الكفاءة التواصلية اثناء التداخل الثقافي لدى المتعلمين العراقيين الدارسين للّغة الانكليزية بوصفها لغة اجنبية: بين تقييم الذات والواقع

Intercultural Communicative Competence of Iraqi EFL Learners: between Self-Assessment and Reality

مودة حسين الحسيني
مدرس مساعد
جامعة الحمدانية– كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية – قسم اللغة الانكليزية
د. عمر علي ألياس
أستاذ مساعد
جامعة الموصل– كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية– قسم اللغة الانكليزية

Mawaddah H. Al-Husseiny
Assistant lecturer
University of Al-Hamdaniya
College of Education for Humanities- Department of English
Dr. Omar A. Ilyas
Assistant professor
University of Mosul
College of Education for Humanities
Department of English

Mawaddah.eh70@student.uomosul.edu.iq
omarillyass@uomosul.edu.iq

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Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence ، Language and Culture، Cultural Dimension ،Intercultural Flexibility ،Cultural Awareness

الملخص

تتقصى الدارسة الحالية مستوى الكفاءة التواصلية اثناء التداخل الثقافي لطلبة الجامعة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الانكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية وذلك باستخدام أدوات تقييم ذاتية واخرى خارجية. وفي هذا الصدد، تم اختيار خمسين طالباً من طلبة المرحلة الرابعة بشكل عشوائي من قسم اللغة الإنكليزية / كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية/ جامعة الموصل, للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢٠–٢٠٢١. اعتمدت الدراسة أُنموذجا معدلاً ناتج عن مواءمة أُنموذجي كل من

بايرم (١٩٩٧) و فانتيني (٢٠٠١) الخاصين بالكفاءة التواصلية اثناء التداخل الثقافي. وبناءً على هذا الانموذج تم تصميم ثلاث ادوات لجمع البيانات. أظهرت النتائج ان الطلبة يميلون الى اعتبار كفاءتهم التواصلية اثناء التداخل الثقافي جيدة وكافية. غير ان نتائج الاختبار اظهرت مستويات ضعيفة لتلك القدرات. بناءً على هذه النتائج، هناك حاجة إلى إلقاء المزيد من الضوء على أهمية البعد الثقافي في تدريس اللغة الانكليزية في العراق والسعي الى تعزيز كفاءة التواصل اثناء التداخل الثقافي لدى المتعلمين العراقيين.

Abstract

The current study investigates undergraduate Iraqi EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence at university level, using both self- and external- assessment instruments. To this end, a sample of fifty fourth-year students has been selected randomly from the Department of English/ College of Education for Humanities/ University of Mosul, for the academic year 2020-2021. The utilized model is a modified one that has emerged from adapting both Byram's (1997) and Fantini's (2001) Intercultural Communicative Competence models. Based on this model, the following three instruments were designed to collect data. Results revealed that student tend to perceive their intercultural competency as being good and sufficient. Nevertheless, when tested, their levels were found to be poor. Building on these results, more light needs to be thrown onto the importance of cultural dimension in teaching English in Iraq, and more work is needed to enhance Iraqi EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence.

1. Introduction

Language and culture are interwoven and interdependent in a way that neither of them can exist without the other. This perspective has become a central focus in FLT literature, especially in the 21st century (Fantini, 2019: 14). As globalization increases, people around the globe have more direct and indirect opportunities to interact with one another. Such interaction includes individuals of different languages and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, a need to promote FLLs' cultural awareness has become one of the ultimate aims for FLT in modern literature (Csillik, 2019: 6).

Emphasizing the cultural dimension of language in education settings gave rise to what came to be known today as 'Intercultural Communicative Competence' (ICC) which highlights the inseparability between communication and culture. ICC can be defined as one's ability to communicate successfully with others whom are different from oneself linguistically and, most importantly, culturally (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006: 12). In line with the increased emphasis on ICC in today's globalized world, the present study investigates undergraduate EFL learners' ICC in Iraqi context.

1.1 Problem of the Study

In today's world of on-going globalization, it has become necessary for ELT in Iraq to address the cultural dimension and its inevitable impact on real-life communication. Iraqi EFL learners need to be equipped with competences that would enable them to step beyond their own language and culture, and function successfully with others from the target communities. One such crucial competence is ICC. The need to promote Iraqi EFL learners' ICC can be attributed to the widely supported argument that proficient EFL learners, with no sufficient cultural knowledge and awareness, may cause serious

offence, misunderstanding and communication break-downs when interacting with others from the target communities (Dai and Chen, 2017: 8). Without sufficient intercultural abilities, Iraqi EFL learners may fail to deliver or interpret intended messages causing themselves to be perceived as inappropriate or culturally insensitive. Such inappropriateness, though unintended, may generalize some serious stereotypes against EFL learners' cultural groups. Therefore, lack of cultural knowledge and awareness hinders successful communication and may exceed to cause EFL learners to suffer from what Oberg (1954: 1) referred to as a "culture shock". A culture shock, in general, is the negative emotional reaction and confusion caused by sudden interaction with a new culture without prior preparation. Iraqi EFL learners are expected to suffer from the above, given that the cultural dimension is commonly ignored in ELT in Iraq.

1.2 Aim of the Study

The current study aims at investigating Iraqi EFL learners' ICC levels at university level, and compare their performance in both self- and external assessment instruments.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Concept of Culture

Defining the concept of culture is regarded as one of the most complicated matters in literature although it has been addressed intensively by different fields of study. Various attempts have been made to define this concept. And only till the 1950's, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) have been able to collect and analyze more than 160 definitions that were proposed in this vein.

One of the earliest and most influential definitions of culture is that of Sir Edward B. Tylor (1871) who defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals,

custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society"(Tylor, 1871: 1). Further attempts have been made to better understand the concept of culture, and in the 1960s, Nelson H. Brooks (1960, as cited in Hua, 2019: 4) proposed his well-known classification of Culture with capital C and culture with small c. In this sense, Culture with a capital C refers to the formal and visible cultural elements that are accomplished and produced by a community. It includes, for example, music, literature, politics, art, holidays, etc. On the other hand, culture with a small c includes cultural elements that are less visible, yet equally, significant such as values, standards, communication styles and so on (ibid: 5).

Another interpretation of culture is that of Edward T. Hall (1976, as cited in Fletcher, 2015: 63) introduced his influential Cultural Iceberg Model. In this model Hall compares the concept of culture with an iceberg. Accordingly, culture is similar to an iceberg in that only 10-20% is visible above the surface of the water, while 80-90% is hidden underneath (see Figure 1). The visible part of the iceberg stands for the surface culture that is made up of the cultural aspects that can be easily perceived by the five senses. It includes, for example, costumes, food, celebrations, rituals, behaviors etc. On the other hand, the hidden portion of the iceberg stands for the deep culture that is comprised of invisible aspects that are not directly observable. For example, beliefs, values, assumptions, attitudes, etc. These invisible aspects that constitute deep culture underlie the observable aspects of the surface culture (ibid).

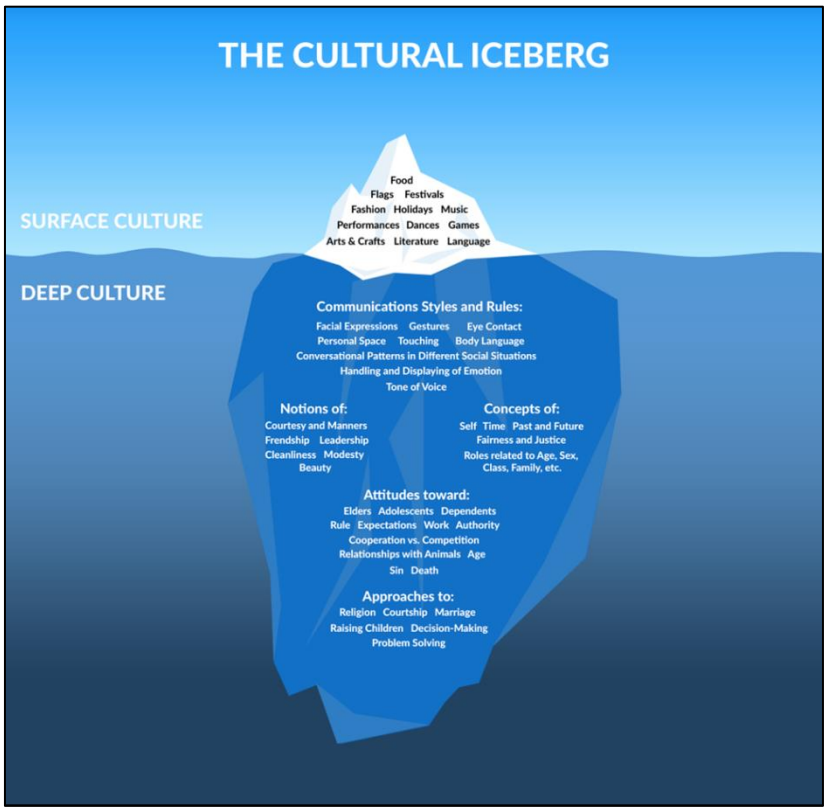

Figure (1)

Hall's Cultural Iceberg Model (adopted from Marsden, 2015)

2.2 Language and Culture

Historically, studies that addressed the relationship between language and culture can be traced back to at least the nineteenth century. According to these studies, language and culture are perceived as being intertwined and interrelated. This notion has been largely supported by various scholars who agree that language and culture should be studied together since these two concepts are inseparable and interdependent (Byram & Grundy, 2003; Kramsch, 2013; Parks, 2020). Language is the vehicle that transmits culture, and culture is the key that determines the way people decipher messages and communicate among each other (Kozhevnikova, 2014: 4462). Reid (2014: 161) argues that "language without culture is a set of symbols which can be

misinterpreted, if they are not understood in the right cultural context". In fact, many scholars argue that language is a component of culture that has dual function: one as a means of communication, and the other as a carrier of culture (Young et al, 2009: 150).

2.3 Culture and Foreign Language Teaching

Promoting FLLs' cultural awareness has become one of the ultimate aims for FLT in modern literature (Griffith et al, 2016: 1). This can be attributed to the widely supported argument that FLLs with insufficient cultural awareness may cause unintended insults, misunderstandings, and communication failure due to their inability to convey or interpret intended messages (Dai and Chen, 2017: 8). As a result, FLLs may be perceived as being inappropriate or culturally insensitive in terms of their interlocutors from the target communities. Lack of such cultural knowledge "can lead to becoming a fluent fool" (Bennet: 1997: 1). Such fluent fools "may be invited into complicated social situation where they cannot understand the events deeply enough to avoid giving or taking offense" (ibid). Similar arguments supporting the incorporation of the cultural dimension can be found throughout FLT literature, and they are constantly on the rise.

2.4 The Concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Many authors agree that there is no one particular definition or conceptualization of ICC that is completely agreed upon. Byram (1997: 34) perceives ICC as being comprised of "Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role". Anther definition is presented by Fantini (2001: 1) who defines ICC as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately

when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself".

Despite decades of research, still there is limited consensus regarding the nature and the components of ICC. In an effort to overcome this murkiness that characterized ICC literature, Deardorff (2006) conducted a study which aimed to reach consensus on the definition and components of intercultural competence (IC). In her study, Deardorff (2006: 244) invited a panel of 23 nationally (within USA) and internationally known authors to share their views regarding the definition and components of IC. A general agreement was found as most scholars agreed on one definition, that perceives IC as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2004, p. 194).

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the current study is 286 forth-year undergraduate students at the Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul, for the academic year 2020-2021, the morning study. This population is chosen with the rationale that; aside from postgraduate studies, fourth-year students represents the most advanced language learners who have spent more years studying English. As such, they are expected to have developed sufficient language proficiency level and critical thinking abilities that are needed in the current study. Moreover, as adult learners with higher rational thinking, they are expected to show deeper understanding regarding their own cultural identity. Such cultural maturity is crucial for making critical and neutral comparisons with the introduced target culture. As for the sample, 50 students are chosen from the

aforementioned population following the simple random sampling strategy.

3.2 Model of the study

This study utilizes a modified model that emerged from the adaptation of both Byram's (1997) and Fantini's (2001) ICC models. According to Byram (1997), ICC is composed of Linguistic Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, Discourse Competence and Intercultural Competence. The components of Intercultural Competence are the following five savoirs: (1) Attitudes, (2) Knowledge, (3) Skills to interpret and relate, (4) Skills to discover and react, and (5) Awareness. In his model, Byram has suggested some well-studied objectives for each of the aforementioned savoires that can be utilized as criteria for teaching and assessment.

As for Fantini's (2001) model, ICC is composed of: Personal Characteristics, Three Areas/Domains (relationships, communication and collaboration), Four Dimensions (Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills and Awareness), Language Proficiency and attainment levels. Throughout literature, it has been admitted that Byram's and Fantini's models are similar in that both of them recognize attitudes, knowledge, skills and awareness as the backbone of their ICC model. Byram labels these intercultural abilities as savoirs, whereas Fantini describes them as dimensions. Fantini's model, however, is more comprehensive, as it has been claimed in literature. This is basically because Fantini's model has emerged from a multinational perspective that is argued to be more applicable within wider range of cultural contexts. Nonetheless, although Fantini has acknowledged attitudes, knowledge, skills and awareness as integral parts of ICC, he did not give any specifications regarding what constitutes them. Unlike Fantini's broad identification of these dimensions, Byram has dedicatedly described and analyzed

them into specific objectives in order to establish the outlines of these intercultural abilities. As such, the model utilized in this study is the outcome of integrating Byram's (1997) identified objectives for the five saviors into Fantini's (2001) ICC model as clarified in Figure 2.

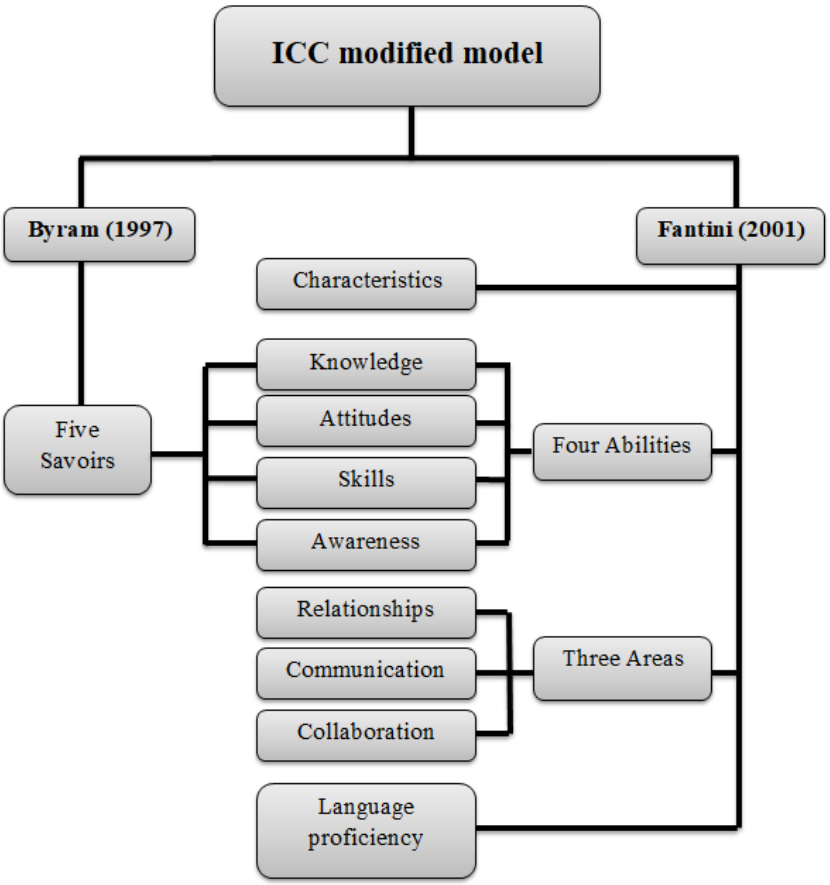

Figure (2)

ICC modified model

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

In order to elicit necessary data for the sake of experimentation, the current study utilizes three data collection instruments. These instruments or tools are: (1) Self-Assessment ICC Questionnaire (ICCQ), (2) Five-Savoirs Test (FST), and (3) Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs). As for the ICCQ, it is constructed based on the

modified model mentioned above. Accordingly, the students are asked to rate themselves in terms of their intercultural competence and language proficiency using 5-point Likert scale items. The ICCQ includes the following five parts: (1) Background Information, (2) Personal Characteristics, (3) Four Abilities / Five Savoir, (4) Intercultural Areas and (5) Language Proficiency.

The FST, on the hand, is constructed in line with Byram's (1997) objectives that draw on the following five savoirs: (1) Attitudes, (2) Knowledge, (3) Skills to Interpret and Relate, (4) Skills to Discover and/or Interact, and (5) Awareness. A variety of questions were utilized to collect required data: such as, multiple-choice items, situational judgment, short answers and text analysis. Finally, the OPIs are intended to test learners' oral proficiency which is regarded as an important part of ICC. These interviews included some questions taken from IELTS and TOEFL exams, and learners' proficiency was measured in terms of Fluency, Pronunciation, Grammar and Vocabulary using Marek and Wu's (2011) 5-point scale rubric.

4. Data Analysis

Collected data were initially diagnosed to decide on the suitable type of statistical tests that are to be used; in other words, whether to use parametric or nonparametric tests. This decision is basically made in light of data normality distribution test that investigates whether or not data are distributing normally in line with the normality distribution curve hypothesis. To this end, Shapiro-Wilk normality test has been utilized, and results revealed that data collected from all three instruments did not undergo normal distributing. That being the case, the nonparametric One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test has been utilized to analyze collected data. According to this test, a hypothetical

median value that equals the average of the domain is proposed for all domains in question. This hypothetical median is utilized as basis for setting out some null hypotheses based on which students' current level can be identified. These hypotheses hold the assumption that the observed (computed) median of a given domain equals the proposed hypothetical median that equals the average. The null hypotheses are tested, and they are either retained or rejected.

The decision of whether to accept or reject these hypotheses is based on the computed P-value for the domain in question. If the computed P-value was found to be higher than 0.05 the null hypothesis is retained, and there are no statistically significant differences between the observed and the hypothetical medians. In other words, the observed median of a given domain indeed equals the average. However, if the P-value was found to be lower than 0.05, this serves as an indicator that there is a statistically significant difference between the observed median and the hypothetical one. As such, the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that the observed median is either higher or lower than the average. In this regard, the observed median is compared against the hypothetical one to decide whether the value of the observed median is higher or lower. According to what has been said so far, students' levels in all tests are analyzed in in terms of the following three levels:

1. Poor: if the observed median is significantly lower than the proposed hypothetical median (average).

2. Average: if the observed median equals the proposed hypothetical median (average).

3. Good: if the observed median is significantly higher than the proposed hypothetical median (average).

4.1 Self-Assessment Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire

Data collected from students' self-evaluation in ICCQ were statistically analyzed to diagnose how students perceive their own ICC. Starting with the first domain; **Personal Characteristics**, the computed P-value (.000) was found lower than 0.05, meaning that there is statistically significant difference between observed median and the hypothetical median. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. And given that the observed median (3.93) is higher than the hypothetical value (3.00), this indicates that students' understanding for the importance of the addressed personal characteristics is **good** (see Table 1).

Table (1)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Personal Characteristics (ICCQ)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Personal Characteristics			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of **Personal Characteristics** equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	1164.000	P-value	.000
Standard Error	97.438	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	5.911	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.93
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Good

The same statistical and analytical procedures were followed when investigating students' **intercultural dimensions/saviors** that include (1) Attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3) Skills and (4) Awareness. Accordingly, students were found to have good and positive **attitudes**

towards the target communities, as clarified in Table 2. This is evident given that the computed P-value (.000) was found significant (lower than 0.05). As such the associated null hypothesis is rejected, and given that the observed median (3.71) was found higher than 3.00, the concluded level is **good**.

Table (2)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Attitudes (ICCQ)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Attitudes			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of **Attitudes** equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	1100.500	P-value	.000
Standard Error	94.440	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	5.681	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.71
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Good

Moreover, results regarding students' intercultural **knowledge** came out with a P-value (.130) that is higher than 0.05, which means that the hypothesis that assumes no significant difference is retained. This indicates that students perceive their intercultural knowledge as being **average** (see Table 3).

Table (3)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Knowledge (ICCQ)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Knowledge			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of **Knowledge** equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	421.000	P-value	.130
Standard Error	94.448	Decision	Retain the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-1.514	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	2.84
P-value	.130	Concluded Level	Average

Similar to the aforementioned outcomes, students were found to perceive their intercultural **skills** as being **average** as well (see Table 4). This is concluded from the computed P-value (.223) which is higher than 0.05, and which means that the hypothesis is retained.

Table (4)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Skills (ICCQ)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Skills			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of **Skills** equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	679.000	P-value	.223
Standard Error	94.446	Decision	Retain the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	1.218	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.11
P-value	.223	Concluded Level	Average

As for students' **awareness**, results reveal that students have **good** level of intercultural awareness. This outcome is revealed from the significant P-value that was found to be .015. This indicates that the hypothesis is rejected, and given that the observed median (3.30) is higher than 3.00, the concluded level is good (see Table 5).

Table (5)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Awareness (ICCQ)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Awareness			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of **Awareness** equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	732.500	P-value	.015
Standard Error	88.480	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	2.430	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.30
P-value	.015	Concluded Level	Good

Shifting to **intercultural areas**, students are found to perceive their intercultural communicative and interactive abilities as being **good** (see Table 6). This is indicated by the significant P-value (.000) that was found lower than 0.05, and by the observed median (3.56) that was found higher than 3.00.

Table (6)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Intercultural Areas (ICCQ)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Intercultural Areas			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of **Intercultural Areas** equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	1049.000	P-value	.000
Standard Error	103.451	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	3.978	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.56
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Good

Finally, regarding students' **language proficiency**, data analysis indicates that students perceive themselves to have **average** linguistic abilities. This is concluded from the computed P-value (.741) which reveals that there is no statistically significant difference; hence, the hypothesis is retained (see Table 7).

Table 7 One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Language Proficiency (ICCQ)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Language Proficiency			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of **Language Proficiency** equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	556.000	P-value	.741
Standard Error	96.914	Decision	Retain the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-.330	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.00
P-value	.741	Concluded Level	Average

To conclude, the **overall** level of students' self-evaluation in ICCQ has been found to be **good**. This is concluded from the significant P-value (.041), and the overall observed median (3.82) that is higher than the hypothetical one (3.00) (see Table 8).

Table (8)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Overall ICCQ

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Overall ICCQ			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of ICCQ equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	826.021	P-value	.041
Standard Error	94.824	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	4. 872	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.82
P-value	.041	Total Level in ICCQ	Good

4.2 Five-Savoirs Test

Data collected from students' responses in FST were statistically analyzed as well to draw on students' current ICC level. As for the first domain; **attitudes**, result indicate that students possess **good** attitudinal orientation towards British/American communities. This is concluded from the P-value (.000) that was found significant, and from the observed median (2.40) that was found higher than the hypothetical median (2.00), as clarified in Table 9.

Table (9)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Attitudes (FST)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Attitudes			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Attitudes equals 2.00.
Test Statistic	891.500	P-value	.000
Standard Error	79.163	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	5.558	Hypothetical Median	2.00
		Observed Median	2.40
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Good

Concerning students' **knowledge**, the test reveals that students have a **poor** level as far as their intercultural knowledge is concerned. This deficiency is concluded from the significant P-value (.000) that indicates that the associated null hypothesis is rejected. The observed median (0.33) that was found lower than the hypothetical one (1.00) serves as evidence that students' intercultural knowledge is poor (see Table 10).

Table (10)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Knowledge (FST)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Knowledge			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Knowledge equals 1.00.
Test Statistic	6.000	P-value	.000
Standard Error	103.244	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-6.175	Hypothetical Median	1.00
		Observed Median	0.33
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Poor

Moreover, results indicate that students' **skills to interpret and relate** were found **poor** as well. This outcome is proven by the significant P-value (.000), and the observed median (0.00) that is lower than the hypothetical median (1.00) (see Table 11).

Table (11)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Skills(1) (FST)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Skills(1) to Interpret and Relate			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Skills(1) equals 1.00.
Test Statistic	8.000	P-value	.000
Standard Error	94.985	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-6.106	Hypothetical Median	1.00
		Observed Median	0.00
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Poor

As for the second set of skills, students' **skills to discover and/or interact** were also found **poor**. This is evident in the significant P-value (.000), and in the observed median (0.43) that is lower than the hypothetical one (1.00) (see Table 12).

Table (12)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Skills(2) (FST)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Skills(2) to Discover and/or Interact			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Skills(2) equals 1.00.
Test Statistic	18.000	P-value	.000
Standard Error	97.199	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-5.864	Hypothetical Median	1.00
		Observed Median	0.43
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Poor

Finally, analyzing students' responses reveals that their intercultural **awareness** is **poor**. This is indicated by the P-value (.000) that was found significant, and the observed median (0.50) that was found lower than the hypothetical median (1.00), as presented in Table 13).

Table (13)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Awareness (FST)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Awareness			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Awareness equals 1.00.
Test Statistic	151.500	P-value	.000
Standard Error	92.983	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-4.436	Hypothetical Median	1.00
		Observed Median	0.50
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Poor

To conclude, the **overall** level of students' performance in FST was found to be **poor** in total. This is indicated by the significant P-value (.000), and the overall observed median (0.79) that is less than the hypothetical one (2.00) (see Table 14).

Table (14)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Overall pre-FST

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Overall FST			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of FST equals 2.00.
Test Statistic	5.500	P-value	.000
Standard Error	103.591	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-6.154	Hypothetical Median	2.00
		Observed Median	0.79
P-value	.000	Total Level in FST	Poor

4.2 Oral Proficiency Interviews

Data collected from students' responses in OPIs were statistically analyzed to assess students' language proficiency, which is regarded as an important part of ICC. Starting with **Fluency**, it was found that the level of the students' linguistic fluency is **poor**. This is concluded from the significant P-value (.000), and from the observed median (2.00) that was found lower than the hypothetical median (3.00), as clarified in Table 15.

Table (15)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Fluency (OPIs)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Fluency			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Fluency equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	87.000	P-value	.000
Standard Error	62.626	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.

Standardized Test Statistic	-4.223	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	2.00
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	Poor

As for **pronunciation**, students were found to have **average** level. This outcome is proven statistically by the computed P-value (.819) that indicates that the proposed hypothesis is retained. As such, students' level as far as their pronunciation is concluded to be average (see Table 16)

Table (16)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Pronunciation (OPIs)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Pronunciation			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Pronunciation equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	90.000	P-value	.819
Standard Error	21.794	Decision	Retain the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-.229	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.00
P-value	.819	Concluded Level	Average

Similarly, students' level in **grammar** was also found **average**. This is concluded from the insignificant P-value (.252) that was found higher than 0.05; hence, the null hypothesis is retained (see Table 17).

Table (17)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Grammar (OPIs)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Grammar			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Grammar equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	64.000	P-value	.252
Standard Error	27.971	Decision	Retain the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-2.234	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	3.00
P-value	.252	Concluded Level	Average

Finally, data analysis indicates that students' level regarding English **vocabulary** capacity is **poor**. This is evident in the significant P-value (.000), and in the observed median (2.00) that was found less than 3.00, as in Table 18.

Table (18)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Vocabulary (OPIs)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Vocabulary			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of Vocabulary equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	82.500	P-value	.000
Standard Error	49.500	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-4.000	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	2.00
P-value	.000	Concluded Level	poor

To conclude, the **overall** level of students' performance in OPIs was found to be **poor**. This is evident in the significant P-value (.038), and in the observed median (2.88) that was found less than the hypothetical median (3.00), as in Table 19.

Table (19)

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Overall OPIs

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Overall OPIs			
Summary		**Testing the Hypothesis**	
Total N	50	Null Hypothesis	The median of OPIs equals 3.00.
Test Statistic	49.200	P-value	.038
Standard Error	86.130	Decision	Reject the null hypothesis.
Standardized Test Statistic	-4.154	Hypothetical Median	3.00
		Observed Median	2.88
P-value	.038	Total Level in OPI	Poor

5. Conclusions

Results related to ICCQ reveal that students have perceived their own ICC levels as being sufficiently good and acceptable. Nevertheless, when students were tested in the FST and OPIs, their performance was way too far from how they have reflected upon their abilities in the questionnaire. It is observed that students' performance in the FST was poor indicating that they have insufficient intercultural knowledge, skills and awareness. However, it has been found that students' attitudes are positive in both self- and external evaluation. In fact, the concluded deficiency in students' intercultural abilities is not a striking outcome, from the authors' perspective, given that the cultural dimension is commonly ignored in Iraqi ELT curriculums. Shifting to students' oral proficiency, results obtained through OPIs reveal that students demonstrate poor fluency level and vocabulary capacity. As for students' pronunciation and grammar, they were found to be average. It is noteworthy that Ilyas (2021) has also attempted to explore Iraqi EFL learners' ICC and came out with similar results. Promoting students' intercultural competency in today's globalized world has proven necessary for Iraqi FL learners.

In light of these outcomes, it can be concluded that Iraqi EFL learners have tendency to perceive their ICC level as being good. However, when tested, their intercultural abilities and language proficiency were found to be poor. This deficiency is basically related to the issue that the cultural dimension is not usually addressed in Iraqi EFL classrooms. More light needs to be thrown onto the importance of cultural dimension of language, and more work is needed to enhance Iraqi EFL learners' ICC.

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