age: _____

Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female

Nationality: _____

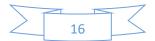Native language: _____

Other languages: _____

_____

Part 2: The Questionnaire

Directions: Please respond to the items in each of the four categories below (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Awareness) using the scale from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent)

Knowledge

NO.		1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Very Good)	5 (Excellent)
1	I can give a definition of culture.					
2	I know the essential norms and taboos of different cultures (e.g. greetings, dress, behaviors, etc.).					
3	I can contrast important aspects of different cultures with my own.					
4	I recognize signs of culture stress and know some strategies to overcome it.					
5	I know some techniques to support my learning of other languages and cultures.					
6	I can contrast my own behaviors with those of the people of other languages in important areas (e.g. social interaction, basic routines, time orientation, etc.)					
7	I can name important historical and socio-political factors that shape my own culture.					
8	I can name important historical and socio-political factors that shape other cultures.					
9	I can name various learning processes and strategies for learning about and adapting to other cultures.					
10	I can describe how people interact in social and professional areas (e.g. family roles, teamwork, problem-solving, etc.) in different cultures.					

Attitudes

NO.		1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Very Good)	5 (Excellent)
11	I am willing to Interact with members from different cultures.					
12	When I am in another country, I feel like learning from my hosts their language and culture.					
13	While in a different country, I try to communicate in their native language and behave appropriately as it is perceived by them.					
14	I show that I can deal with my emotions and frustration with other cultures.					
15	I show interest in new cultural aspects (e.g. to understand the values, history, traditions, etc.)					
16	I try to understand the differences in the behaviors, values, attitudes, and styles of members from different cultures.					
17	I am willing to adapt my behavior to communicate appropriately in another country (e.g. in non-verbal and other behavioral areas, as needed for different situations)					
18	When talking to people in other countries, I show that I can deal with different ways of perceiving, expressing, interacting, and behaving.					
19	When I am abroad, I interact in different ways, even when quite different from those to which I am accustomed					
20	I suspend judgment and appreciate the complexities of communicating and interacting interculturally					

Skills

NO.		1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Very Good)	5 (Excellent)
21	I can show flexibility when interacting with people from other cultures.					
22	I can adjust my behavior, dress, etc., as appropriate, to					

NO.		1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Very Good)	5 (Excellent)
	avoid offending people in other cultures.					
23	I am able to contrast other cultures with my own.					
24	I use strategies for learning the target language and about the target culture.					
25	I demonstrate a capacity to interact appropriately in a variety of different social situations when in another culture.					
26	I can use appropriate strategies for adapting to other cultures and reducing stress.					
27	When I am staying in a different country, I can monitor my behavior and its impact on my hosts.					
28	I can use culture-specific information to improve my interaction with my hosts.					
29	I can resolve cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings when they arise.					
30	I can use appropriate strategies for adapting to my own culture after returning home from a foreign country					

Awareness

NO.		1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Very Good)	5 (Excellent)
31	I am aware that there are differences and similarities between other cultures and my own.					
32	I realize that I need to control my negative reactions toward these differences between other cultures and my own (e.g. fear, disgust, superiority, etc.)					
33	I understand how different situations in the host culture require modifying my interactions with others.					
34	I realize the importance of knowing how members from other cultures view me and why.					
35	I recognize responses by different culture members to my own social identity (e.g. race, class, gender, age,					

	etc.)					
36	I understand the importance of diversity in the host culture (such as differences in race, class, gender, age, ability, etc.)					
37	I am aware of the danger of generalizing individual behaviors as representative of the whole culture.					
38	I realize my hosts' reactions to me that reflect their cultural values.					
39	I am aware of my own level of intercultural development.					
40	I recognize the factors that influence my intercultural development.					