

Xenophilia from An Educational Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand xenophilia from an educational point of view and to determine its impact on increasing students' intercultural awareness and inclusive classroom climate. A descriptive correlational method was used for the analysis. A questionnaire was used for a sample of 120 students from the College of Education. Four areas of acceptance were investigated in the questionnaire: cultural openness, acceptance of difference, readiness for intercultural communication and inclusive classroom climate. The findings revealed a high level of xenophilia among students, with cultural openness being the highest mean. Results also showed that there was a positive significant correlation between xenophilia and inclusive classroom climate. Experiences in foreign cultures were positively related to xenophilia, but at a moderate level. The findings suggested that xenophilia is an essential educational attitude that can be fostered in educational settings through embracing inclusive classroom practices, promoting intercultural activities, and offering curricula that support cultural acceptance.

Keywords: *Xenophilia; Intercultural Education; Cultural Openness; Inclusive Classroom Climate; Cultural Diversity; Students' Attitudes.*

حب الأجانب وتأثيره على تعلم اللغة الأجنبية (من منظور تعليمي)

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الملخص:

يتناول هذا الموضوع الميل الإيجابي والانفتاح تجاه الأجانب أو الثقافات المختلفة، ويبحث في دوره داخل العملية التعليمية، من الناحية التربوية ينظر إلى هذا المفهوم كقيمة ومبدأ مهم يساعد على التوصل إلى تعزيز قيمة التسامح واحترام التنوع الثقافي، وتقليل التحيزات والعنصرية بين الأشخاص، وتنمية مهارات التفكير الإيجابي وفهم وجهات النظر المختلفة، واعداد طلبة للعيش والعمل في بيئات متعددة الثقافات والأصول. يركز التعليم في هذه الناحية على ادخال مناهج ونشاطات مثل دراسة ثقافات ولغات مختلفة والتبادل الثقافي سواء كان افتراضيا او فعليا ومناقشة قضايا عالمية لتعزيز الفهم المتبادل وتعليم متعلمي اللغة علة الانفتاح على الاخر مع الحفاظ على الهوية الثقافية الخاصة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حب الأجانب، التفاعل التعليمي، الانفتاح الثقافي، المناخ الصفّي الشامل، التنوع الثقافي.

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, education has become intimately linked with topics of cultural diversity, intercultural communication, global citizenship, migration, online openness and inclusive classrooms. Today's students do not only encounter and experience local information and homogeneous cultures; they are involved with foreign languages, global media, digital technology and other

ethnic, linguistic and socio-cultural groups. Thus, a key task of contemporary education is to teach students to perceive cultural difference in a positive way and to engage with others in a respectful, open and empathetic manner.

In this regard, xenophilia has an educational prominence. Xenophilia could be defined as positive attitudes toward unfamiliar people, cultures, languages, customs and lifestyles. This is not only the appreciation of foreign but also inclusion of cultural difference and interest in other cultures. Stürmer and Benbow explain that xenophilia is a motivational readiness to engage in explorative intercultural contact that may be linked to knowledge, understanding, social development, value expression, and personality development [1]. This means that, in education, xenophilia can be understood as learners' willingness to engage with cultural difference.

The value of xenophilia in education can be better understood in relation to intercultural communicative competence. Byram suggests that language education does not only concern itself with being able to use foreign languages correctly and fluently, but also being ready to communicate with those who possess different cultural identities, meanings and practices [2]. In this respect, xenophilia facilitates emotional and attitudinal dimension of intercultural learning, as students need to be curious, open and wanting to learn about others before they actually communicate.

Also, multicultural education gives a broader context for the education value of xenophilia. Banks and Banks stress that multicultural education assists teachers and students in dealing more effectively with issues of cultural difference in the classroom and how culture, identity, social structure and educational opportunity interact to affect learning circumstances [3]. Therefore, xenophilia may be considered a product of multicultural education, especially if students embrace difference as a source of enrichment, rather than exclusion or marginalisation.

The importance of xenophilia also emerges with global citizenship education. Global citizenship education, according to UNESCO, is an educational orientation that promotes the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural competences of learners to deal with local, national and global challenges [4]. This educational perspective is highly relevant to xenophilia because if students develop a positive attitude towards other cultures, they may develop their ability to communicate, collaborate, empathise and participate effectively and responsibly in exploring a multicultural world.

Further, xenophilia research is backed by the field of intercultural competence. Deardorff explains that intercultural competence is an important outcome of internationalization in education and includes the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on knowledge, skills, and attitudes [5]. This suggests that xenophilia should not come to be seen merely as a kind of praise for foreign cultures, but as an educational disposition that may help bring about positive intercultural understanding, interaction and participation.

This topic is also important when we consider evidence on contact. A meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp demonstrated reduced prejudice when people from different groups interact [6]. While we view xenophilia differently from contact, positive educational contacts with culturally distinct others may enable students to attenuate fear, stereotypes and social distance. So, schools and universities can make an important contribution to turning contact into intercultural learning.

Moreover, current educational approaches increasingly priorities global competence. The OECD defines global competence as students' ability to understand and connect local, global and intercultural issues, and respect and appreciate different worldviews, engage in open and appropriate dialogue with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and take action for collective good [7]. This concept also supports the current study as xenophilia could be regarded as an attitudinal precursor to global competence. [8]

2. Research Problem

While the importance of diversity and inclusion in the classroom has been acknowledged and prioritised, little has been accomplished in understanding positive attitudes toward cultural diversity among students. We therefore explore the role of xenophilia as an educational attitude that might promote intercultural understanding and inclusive classroom dialogue.

This study aims to answer the question:

What are the contributions of xenophilia to students' intercultural understanding and interactions in the classroom?

3. Previous Studies

3.1 Yıldız Study [9]

Yıldız compared nursing students' intercultural sensitivity and xenophobic attitudes. Yıldız sought to identify if students who had higher intercultural sensitivity scores were less xenophobic. They found that intercultural sensitivity is a significant factor in mitigating negative attitudes towards intercultural difference. This study is relevant for the current study as it suggests that training and professional development can help shape students' attitudes towards cultural difference. Nonetheless, while Yıldız studied the influence of intercultural sensitivity on xenophobic attitudes, the present study analyses their influence on xenophilic educational attitudes.

3.2 Maratia et al. Study [10]

Maratia and team investigated how school diversity climate affects adolescents' academic achievement and social well-being. Researchers surveyed 1,156 Italian adolescents in a longitudinal study exploring the effects of students' perceptions of equity, contact and cooperation in school. Results indicated that high school diversity climate was linked to greater academic performance, school belonging and social well-being. This research is relevant to the current study since it reinforces the notion that classroom and school environments that promote the inclusion of diversity may foster a positive view of cultural difference.

3.3 Gaitán-Aguilar et al. Study [11]

Gaitán-Aguilar et al conducted a review of global citizenship in universities. The researchers found three key relational perspectives on global citizenship: intercultural competency, global identification and global civic engagement. This study highlighted the importance of higher education promoting students' knowledge of global issues, engagement with cultural difference and engagement in diverse societies. This research is connected with the present research because xenophilia can be seen as a part of the attitudinal aspect of global citizenship education, when students are open and accepting of other cultures.

3.4 Schwarzenenthal et al. Study [12]

Schwarzenenthal and colleagues studied classroom cultural diversity climate and its role in helping students benefit from cultural diversity. This study found classrooms that fostered interaction, cooperation and multiculturalism were beneficial while classrooms that ignored cultural difference were not. The results show that diversity can be improved by teacher and classroom practices that encourage interaction and understanding among students. This research also supports our argument in the current study in that it demonstrates that xenophilia can be not only an individual trait, but a trait that is related to the classroom environment, peer encouragement, and culturally relevant teaching practices that exist in the classroom.

4. Methodology

4.2 Population and Sample

The sample population was all university students in the College of Education at the 2015-2016 academic year. A sample of 120 students was chosen from various class levels.

Table 1. Distribution of the Study Sample According to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	60	50.00%
Female	60	50.00%
Total	120	100%

Table 2. Distribution of the Study Sample According to Academic Stage

Academic Stage	Frequency	Percentage
Second Year	40	33.30%
Third Year	40	33.30%
Fourth Year	40	33.30%

Total	120	100%
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4.3 Research Instrument

The main instrument used in the study was a questionnaire titled:

Xenophilia in Education Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of **24 items** distributed across four domains. Each domain included six items.

Table 3. Distribution of Questionnaire Items across the Main Domains

Domain	Number of Items
Cultural Openness	6
Acceptance of Difference	6
Intercultural Communication Readiness	6
Inclusive Classroom Climate	6
Total	24

A five-point Likert scale was used to measure students' responses.

Table 4. Five-Point Likert Scale Used in the Questionnaire

Response	Score
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral	3
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5

Table 5. Interpretation Criteria for Mean Scores

Mean Range	Interpretation
1.00–1.80	Very Low
1.81–2.60	Low
2.61–3.40	Moderate
3.41–4.20	High
4.21–5.00	Very High

4.5 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was validated by presenting it to 7 experts in the areas of education, psychology, English language teaching and intercultural education. The experts assessed the clarity, appropriateness and conformance with the purposes of the study of the items. The experts' level of agreement was 85.7% to 100% and this showed that the questionnaire items were valid. To find the reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was used. These results indicated that the questionnaire items had high internal consistency.

Table 6. Reliability Coefficients of the Questionnaire Domains

Domain	Cronbach's Alpha
Cultural Openness	0.84
Acceptance of Difference	0.81
Intercultural Communication Readiness	0.86
Inclusive Classroom Climate	0.83
Total Questionnaire	0.89

5. Results

The findings of the study are reported according to questions. The results include descriptive statistics, associations, gender comparison, and visual comparison of the students' exposure to foreign cultures and education factors that promote the development of xenophilia.

5.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

The study sample consisted of **120 university students** from the College of Education. The sample was balanced according to gender and included students from three academic stages.

Table 7. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	50.00%
	Female	60	50.00%
Academic Stage	Second Year	40	33.30%
	Third Year	40	33.30%
	Fourth Year	40	33.30%
Exposure to Foreign Cultures	Low	28	23.30%
	Moderate	63	52.50%

	High	29	24.20%
Total		120	100%

The analysis reveals that majority of the students had a moderate level of exposure to foreign cultures with 52.5% in the sample. This suggests students had some exposure to foreign languages, foreign media, online platforms, or people of different culture backgrounds, but the level of this exposure was not the same for all students.

Figure 1. Distribution of Students by Exposure to Foreign Cultures



Figure 1. Distribution of Students by Exposure to Foreign Cultures

5.2 Level of Xenophilia among Students

To answer the first research question, means and standard deviations were calculated for the four domains of the questionnaire.

Table 8. Means and Standard Deviations of Xenophilia Questionnaire Domains

Domain	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Cultural Openness	4.08	0.62	High
Acceptance of Difference	3.91	0.68	High
Intercultural Communication Readiness	3.76	0.71	High
Inclusive Classroom Climate	3.58	0.79	High
Total Xenophilia Score	3.83	0.57	High

This shows the overall level of xenophilia of the students was high, with a mean score of 3.83. The area of Cultural Openness received the highest mean of 4.08, which indicates that the students were generally open to learn about other cultures, languages and practices.

Students scored lowest in the area of Inclusive Classroom Climate with a mean of 3.58, but this was still in the high category. This finding suggests that students have positive individual attitudes toward cultural differences; however, classroom climate and institutional support for diversity may not be as developed.

5.3 Relationship between Exposure to Foreign Cultures and Xenophilia

The second research question looked at how students' exposure to foreign cultures was related to their xenophilia. The visual analysis found a positive association between foreign culture exposure and total xenophilia score.

Figure 2. Relationship between Exposure to Foreign Cultures and Xenophilia Score



Figure 2. Relationship between Exposure to Foreign Cultures and Xenophilia Score

The scatter diagram below reveals that the more exposure students had to foreign cultures the higher their xenophilia scores were. This suggests that students with more frequent exposure to foreign languages, foreign media, culturally different people or global online media showed optimism, interest and appreciation towards cultural diversity.

But the correlation was only moderate. Although many students with moderate exposure obtained high xenophilia scores, some students with high exposure only showed average xenophilia scores. So exposure to foreign cultures is not everything; students' attitudes may also be impacted by the educational support, classroom debates, and teacher pedagogies at play.

5.4 Relationship between Xenophilia and Inclusive Classroom Climate

To answer the third research question, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between total xenophilia and the main questionnaire domains.

Table 9. Correlation between Xenophilia and Inclusive Classroom Climate

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	Interpretation
Xenophilia × Inclusive Classroom Climate	0.61	0.001	Positive Significant
Cultural Openness × Inclusive Classroom Climate	0.55	0.001	Positive Significant
Acceptance of Difference × Inclusive Classroom Climate	0.58	0.001	Positive Significant
Intercultural Communication Readiness × Inclusive Classroom Climate	0.52	0.002	Positive Significant

This study found a statistically significant positive association between xenophilia and inclusive classroom climate with a correlation coefficient of 0.61. This suggests that classroom environments that were perceived as more inclusive, respectful and promoting diversity lead to greater levels of xenophilia. The strongest correlation was between acceptance of difference and inclusive classroom climate with a coefficient 0.58. This implies that a classroom culture that promotes respect, inclusiveness and participation may foster acceptance of cultural differences among students.

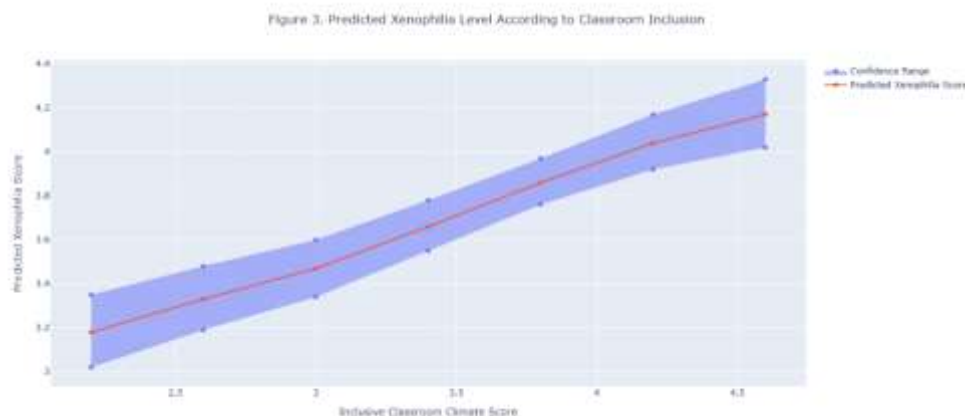
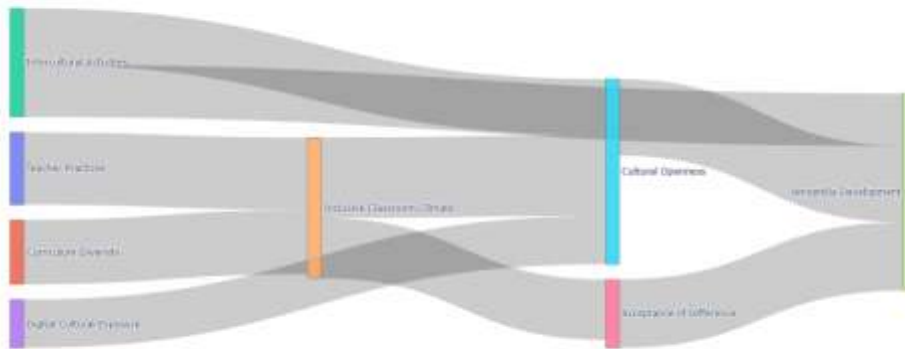


Figure 3. Predicted Xenophilia Level According to Classroom Inclusion

The figure below shows the predicted xenophilia score as the inclusive classroom climate score rose. This confirms that xenophilia is not only a personal trait but also an educational trait that can be nurtured in the classroom through classroom practices, the actions of teachers, peer support and classroom activities that promote inclusivity.

Figure 4. Educational Factors Contributing to Xenophilia Development



5.5 Differences in Xenophilia According to Gender

To examine whether there were differences in xenophilia according to gender, an independent samples t-test was conducted.

Table 10. Differences in Xenophilia According to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Male	60	3.74	0.59	1.97	0.051
Female	60	3.93	0.54		

The data analysis reveals that the mean of female students in xenophilia was higher than that of male students; the mean of the former was 3.93 and the latter was 3.74. But the p-value was 0.051, which is greater than the typical significance level (0.05).

This finding reflects that there are differences between the sexes but they were not significant at the 0.05 level. So, xenophilia is related more to educational and cultural exposure than gender.

5.6 Educational Factors Contributing to Xenophilia Development

In addition to the statistical tables, the study used a conceptual visual model to clarify the educational factors that may contribute to xenophilia development.

Figure 4. Educational Factors Contributing to Xenophilia Development

The figure indicates that the development of xenophilia is influenced by a number of educational factors, such as teacher practices, curriculum diversity, intercultural activities, online cultural learning, and inclusive classroom climate. These factors do not exist in isolation; they are in turn related to developing cultural openness, acceptance of difference, and intercultural communication skills.

We can see that inclusive classroom climate is crucial because it bridges the link between teacher practices and curriculum diversity to cultural openness and acceptance of difference of students. This implies that xenophilia development involves more than teaching about foreign cultures in the classroom. It also needs continuous classroom practices that facilitate dialogue, learning together and positive interaction with difference.

6. Discussion

Our study found that students had a high level of xenophilia scores with an overall mean of 3.83. The result suggests that although students showed positive attitudes towards cultural difference, foreign cultures and intercultural communication. The highest subdomain was Cultural Openness, implying that they were curious about other cultures, languages, and cultures. If we take Zhou's systematic review into consideration, which stressed that cross-cultural communicative competence (CCIC) in undergraduate education is significantly related to students' competence in understanding cultural difference, communicating across cultures, and developing positive intercultural awareness [13], then it suggests that students' CCIC in this study was directly tied to students' understanding of cultural difference, intercultural communication, and intercultural attitudes.

Further, the results also indicated that the lowest mean of the four topics was Inclusive Classroom Climate, although it is still at the high level. This suggests that students may be personally open to cultural diversity, but that classroom practices may not always provide the same level of opportunities for intercultural interaction, understanding and inclusivity. This is in line with Basarkod et al., who found that intercultural education and students' attitudes play an important role in promoting social cohesion and psychological outcomes in diverse classrooms [14].

The correlation analysis revealed a positive significant correlation between xenophilia and inclusive classroom climate. This indicates that students who had a positive perception of their classroom as being respectful, justice and open to diversity had higher xenophilia. This finding is supported by Huang, who reported school intercultural learning is important for developing students' global competency, particularly if students feel confident handling intercultural situations [15]. As such, we believe that xenophilia should not be considered as an individual attitude, but as a learnable attitude which can be nurtured through classroom practices and intercultural learning opportunities.

In terms of the extent of exposure to foreign cultures, the results revealed exposure to foreign cultures was significantly positively related to xenophilia, but the association was not perfect. This supports the idea that exposure to foreign cultures (e.g., through language study, electronic media, or international content) may enhance students' openness, but exposure needs to be complemented with other educational opportunities. They also need support through educational experiences to interpret cultural difference. This notion is supported by Al-Afifi's review, which stressed the importance of classroom teaching/learning for developing intercultural competence, rather than a simple expectation of intercultural awareness [16].

Regarding gender differences, the results indicated that female students scored a little higher average score than males, but it was not significant. This suggests that gender did not play a critical role in explaining xenophilia among the students. Instead, the findings imply that xenophilia is more likely to be associated with educational aspects such as cultural exposure, inclusive classroom environment, multicultural curriculum and intercultural communicative opportunities.

In conclusion, the results show that xenophilia can be considered as an educational variable. It is indicative of students' preparedness to accept cultural difference, engage in intercultural communication, and engage in inclusive classrooms. The findings also reveal that becoming xenophilic can be achieved through more than just talking about diversity. It requires dynamic educational approaches, inclusive pedagogy, intercultural draw and curricula that position cultural difference as enriching and educational.

7. Conclusion

The current research adopted an educational approach to look at students' xenophilia and its association with their willingness to engage in intercultural communication, level of acceptance of difference and cultural openness, and classroom environment. The findings showed that the level of students' xenophilia was high, especially in the aspect of cultural openness. This suggests that students expressed positive attitudes in their interest towards foreign cultures and culturally different groups.

The results further showed that there was a significant positive relationship between xenophilia and an inclusive classroom environment. This finding supports the idea that positive attitudes towards cultural difference are reinforced when the classroom climate is positive, inclusive, respectful, fair, participative and co-operative. Furthermore, the results indicated that exposure to foreign cultures positively correlated with xenophilia but in a moderate way. That is, exposure is not sufficient without support from the educational system.

The study concludes that xenophilia is not a mere preference for the unfamiliar and foreign, but an educational attitude that has the potential to promote intercultural understanding and mutual inclusion in classrooms and classrooms, as well as global citizenship. So, we should be more aware of how to foster

students' openness towards cultural difference in schools and universities, through curriculum, teacher, classroom, and intercultural learning activities.

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