

Fostering EF learners' intercultural communicative competence through the exploration of non-native cultures

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Abstract

The Intercultural Language Teaching Approach has been widely recognized for fostering learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence in foreign language classrooms. Despite its growing prominence, existing research remains strongly anchored in the native speaker paradigm, predominantly emphasizing native cultural content. This orientation reveals a critical gap, as it overlooks the implications of English functioning as an English as a Lingua Franca and limits understanding of whether engagement with non-native cultures can similarly promote intercultural development. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the comparative effectiveness of native and non-native cultural orientations within intercultural language teaching. An experimental design was implemented through a ten-session instructional treatment involving 99 EFL learners. Data were analyzed to compare intercultural competence outcomes across instructional models. The findings indicate that intercultural language teaching significantly enhances learners' intercultural communicative competence in comparison with communicative language teaching. Moreover, both native and non-native cultural models demonstrated comparable effectiveness. These results challenge the presumed centrality of the native speaker model and suggest greater pedagogical flexibility in intercultural language instruction.

Keywords: Communicative language teaching; English as a Lingua Franca; intercultural communicative competence; intercultural language teaching; native speaker model.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modern education emphasizes the development of students' intercultural competence (IC) (Byram, 1997, 2020; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1997; Lo Bianco et al., 1999; Fantini, 2000; Corbett, 2022; Liddicoat, 2008; Deardorff, 2006). Moreover, foreign language education scholars insist on the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence (henceforth, ICC) for the proper use of language (Byram, 1997; Liddicoat, 2008). Among the widely used frameworks of intercultural communicative competence is Byram's (1997) influential model (Barrett & Golubeva, 2022). Regarding Byram's (1997, 2020) model, numerous theoretical and practical research papers utilize this framework in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), including in Algerian EFL classrooms. Additionally, even though Byram's (1997) model was mainly targeted at the secondary school level, ELT curriculum designers worldwide have primarily used Byram's (1997) model at the university level. According to Corbett (2022), Byram's (1997) model has laid out the "most fully worked-out specification of intercultural competence, which involves the kinds of knowledge and skills needed to mediate between cultures". For Byram (2006), this model is a perspectival framework from which one can derive foreign language teaching objectives. Ideally, Byram's (1997) model can be used to design courses aimed at enhancing EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence and, most importantly, their critical cultural awareness (CCA). Systematic reviews emphasize that ICC instruction must integrate linguistic, socio-cultural, and critical reflection components to be effective in higher education EFL classrooms (Zhou et al., 2024).

On the other hand, English has become widespread and no longer remains the property of Anglophone countries but has instead become a Lingua Franca (Harmer, 2001; Widdowson, 2012). This is due to the number of global English users surpassing that of Anglophone English users over the past few years (Robson, 2013). The emergence of World Englishes is characterized by a spectrum of global users who learn different varieties of English for diverse communicative purposes in multilingual contexts. The shift from the monolingual to a multilingual model also entails that the ideal native speaker is no longer the ultimate goal of FLT but rather the intercultural speaker model (Byram, 1997) or the cosmopolitan speaker (Ros i Solé, 2013). The intercultural speaker communicates appropriately and effectively with various English users, not only Anglophones. Research on World Englishes supports this shift toward models centered on communicative effectiveness rather than native-speaker norms (Hicham et al., 2025). In addition to this, the intercultural speaker, in Byram's (1997) words, is expected to build and maintain relationships. In a global world characterized by multilingualism and multiculturalism like ours, it is necessary to move away from monolingualism- and monoculturalism-oriented FL pedagogy. Likewise, the monolingual model does not align with all EFL learners' needs, as some have no particular interest in Anglophone English-speaking countries. Therefore, the emphasis on the native-speaker model in ILTA should be challenged and reconsidered.

This paper acts as a sequel to its previous counterparts, addressing gaps in past research that relied on monoculturalism-oriented FL pedagogy. It intends to implement the intercultural approach to language teaching by exploring non-native-speaking cultures, including the diverse cultures already present in the classroom, rather than centering FL pedagogy on the monolingual model. Consequently, this paper has two main inquiries. First, it studies the effects of the intercultural approach to language teaching on EFL learners' ICC in comparison to the traditional communicative approach. Second, it investigates how the native-speaker and non-native-speaker models influence the outcomes of the intercultural language teaching approach differently. To the best of current knowledge, research on the development of EFL learners has predominantly emphasized the exploration of native-speaking cultures, with few exceptions. However, recent evidence shows that intercultural exposure through diverse cultural content correlates positively with ICC development across multiple EFL contexts (Li et al., 2025). Accordingly, this paper brings into focus the exploration of non-native-speaking cultures in contexts where exposure to native English speakers is either utterly unavailable or perhaps not feasible.

Building on this discussion, one may ask a fundamental question: Which model is more effective for developing EFL learners' ICC, the native-speaker culture model or the non-native-speaker culture model? To provide empirical evidence, we conducted a ten-session course with two undergraduate EFL classrooms in the Department of English at Mostaganem, following an intercultural approach to language teaching. One group (n = 27) explored non-Anglophone cultures, whereas the other focused on native-

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speaking cultures. Students were assigned to these groups based on their preferences at the beginning of the semester in September 2022. Also, to ensure experimental control, we relied on a true experiment research design and included a control group, where the teacher utilized the communicative language teaching approach.

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1. Intercultural communicative competence

Modern education necessitates the development of EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 2020; Corbett, 2022; Deardorff, 2006). This results from educators' recognition that "learners need not just knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways." (Byram et al., 2002). 21st-century learners who possess linguistic competence but cannot use the language appropriately in context and purpose are considered "fluent fools" (Bennett, 1997). Intercultural speakers, on the other hand, or often so-called "cosmopolitan speakers," demonstrate the "ability to interact effectively with people of cultures other than one's own" (Byram, 1997). In the same vein, intercultural speakers' utmost goal is to interact with individuals from diverse cultures and to build and maintain strong personal relationships with their interlocutors (Byram, 1997).

Since the literature presents a myriad of definitions of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), we have chosen to rely on Sercu's (2002) definition of what constitutes ICC, or rather, an intercultural speaker:

The 'intercultural speaker' is not a cosmopolitan figure who merely floats between cultures, much like tourists tend to do. Rather, he or she is committed to transforming intercultural encounters into meaningful relationships. Instead of being an outsider who marvels at differences or perceives another culture as exotic and intriguing, the intercultural speaker seeks to understand it from within. Simultaneously, he or she contributes to the other person's understanding of their own culture from an insider's perspective (Sercu, 2002).

On a side note, intercultural communicative competence differs from intercultural competence. Although these two concepts are sometimes used interchangeably, we argue that intercultural communicative competence has a broader purpose. The objectives of intercultural competence, such as what Byram (1997) terms *savoir être* (intercultural attitudes) alongside linguistic & communicative competence, are key components of intercultural communicative competence. Similarly, we drew on Sercu's (2002) definitions to define both ICC and ISs, as they encompass principles of both. Given this established working definition of what ICC entails and its characteristics, the question of pedagogical implications naturally arises.

At a theoretical level, there are many models of intercultural communicative competence. Nevertheless, it is crucial to concentrate on those specifically designed for foreign language teaching, with Byram's (1997) model being among the most prominent (Deardorff, 2006). Notably, Byram's (1997) framework is a structurally accessible approach that educators can readily implement (Corbett, 2022; Dervin, 2010). Accordingly, this paper adopts Byram's (1997) model as a framework for designing both a comprehensive intercultural course (treatment) and a thorough assessment. This approach excludes the traditional triumvirate of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. Instead, ICC will be examined through the five *savoirs* proposed in Byram's (1997) model.

The model of Byram (1997) encompasses four distinct competencies, collectively termed *intercultural communicative competence*. On top of linguistic competence, discourse competence, and communicative competence, Byram introduces intercultural competence as the final key competence that enables foreign language learners to use the language appropriately within various contexts. This intercultural competence is composed of five *savoirs*, with Byram (1997) identifying *critical cultural awareness* (henceforth CCA) as the most critical. CCA refers to the ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products within one's own and other cultures based on explicit criteria.

The remaining *savoirs* are:

1. Knowledge (*savoirs*): Understanding social groups, their cultural products, and practices in both one's own country and that of other interlocutors.

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2. Attitudes (*savoir être*): Cultivating curiosity and openness toward others.
3. Skills of Interpreting and Relating (*savoir comprendre*): The ability to interpret, explain, and relate to written documents from interlocutors.
4. Skills of Discovery and Interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*): The capacity to acquire new cultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real-time interactions (Byram, 1997).

Admittedly, using Byram's (1997) model as a theoretical backbone for an intercultural approach to language teaching is a double-edged sword. For instance, Byram's (1997) approaches culture through a static and essentialist lens paradoxically conflicts with the very essence of intercultural competence, namely, the willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and reassess one's own. Furthermore, certain savors are highly advanced and challenging to incorporate into classroom instruction. Lastly, some aspects of Byram's (1997) model require written texts from the target culture and real-time interactions with speakers of that particular culture. Yet, a closer examination of Byram's (1997) framework reveals that its structure allows for adaptations, including a shift toward a non-essentialist standpoint on culture.

Byram's (1997, 2020) model of intercultural communicative competence remains one of the most influential frameworks in the field today. His contribution is particularly important, as he was amongst the pioneers who played a key role in shaping the "cultural turn" in foreign language teaching. The cultural turn is characterized by the shift from "communicative competence" to "intercultural competence." The teaching of sociolinguistic appropriateness and politeness is presently considered outdated. Instead, intercultural language teaching has gained prominence, recognizing that today's learners must navigate a multicultural and multilingual world using English as a Lingua Franca. Nonetheless, the core objective of foreign language teaching remains unchanged: achieving successful communication.

1.1.2. Intercultural language teaching approach

An intercultural approach to language teaching goes beyond the instruction of grammar and vocabulary, as the goal is to equip learners with the means to communicate effectively and appropriately in a multilingual and multicultural world. As a result, the bilingual model of intercultural language teaching, proposed by some scholars (e.g., Liddicoat, 2004), requires revision. Indeed, in a world where English is a Lingua Franca and multilingual users surpass the number of Anglophone English users, we should rather prioritize the norms of multilingual speakers in multicultural contexts. In this study, we adopt an English as a Lingua Franca perspective, wherein the goal is to help EFL learners from different cultural backgrounds communicate with one another. To illustrate, two EFL learners: one from Algeria and another from Palestine, communicating in English in a multicultural context, do not necessarily need to conform to the cultural conventions of native English speakers.

According to Papademetre et al. (2003), intercultural language teaching and learning are built around five principles:

1. Learners need to construct their own knowledge through self-reflection, allowing them to understand their own language and culture as well as that of their interlocutors.
2. Learners are encouraged to make connections between their own culture, language, and prior knowledge and those of their interlocutors.
3. Authentic social interaction is fundamental for enhancing intercultural competence.
4. Classroom experiences require reflective discussion(s), and teachers can support their students in deepening their reflections.
5. Learners must recognize their responsibility for communicating effectively and appropriately with others.

Per the five aforementioned principles, intercultural language teaching necessitates a supportive environment in which all cultures and beliefs are open to negotiation. Students must acquire skills that enable them to recognize cultural differences and understand how they influence communication. Then, students

can compare and reflect on their own language and culture in relation to others, which helps them understand how social processes work on both sides and grasp societal conventions. In addition, teachers should consider the intercultural language approach as an opportunity to foster the learners' language skills and intercultural competence. By the same token, an intercultural language teaching approach fosters strong ethical values, such as valuing and respecting others, which instills in learners a desire to become better citizens and address global dilemmas like racism. Ideally, the intercultural language teaching approach helps students acquire a set of skills and behaviors that enable them to equally become autonomous intercultural speakers.

In the intercultural language teaching approach, teachers should provide opportunities for learners to engage in social interactions. Students also require guidance and support throughout their reflective process to develop a profound comprehension of their feelings and emotions. This is crucial, as intercultural language teaching frequently involves complex discussions rather than merely presenting surface-level cultural aspects. Over and beyond that, teachers should ensure that learners are not assimilated into the target culture but rather understand how cultures function.

1.2. Purpose of study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it investigates how the use of English as an International Language (EIL) or Lingua Franca influences English Language Teaching (ELT). Second, it explores how EFL students' involvement with their own cultures differs from their exploration of Anglophone cultures and the impact this has on their ICC development. Third, it depicts EFL learners' perceptions of whether Anglophone cultures are overly glorified. Fourth, the present paper is among the few conducted on a global scale and not the first in Algeria, which incorporates EFL learners' ICC within a non-monolingual English-speaking model.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

An experimental research design was conducted to examine the effect of ILTA as a treatment on Algerian EFL learners' ICC. The manipulation of variables also provides empirical evidence regarding the differences between reliance on the native-speaker model, as well as their respective impacts on the overall ILTA results. Furthermore, to meet the reliability of our findings and effectively address the research questions, we employed a triangulation approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. In this study, qualitative data complements qualitative insights by "giving life" (Seemann, 2012) to the numerical findings collected primarily through pre- and post-tests. This is particularly important, as the development of learners' ICC cannot be solely measured or presented numerically (Byram, 1997).

2.1. Procedure

This research study followed a five-step procedure:

- **Assignment** of participants into three groups: a control group, an experimental group following the native-speaker model, and a second experimental group following the non-native-speaker model.
- **Assessment** of the scale validity and reliability using SPSS.
- **Distribution** of the pre-test scale to all groups.
- **Implementation** of the experiment over two and a half months (10 sessions, including introductory sessions). The control group was taught using a traditional approach (CLT), whilst both experimental groups received instruction through ILTA. Additionally, students in the experimental groups were asked to complete reflective post-lesson worksheets at the end of each session.
- **Distribution** of the post-test scale for data analysis.

2.1.1. Teacher

The intercultural language teaching approach is a relatively recent development in foreign language teaching (FLT). Several researchers have emphasized the need to train competent teachers who can implement this approach effectively in their classrooms. This literature also highlights numerous studies on

the practicality of this approach and how to transition from theory to practice. For these reasons, the researcher-teacher who implemented this experiment (first author) decided to rely on predetermined lesson plans designed to align with the intercultural language teaching approach. Moreover, the researcher used a pre-designed scale to measure learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and modified certain aspects of it to suit the guidelines provided by Byram (1997, 2020) and Liddicoat (2004).

2.1.2. *The intercultural communicative competence course*

In accordance with Byram's (1997, 2020) model and Liddicoat's (2004, 2008) principles of the intercultural language teaching approach, we designed a ten-session intercultural course.

(ICCC). Most of the lesson themes and activities were inspired by Tomalin & Stempleski's (2003) *Cultural Awareness: A Resource Book for Teachers*. The researcher-teacher selected themes and activities at an intermediate level to best align with his teaching objectives.

The ICCC sessions lasted one hour and thirty minutes, with one session per week. Most student activities were interactive and required the use of body language. The only classroom rule was the exclusive use of the English language, along with tolerance for diverse opinions and beliefs. The ICCC content is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
ICCC Content

Sessions	Theme	Activities/Goals/Purpose
Session one	Introduce one another	Students get to know one another to create a friendly atmosphere for the rest of the semester
Session two	All about cultures	National-driven vs. non-essentialist culture definition
Session three	Culture match	Increases awareness of symbols and events in the culture(s) represented by students (either native or non-native culture)
Session four	Stereotypes	Students increase their critical cultural awareness by discussing stereotypes & how it hinders communication. Students are helped to make a connection with what they learned in session two
Session five	Cultural Shocks	Session five is complementary to session four as students discuss how stereotypes create cultural shocks. They are also asked to share the shocks they have experienced
Session six	Cross-cultural role plays	Session six is a follow-up. Students from different cultures (e.g., Palestinian students) are asked to role-play a cultural shock they witnessed when they first came to Algeria. Algerian students are then asked to explain. What happened to the Palestinian students?

		Students at the end are asked to provide solutions to the cultural shocks issue.
Session seven	Agony aunt	To compare personal/social problems in both native-speaker & non-native-speaker cultures and in the students' culture.
Session eight	What would you like to do?	Improving skills of discovery and interaction by reading advertisements or eliciting information from interlocutors
Session nine	What's the message?	To discover the meaning of some common gestures, as well as an understanding of non-verbal communication across cultures
Session ten	Agree or disagree?	To stimulate discussion of cultural values and attitudes; to practice reaching consensus; to practice rewording sentences. Improves intercultural attitudes

2.2. Participants

In a true experiment, subjects are randomly assigned to the treatment (Gribbons & Herman, 1996). Accordingly, the Department of English assigned to the teacher-researcher five

First-year EFL classrooms to conduct the study. Two experimental groups were taught using the ILTA, relying on a native-speaker model, whereas two other groups were taught using a non-native-speaker model. The last group served as a control group, where students were taught through the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. The total number of students was 99, as demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Participants demographic

	Control group	Treatment category 1	Treatment category 2
Number	19	36	44
Age (sd)	18.6	19.2	19.11
Gender (%)	83% female	79% female	82% female

2.3. Data collection instruments

The study relied on both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments for this research. To collect qualitative data, the researcher used post-lesson worksheets. On top of reporting the development of their ICC levels, students were asked to mention what they liked and disliked most during the lesson so the researcher could make appropriate changes in future lessons.

According to Hinkin (1995), scale development follows several steps, including obtaining expert opinions, piloting, and conducting validity and reliability analyses. All these necessary steps were followed to develop a valid and reliable scale in this study. Quantitative data were gathered using the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS), which was modified to integrate additional dimensions based on Byram's (1997; 2020) model, along with demographic data. The CQS has shown its generalizability across various countries and contexts (Gozzoli & Gazzaroli, 2018) and has a high reliability score. Therefore, it is suitable for assessing learners' ICC development. The modified version is composed of demographic questions followed by a few open-ended questions in which participants are asked about their past experiences with other cultures. The second part of the questionnaire comprises twenty items (metacognitive: 4; cognitive: 6, motivational: 5; behavioral: 5) rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).

Additionally, post-lesson worksheets were used, requiring students to write a short paragraph about what they learnt during each session. Students were often guided by the researcher-teacher to reflect better on their learning process. The reflection part lasted approximately seven to ten minutes, during which students were allowed to form groups and discuss their insights collectively.

2.4. Data analysis

The present study used Statistical Package for Science (SPSS) to analyze the numerical data collected from the scales. Also, SPSS was used to calculate the reliability scores of both the pre- and post-tests to determine whether the modified version of the CQS is a fit for this study. The results were positive and satisfactory, as the pre-test scale achieved an overall reliability score of $\alpha = 0.855$, while the post-test scale scored $\alpha = 0.899$. Moreover, the data collected from the scales were used to verify whether the control and experimental groups were homogeneous.

This is crucial, as t-tests allow the researcher to justify whether the treatment is responsible for the changes that may occur in the dependent variable (EFL learners' ICC). The results presented in Table 3 illustrate that the control and experimental groups were similar across all levels of ICC (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral). An independent samples test was conducted using SPSS to ensure homogeneity of variance between the two treatment groups (Group 1: native-speaker model; Group 2: non-native-speaker model) and to determine which ILTA model has a greater impact on learners' ICC.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Quantitative results

The results confirmed that the assumption of homogeneity could not be rejected ($p > 0.05$), indicating that all three groups were comparable in terms of initial conditions (see Table 1). In this regard, to analyze the qualitative data, the researcher relied on thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative data analysis method. Given the detailed nature of Byram's (1997) model, the five *savoirs* served as pre-determined themes for this analysis. Similar thematic approaches have been adopted in previous research (Huang, 2021).

Table 3

Pre-experiment scores of the control and treatment groups

variable	Control group		Treatment group	
	M	SD	M	SD
Metacognitive	2.88	.22	2.87	.52
Cognitive	2.60	.66	2.62	.77
Motivational	3.76	.21	3.79	.14
Behavioral	2.62	.75	2.70	.81

Table 4

Post-experiment scores of the control and treatment groups

variable	Control group		Treatment group	
	M	SD	M	SD
Metacognitive	2.91	.24	2.98	.47
Cognitive	2.64	.54	2.72	.69
Motivational	3.78	.21	3.76	.31
Behavioral	2.64	.62	2.76	.89

Table 5

Post-experiment analysis of the native-speaker and non-native-speaker models

variable	Treatment group 1		Treatment group 2		t	p-value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Metacognitive	2.95	.39	3.01	.54	-.377	.709
Cognitive	2.76	.38	2.70	.42	.419	.678
Motivational	3.22	.82	3.30	.81	-.281	.781
Behavioral	2.60	.62	2.81	.78	-.762	.452

Table 4 results indicate that the intercultural language teaching approach was more successful in altering EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence compared to the traditional communicative language teaching approach. All four levels of ICC showed positive development, with the cognitive level being the

most significantly influenced. Conversely, the motivational aspect exhibited the least change, which may be attributed to the overall willingness of all groups to engage with and learn about foreign cultures, regardless of the teacher's approach. The results in Table 5 show that the most significant difference between the native-speaker and non-native-speaker models arose in the behavioral element of ICC. Students exposed to the native-speaker model were less enthusiastic about changing their communication to support intercultural relationships. In contrast, participants in the non-native-speaker model were more willing to adjust both verbal and nonverbal behaviors in intercultural encounters. Despite this contrast, both groups expressed significant motivation to engage in intercultural communication.

3.2. Pre-lesson worksheets (Qualitative Results)

Following a deductive approach to thematic analysis, the researcher identified 195 instances of ICC development within the treatment groups and only 8 instances within the control group. Given that Byram's (1997) model indicates nearly 30 *savoirs*, the pre-determined themes are presented collectively as *savoirs* rather than separately listing each *savior's* specific objectives.

During the 2022/2023 academic year, five different groups of EFL learners participated in a ten-session study to assess the effectiveness of the CLT approach compared to the ILT approach in developing learners' ICC. The research also examined how exposure to the native-speaker and non-native-speaker models influenced ICC development when implementing ILTA. The experiment was conducted in oral comprehension and expression classes, as first-year EFL learners in Algeria do not have a dedicated module for intercultural language teaching.

4. DISCUSSIONS

A noteworthy finding of this study is that encouraging a friendly atmosphere among learners enhances the outcomes of both CLTA and ILTA. Participants from both the control and experimental groups reported feeling more at ease after becoming acquainted with their peers. Notably, two female students who introduced each other during the first session later developed a close friendship and spent significant time together outside the classroom. Similar findings were reported in a recent study by Nam et al. (2023), which argued that ILTA contributes to personal growth. The present study extends this argument by suggesting that CLT can yield similar outcomes. Both CLTA and ILTA contributed positively to the enhancement of EFL learners' English language skills, particularly in listening and speaking. Learners were asked to complete short post-lesson worksheets, and the teacher-researcher occasionally guided improving their writing.

Apart from the results mentioned earlier, the lesson content differed between the control and experimental groups. Students in the control group were taught using the traditional methods commonly used at Mostaganem University. These lessons generally excluded the exploration of foreign cultures, concentrating rather on everyday topics such as *What is your favorite film?* Or educational games are mainly aimed at grammar instruction and vocabulary acquisition. On occasion, teachers incorporated cultural exploration, though this was approached from an essentialist conception (Ghaffour, 2022; Boudjelal, 2014). Several second-year students reported that teachers often asked them to present British culture superficially, primarily focusing on the dominant cultural aspects. Others noted that they resolved to present British or American cultures stereotypically. To address these issues before implementing ILTA with the experimental group, we designed the second lesson, *All About Cultures*, as an introductory step.

In light of the argument presented above, the second session (*All About Cultures*) has helped learners gain a deeper understanding of their multicultural and intercultural world. This is particularly pivotal, as lower foreign language education aims to foster both communication skills and global citizenship (Byram, 2008). Students became more conscious of the risks of stereotyping and reported in their post-lesson worksheets that the course helped them reject national determinism. Many scholars in the field of intercultural teaching approaches pointed out that national stereotypes and a nation-centered view of culture would hinder intercultural interactions and lead to misunderstandings between interlocutors (e.g., Holliday, 2010). A global mindset that transcends national identity and superficial differences is essential in order to foster a harmonious coexistence in an increasingly diverse world, as highlighted by the Council of Europe (2008): "live

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together amid growing cultural diversity."

Based on the experiment and thematic analysis results, the intercultural language teaching approach holistically develops EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence. In response to the research question "Which model is more effective in developing EFL learners' ICC: the native-speaker culture model or the non-native-speaker culture model?" the findings indicate that neither model is inherently superior. Both approaches led to positive outcomes, with nearly identical levels of ICC development. The distinct difference between the two models lies in students' willingness to interact with foreigners. This outcome may be attributed to the selection of cultures, as several students expressed a stronger connection and felt more appreciative when discussing topics related to their own racial and ethnic backgrounds (Arab and Kabyle). One student, for instance, marked, "I liked today's lesson since we discussed racism and all, but I feel like we needed to address this phenomenon within Algeria or at least in the MENA region." While qualitative feedback from treatment group 2 (non-native-speaker model) was largely positive, many students reported enjoying lessons that focused on their preferred cultures, such as Turkish, Saudi Arabian, Japanese, Korean, and so on.

Despite the minor differences between the native-speaker and non-native-speaker models in ILTA, this innovative approach effectively proved the developmental outcomes scholars associate with it. The results indicate that the ILTA as an approach is functional in: (1) ameliorating EFL learners' language proficiency across the four skills, (2) advancing personal growth, including forming and maintaining relationships, (3) promoting global citizenship through discussions on social issues at both local and global levels, like racism and sexism, and (4) challenging cultural stereotypes.

5. CONCLUSION

The empirical research adds to the existing body of literature advocating for the explicit integration of intercultural issues in foreign language teaching through an intercultural approach. A range of intercultural topics was selected, progressing from surface-level to in-depth explorations of different cultures. The findings demonstrate that intercultural language instruction does not have to be limited to native-speaking cultures; rather, it may be applied effectively by researching non-native-speaking cultures. This is particularly important for universities with limited access to native speakers since it validates the use of existing non-native cultures in the classroom.

The communicative language teaching approach, on the other hand, yielded statistically insignificant results in terms of intercultural abilities development. Consequently, we argue that its continued use, in its current form, is no longer beneficial. Given the increasing significance of intercultural competence and global awareness in today's context of globalization, CLT still appears insufficient and outdated in addressing these educational needs.

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