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Intercultural Communicative Competence: Definition, Models, Measurement Instruments, and Empirical Practice in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract- Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) connects language with culture. Its pioneering writer was Byram, and many scholars had also approached it. ICC basically helps avoid any conversation breakdowns in a culture other than the individual's. Thus, the study addressed the ICC and its implications in the EFL classroom. The researcher defined ICC, and many models of ICC were surveyed and explained. Moreover, the study suggested many instruments to measure how individuals move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelatoivism. EFL classroom strategies were also included, and selected empirical studies in the fields of ICC and classroom were approached. The study concluded that this study's theoretical and empirical implications would improve EFL teaching in the classroom and dispel cultural misconceptions. These aspects will help improve EFL classroom teaching consequently, dispel cultural misconceptions about other cultures.

Keywords: Bennet; Byram; EFL; Ethnocentrism; Ethnorelativism; Intercultural communicative competence; Intercultural sensitivity.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1989, Hantrais noted that culture is a set of beliefs and practices that govern any society, and language is used as the vehicle of expression. He, therefore, regarded language as culture and culture as language. Furthermore, in 1996, the Council of Europe approved some Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards. The council issued guidelines for language competencies that learners must acquire to become proficient in them. Therefore, the preamble of CEFR affirmed that language learning should "promote mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication" (p.3). Consequently, ELT researchers and teachers are focusing more on the capacity to employ language resources to communicate effectively in a variety of socio-cultural contexts. Thus, "to avoid becoming a fluent fool, there is a need to understand more completely the cultural dimension of the language" (Bennett, 1997, p. 16) and "intentionally addressing intercultural competence development at the post-secondary level through programs, orientations, experiences, and courses–for both our domestic and international students–is essential if we are to graduate globally-ready students" (Deardorff, 2006a, p. 2). Some scholars argue that culture is the fifth skill to be incorporated in a language classroom apart from the LSRW skills (Larson-Freeman, 2000). Similarly, Giri (2006) reiterated the context of the previous definitions and underlined the need for language to communicate with other cultures.

Based on this rooted and close connection between language and culture, promoting intercultural communication ability has become a priority in the EFL classroom after ages of solely focusing on grammatical and lexical teaching and learning. Therefore, Kumaravadivelu (2008) suggested a cultural transformation based on a pedagogic program to encourage the students to negotiate meanings and values. This, in turn, opens numerous possibilities for the students to investigate cultures and promotes intercultural communication. By the same token, Banks and Banks (2010) proposed integrating a multicultural content curriculum into the ESL environment. In this curriculum, the teacher must play different motivating roles: dispelling stereotypes through situations, promoting cultural sensitivity, and sharing intercultural stories and experiences. University graduates can learn to interact and communicate effectively with other cultures only if they are presented with intercultural materials to practice and produce L2. Accordingly, this study will address the issue of ICC and its impact on improving cultural literacy and cultural sensitivity.

This study aims to answer the following main question:
1- How does integrating ICC into EFL classrooms impact students' cultural literacy and sensitivity compared to traditional grammar and vocabulary-focused approaches?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Implementation of ICC in the EFL classroom*

Alptekin (2002) argued that communicative competence continued to adhere strictly to the norms of the target language culture. Alptekin criticized the idealized figure of the native speaker created in the British and American textbooks. Alptekin noted that promoting communicative competence in the EFL classroom would not help to achieve intercultural communication. Indeed, Alptekin suggested that this would be inappropriate and hinder international and cross-cultural communication. Instead, he was in favour of the ICC. Also, Alptekin pointed out that English was a lingua franca for professional

contacts and academic studies. This involves much communication among non-native speakers. Hence, strengthening ICC would be more appropriate.

Promoting ICC in the classroom does not mean relinquishing the usual methods of teaching L2; teachers can still use role-playing, miming, group work, and other collaborative activities. The difference will lie in the new roles of the teachers and students and changing their attitudes toward whether ICC should be an integral part of the L2 classroom. The teacher's role will also be that of a mediator or facilitator. Teachers also teach their subject knowledge and are expected to develop new attitudes, skills, and critical thinking. In the long run, the students should become competent enough to build on their own cultural beliefs and behaviors to explore other cultures and compare them with their own culture (Aguilar, 2008).

### 2.2 *Intercultural, cross-cultural, multicultural communication*

The terms intercultural, cross-cultural and multicultural communication may appear synonymous but are different concepts. To begin with, multicultural communication involves many cultures living together in one country; however, each has its own identity and entity; interaction and communication among these communities are not evident and even unnecessary. On the other hand, cross-cultural communication involves a comparison of different cultures, and a dominant culture stands out as the standard or norm against which to compare. Each culture identifies and understands the differences. Therefore, communication and interaction are limited since the main purpose is to acquire knowledge of the other and behave accordingly.

Conversely, intercultural communication deeply enhances cultural interaction, and communication is a central feature. No one is left behind or unchanged in this kind of communication since everyone learns and grows in a consolidated interactive society (Fries, 2003; Schriefer, 2016).

2.3 *Communicative competence components*

The term was coined by Hymes (1972) in reaction to Chomsky's linguistic or grammatical competence. Chomsky (1965) underlined that "A grammar of a language purports to be a description of the ideal speaker-hearer's intrinsic competence" (p. 4). Almost all theoreticians have agreed that the communicatively competent user should possess knowledge of the language and how to use this competence in communicative situations (Bagaric, 2007). Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980) agreed that the components of communicative competence should be:

1- Grammatical or linguistic competence refers to knowledge of and the ability to use language resources to form well-structured messages.

2- Sociolinguistic competence refers to possessing knowledge and skills for appropriate language use in social contexts, including social relationships, rules of appropriate behavior, and expressions of people's wisdom.

3- Strategic competence is knowledge of how to use communication strategies to handle breakdowns in communication.

4- Discourse competence refers to the knowledge of achieving coherence and cohesion in a spoken or written text.
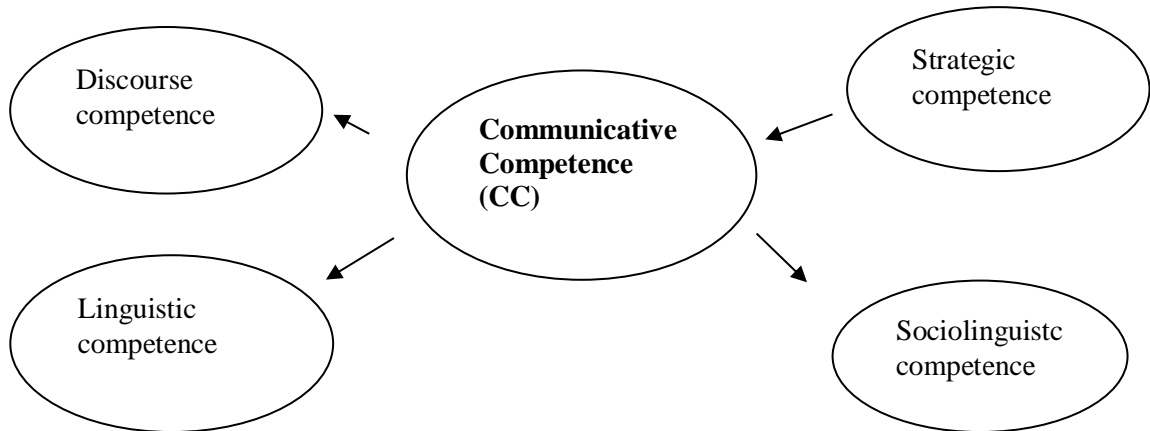
However, some scholars believe that promoting communicative competence in the EFL classroom is insufficient to develop intercultural communication. Alpetkin (2002) considered promoting it inappropriate and hindering international and cross-cultural communication. Alpetkin claimed that communicative competence is strict and adheres to the norms of the target language culture. Alpetkin also criticized the idealized figure of the native speaker created in the British and American textbooks. Alpetkin argued that while English is the lingua Franca for professional contacts, academic studies involve much communication among non-native speakers.

2.4 *ICC*

However, The pioneer of ICC, Byram (1997), proposed the following five components of ICC.
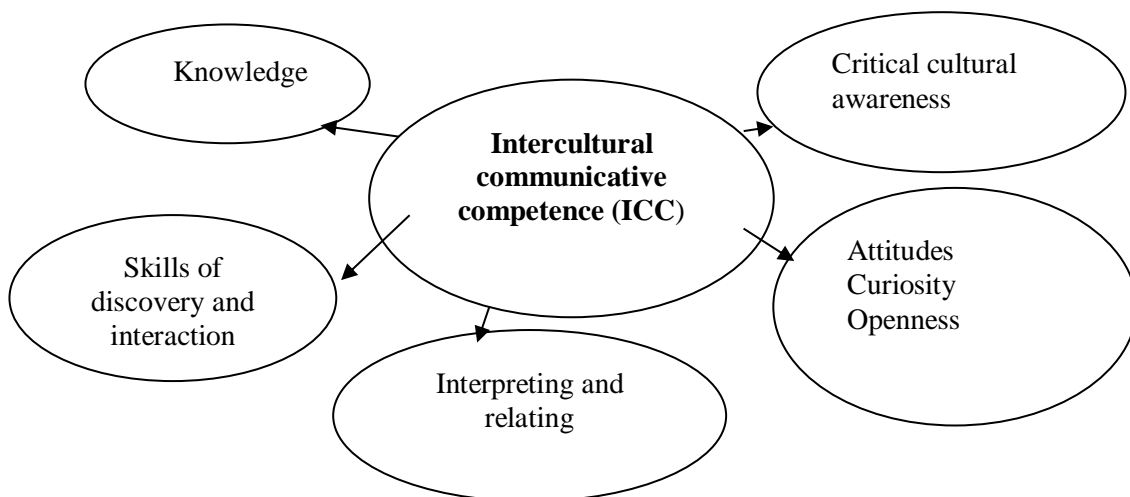
Many scholars are in favour of the ICC. Aguilar (2002) and Alpetkin (2002) applauded ICC. They contended that it was a new step forward in strengthening language proficiency. Alpetkin suggested that ICC should be developed among EFL learners by equipping them with linguistic and cultural behaviour, which will enable them to communicate successfully and fruitfully with others. Similarly, Aguilar confirmed the necessity of adopting Byram's model of ICC as a replacement for communicative competence.

2.5 *Intercultural sensitivity*

Intercultural sensitivity is a participant's "active desire to motivate oneself to comprehend, respect, and accept differences among cultures" (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 231). It is a requirement for intercultural communication competency. People with a higher level of intercultural sensitivity are thought to become more confident global citizens as their grasp of cultural differences improves (Chen & Starosta, 2000).

Intercultural sensitivity, according to Bennett (1993), has six stages: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration of cultural diversity. On the other hand, Hammer et al. (2003) claimed that as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more nuanced and sophisticated, one's prospective competence in intercultural relations grows. Anand and Lahiri (2009) distinguished between ICC and intercultural sensitivity; the former was regarded as acting properly in any intercultural situation; the latter was defined as the competence to differentiate, experience, and address cultural differences properly. Thus, intercultural sensitivity (IS) preceded IC.

2.6 *Implementation of the ICC in the classroom*

According to researchers, promoting ICC in the classroom does not mean relinquishing the common methods of teaching L2. Teachers may continue to use role-playing, miming, group work, and other cooperative activities. The difference would lie in the new roles of the teachers and students and changing their attitudes toward whether ICC should be an integral part of the L2 classroom. Additionally, the teacher's role is seen as more of a mediator or facilitator; teachers are entitled to teach knowledge and develop new attitudes, skills, and critical thinking. In the short and long run, students should be competent enough to build on their own cultural beliefs and behaviours to explore other cultures and compare them with their own culture. In this respect, a competent teacher is not a native or non-native speaker but a person who can influence the learners' perceptions of their culture and those of others (Aguilar, 2008).

2.7 *Strategies for promoting intercultural communication*

Oxford (2001) and Celce-Muricia (2008) agreed on three learning strategies regarding ICC. They are classified as cognitive, metacognitive, and memory-related. With respect to cognitive strategy, students usually learn by outlining, summarizing, note-taking, organizing, and reviewing. In addition, metacognitive strategies are developed through noting errors, feedback from peers and teachers, guessing the meaning of words from contexts or grammatical functions, etc. The third strategy—memory-related—helps learners recall words using certain clues like acronyms, images, and sounds. Further, Celce-Muricia (2008) highlighted that to develop communicative skills, teachers should use certain lesson plans whose components are drawn from linguistics, sociolinguistics, and culture. These lesson plans may include activities such as using mobile phones or writing e-mails to cite opinions, summarizing the main idea of the discourse, role-playing, and writing newsletters about cultural differences.

2.8 *Models of ICC*

Many scholars and researchers have scrutinized the concept of ICC; each proposed model has its merits and drawbacks. According to Spitzberg and Cupach (1989), no model of ICC may be considered perfect since "most existing cultural communicative methods have been fairly fragmented" (p. 344).

2.9 *Development model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS)*

Bennett (1986) created the development model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS)

to illustrate how people adapt and integrate with cultural differences. Bennett (1986, 1993) proposed and outlined six stages of the development of intercultural competence, in which learners move from ethnocentrism (three stages) to ethnorelativism (three stages). Ethnocentrism is the attitude of the learners who regard their own cultures as superior to others. According to the DMIS, ethnocentrism goes through three stages:

1- Denial: People refuse the existence of cultural differences. They believe their culture is right, cultural differences are unacceptable, and their values should be prioritized.

2- Defense: People recognize the existence of cultural differences, but they regard them as invalid. Specifically, people believe that it is difficult to cope with cultural differences, and they tend to avoid dealing with other cultures because they feel threatened. •

3- Minimization: People in this stage are still obsessed with the threat of cultural differences but try to make it less acute; they adopt certain ideas, such as people being more similar than different. They no longer describe other people as inferior or unlucky (Nadeem et al., 2018; Vegh & Luu, 2019).

Bennett (1993) explains ethnorelativism thus: "Cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that a particular behavior can be understood within a cultural context" (p. 46). Ethnorelativism is comprised of the following stages.

First,

1- Acceptance: The cultural differences are recognized and accepted but with no adaptation. More specifically, people accept the values and behaviors of other cultures.

2- Adaptation: In this stage, the cultural differences are viewed as positive. Consequently, people tend to change their behavior to suit those of different cultures. People also tend to view cultural differences as invaluable resources.

3- Integration: In this last stage, the movement from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism is achieved. People become satisfied that identity is not exclusive to one culture.

2.10   *Spitzberg's model*

Spitzberg (1997) defined ICC as communication that is appropriate and effective. That is, appropriateness means the rules or values are not clearly broken. Effectiveness is the achievement of goals in terms of successes and failures. Spitzberg suggested an interactional process between motivation, knowledge, and skills. All these components are interacting with what the interactant expects of the others. If the expectations are fulfilled, then the interactant is interculturally competent and vice versa. Spitzberg also identified conditions that tend to increase communicative competence. That is, when motivation increases due to confidence, the interactant will be more culturally literate and knowledgeable, identity and diversity will increase among cultures, communicative skills will be enhanced, and relational competence will increase in terms of the accomplishment of the autonomy needed.

2.11   *Cultural intelligence (CQ) model*

In 2003, Earley and Ang proposed the construct of cultural intelligence as "another complementary form of intelligence that can explain variability in coping with diversity and functioning in new cultural settings" (p. 23). This new framework of cultural intelligence was based on Stern's framework of 1986. Sternberg (1986) identified four dimensions of intelligence: metacognition, cognition, motivation, and behaviour (as cited in Ang et al., 2007, p. 337). The metacognitive dimension includes all

mental processes the learners employ to attain more information about other cultures, like self-monitoring, planning, and awareness of other cultures and their interaction preferences. Cognitive CQ displays an understanding of different cultures' values, beliefs, and practices—in other words, how cultures are similar and distinct. Motivational CQ is the ability to focus one's attention and energy on cultural differences and adapt to them. Finally, behavioral CQ refers to the use of appropriate verbal and nonverbal acts in intercultural relationships (Ang et al., 2007).

2.12   *The pyramid model of ICC*

Dreadroff (2006, 2009) proposed the pyramid model of ICC (ICC). The ICC elements included in this model are:

1- Desired external outcomes, which were to behave and communicate effectively and appropriately;
2- Desired internal outcomes such as adaptability, flexibility, ethnorelative views and empathy;
3- Knowledge and comprehension, such as having information about one's culture and other cultures;
4- Skills, such as listening and analysis, and the ability to analyze, evaluate and relate;
5- Requisite attitudes include mutual respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery.

2.13   *Integrated model of ICC (IMICC)*

Arasantam et al. (2010) proposed a comprehensive, integrated model of intercultural communicative competence (IMICC). This model was designed to be general and cross-cultural. It includes motivation, empathy, attitudes, interaction involvement, and intercultural experience. The above discussion of various models also brings to attention the significance of culture in the EFL classroom and the need to integrate modes of developing intercultural communicative competence and strengthening language skills.

2.14   *Instruments of measuring ICC*

Klemp (1979) pointed out that "competence can be measured. But its measurement depends on its definition" (p. 41). Similarly, Kuada (2004) stated that for ICC to be assessed effectively, "there is a need for a clearer definition of the concept of international competence" (p. 10). Although ICC assessment is not easy, it is fruitful since it provides immediate feedback to the teachers and decision-makers on how much intercultural knowledge and experience the learners have, according to which the teaching methodologies, curricula, and extracurricular activities, policies, and procedures may be either sustained or modified (Skopiskaja, 2009).

2.15   *Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)*

This instrument is theoretically based on Bennett's DMIS (Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity), which was explained in the previous section. As mentioned earlier, DMIS involves six stages of intercultural development, from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Hammer et al. (2003) proposed an ICC measurement tool called the intercultural development inventory (IDI) to measure the three stages of ethnocentrism (denial, defense, and minimization) and of ethnorelativism (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). They claimed that this 50-item instrument, in which respondents are scored according to a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to agree strongly), can be used with confidence since it is valid and reliable. According to Paras et al. (2019), Lebak

(2012), Hammer (2003), and Paige et al. (2003), this scale is valid and accurately predicts attitudes toward cultural differences.

2.16   *Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS)*

This scale is based on the cultural intelligence model developed by Earley and Ang in 2003, discussed in detail in the previous section. As explained earlier, the CQ model comprises four dimensions: metacognitive, cognitive, motivation, and behavior. Accordingly, this scale is composed of these four areas, each of which includes five items. In addition, this measuring instrument is scored using a 7-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Ang et al. (2007), Gozzoli and Gazzaroli (2018), and Wright (2016) stated that this 20-item model can be used with confidence since it is valid and reliable.

2.17   *Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC)*

This scale was developed by scholars at the universities of Groningen, Amsterdam, Gent, and Toronto. The IRC model is comprised of four behavioural dimensions: intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication, building commitment and preference for uncertainty. The ultimate purpose of these four competencies is to build intercultural effectiveness. This scale is scored using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). It is a 60-item instrument that can be used with confidence (Brinkman &Wink, 2007; IRC).

2.18   *The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ)*

Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee developed the scale between 2000 and 2001. It is comprised of five personality components: cultural empathy, emotional stability, flexibility, open-mindedness, and social initiative. The ultimate purpose of these five dimensions is to measure cultural effectiveness and assess the behavioral dimensions of intercultural competence. This scale is rated using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). It is a 9-item instrument to be completed within 15 minutes (Popescu et al., 2014; Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002).

2.19   *Cross-cultural adaptability inventory (CCAI)*

Kelly and Meyers developed and revised this scale in 1992. This scale includes four cross-cultural subscales: emotional resilience, flexibility and openness, perpetual acuity, and personal autonomy. The ultimate purpose of these four dimensions is to identify a participant's strengths and weaknesses in the four areas of cross-cultural communication and interaction. This scale is rated using a 5-point Likert scale (definitely not true to definitely true). It is a 50-item instrument to be completed within 20 minutes (Davis & Finney, 2003; Kelly & Meyers, 1992).

2.20   *Intercultural sensitivity index (ISI)*

This instrument is based on Bennett's DMIS (Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity), which involves six stages of intercultural development, starting from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, which the researcher explained in the previous section. Olson and Kroeger (2001) developed Bennett's tool for measuring DMIS IDI and developed a 48-item scale called the Intercultural Sensitivity Index (ISI). This scale is comprised of nine intercultural competence components, six of which are modified from IDI (denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, integration). The others are:

1-   Substantive knowledge: It measures the world's interdependence, knowledge of other cultures, linguistic, and cultural competence besides using another language.
2-   Perpetual understanding: It measures the mutual understanding of differences between

cultures, knowledge, appreciation of one's culture, and resistance to stereotypes.

3-   Intercultural communication: It measures cross-cultural communication and awareness of cultural differences. (Brinkman & Wink, 2007; Fantini & Tirmizi,2006; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Schnabel, 2013).

This instrument measures almost all the components of ICC and its stages. The first stage is ethnocentrism, which is comprised of the following levels or dimension:

1- Denial: Its main theme is that cultural differences are neither existent nor noticeable.

2- Defense: It highlights that cultural differences exist. However, they are threatening one's culture.

3- Minimization: The individual minimizes the cultural differences, saying that people are more similar than different.

The second stage is ethnorelativism, which includes the following dimensions or levels:

1- Acceptance: This dimension focuses on the respect of diverse cultural values and behaviors.

2- Adaptation: This level focuses on seeing the world with different eyes and adapting behavior.

3- Integration: It mainly aims to promote and maintain one's culture and integrate other cultures.

The third stage is global competence, which entails the following three levels:

1- Substantive knowledge: This level addresses the need for more substantial cultural knowledge.

2- Perpetual understanding: It measures the open-mindedness that promotes universal worldviews.

3- Intercultural communication: It measures intercultural engagement and mediation. The improvement in ICC is measured in terms of the shift from one level to another in the same stage or from one stage to another.

4- For this purpose, an ISI questionnaire was developed and included 48 items measured according to a 5-point Likert Scale (Never Describe Me to Describe Me Extremely).

2.21   *Global perspective inventory (GPI)*

This instrument is theoretically based on two intercultural concepts: cultural development and cultural communication. Cultural development is defined as the awareness of feelings and relating to others and the ability to reflect on experiences. It is classified into three categories: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal (Kegan, 1994; King & Magloda, 2005). Comparatively, communication in an intercultural context requires holistic interaction between the three dimensions: the cognitive (how do I know), the affective (how do I feel), and the behavioral (how do I relate to others) (Chen and Storosta 1996). This instrument is composed of 32 items and scored using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) (Braskamp et al., 2014; Research Institute for Studies in Education, 2017).

2.22   *Assessment of intercultural competence (AIC)*

It is a multidimensional scale that measures knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical awareness. It consists of 54 items and is rated using a 6- 6-point Likert Scale (not

at all competent to extremely high competent) (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006). The new component here is critical cultural awareness, which is defined as managing stereotypes through intercultural teaching and experience (Nugent & Catalono, 2015).

2.23   *The behavioural assessment scale for international communication (BASIC*

The behavioural assessment scale for international communication (BASIC) was developed from Ruben's scale (1976), which included intercultural behavioural assessment indices (IBAI). However, BASIC added one more dimension to become eight instead of seven, as in IBAI; the added dimension is relational role behavior. The eight dimensions are rated using a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The scale measures display of respect, orientation to knowledge, empathy, interaction management, task role behaviour (getting involved in group discussion), relational role (group harmony), and interaction postures (judgmental way of dealing with others) (Koester & Olebe, 1988, 1989).

2.24   *The Intercultural Awareness, Sensitivity, and Effectiveness Scales*

Portalla and Chen (2010) have created three tools to measure intercultural competency holistically: intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural effectiveness. Intercultural awareness represents the cognitive dimensions of intercultural competence in Chen and Starosta's (1996) approach. It is the ability to comprehend different cultures, which depends on self-awareness and cultural understanding. To assess this, the Intercultural Awareness Scale was developed. On the other hand, intercultural sensitivity refers to the affective aspects of intercultural competence. The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was developed by Chen and Starosta (2000).

3. EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will discuss some of the studies that used these tools and models in their experiments that offered results of interest for the present study. Li-Hua and Shu-sing (2010) examined Project Based Learning (PBL) using intensive reading to promote ICC at a Chinese university among students whose major was English. The sample was 80 students divided evenly into two experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught intensive reading using PBL, in which the role of the teacher was a facilitator. However, the control group was taught intensive reading using the traditional way of teaching, which was teacher-centered and did not involve any PBL. The experiment lasted for nine months. The intervention was represented by introducing reading texts and teaching them intensively.

Therefore, the students chose a project, which was a reading text through brainstorming, like "Hitler's speech on the invasion of the USSR." To assess this intervention, the researchers used two pre- and post-questionnaires, English proficiency tests, self-assessment sheets, and open-ended questions attached to the questionnaires. The results found that integration of intercultural dimension into intensive reading through PBL is essential and profitable. Also, the results revealed that the students' attitudes towards other cultures were positive. PBL is effective as it connects language learning with intercultural experiences. Wright (2016) organized a workshop to examine the effectiveness of document-based questions (DBQ) in promoting the ICC of An-Najah University, Palestine undergraduates. This experiment was carried out in a workshop, and the students were distributed into two control and experimental groups, each of which consisted of 21 female and male students from all years and disciplines of the university.

The control group had training in professional English language skills like writing a CV and cover letter, speaking on the phone, job interviews, etc. The experimental group was trained using DBQ. Consequently, the researcher recommended that teachers always seek proper intercultural teaching methods to develop the students' intercultural content with language-related ones, and while teaching intercultural objectives, teachers should avoid building up stereotypes and intercultural misunderstanding.

In this paper, Nie (2017) experimented to study the impact of promoting intercultural communication through the intervention of novels using the journal teaching method. The participants were 69 undergraduates in a Chinese university, 48 of whom were females and 21 were males from various university disciplines and years. The experiment lasted for a semester, in which the students attended two hours of English classes a week. To achieve the purpose of the study, the students were given a 320-page novel called Veil of Roses by Laura Fitzgerald to read at home extensively. The participants were pre-tested and post-tested using two questionnaires before and after reading the novel and journal intervention. The results showed that using the novel to promote ICC was effective since the texts involved authentic experiences.

Bouhidel (2018) conducted a study for her MA thesis. Her main purpose was to promote ICC at a sophomore university level at the University of Batna, Algeria, by integrating literary texts. The research design was experimental, which involved the mixed method. Therefore, the data were collected using quantitative tools, i.e., a pre-test and a post-test, and qualitative tools, i.e., two questionnaires for both teachers and students. The experimental intervention lasted for a whole year, in which literary texts from British literature were introduced. The sample consisted of 90 students in experimental and control groups. The results showed that the introduction of literary texts enhanced ICC, which is students' understanding of the target culture.

Rezaei and Naghibi (2018) investigated the impact of the intervention of teaching short stories in the EFL classroom using intensive reading in promoting ICC among Iranian undergraduate students at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran. To achieve this purpose, 14 intercultural texts were designed and then taught using intensive reading, cross-cultural discussions, role-plays, and critical thinking activities in the classroom. Reflective journals and semi-structured interviews were used as assessment tools. The researcher concluded that positive attitudes and a wider understanding were developed as a result of using intercultural texts to promote ICC through intensive reading.

Yu and Maele (2018) studied the effect of integrating intercultural awareness in an intensive English reading class in a Chinese university, where 77 undergraduates were involved. The experiment lasted for a semester. During the experiment, the participants were taught to read texts intensively using the reading strategies of scanning, comprehending and summarizing, analyzing and comparing, reflecting and evaluating, and finally, empathizing and respecting. The researchers concluded that intensive reading raises intercultural awareness.

Gunes and Mede (2019) conducted action research to examine the impact of integrating ICC teaching into an EFL class. The sample was composed of 20 female and female students A1 level students in Istanbul, Turkey. During the 1st semester of 2019, the participants were taught through some ICC tasks like multicultural texts, role-playing, and interactive cultural activities. To assess the impact of ICC inclusion into an EFL classroom, the researcher used the mixed method, which utilized 28 item pre and post-questionnaire designed according to a 5-point Likert scale, quantitative tools, and semi-structured interviews and teachers' reflective journals as qualitative tools. The student concluded that the sample's views were significantly different after the ICC was

integrated. The participants showed more development in their perceptions of their culture and other cultures. They also became aware of the presence of differences between cultures, which should be respected and promoted. In terms of pedagogy, integrating ICC tasks into the EFL classroom will definitely help students communicate more effectively in cultures other than their own, improving students' attitudes, reactions, and communicative skills.

Imamyartha et al. (2019) investigated the engagement of EFL readers in literature to enhance ICC. The study targeted first-year Indonesian university students. The sample comprised 34 freshmen students who received four weeks of intercultural learning and cultural awareness in the first semester of 2019, 75 minutes a week. The participants were provided with diversified reading texts explaining certain intercultural concepts in situations. Those texts were taught using intensive reading, which included three phases: teaching the reading text for 30 minutes, doing the related tasks for 30 minutes, and organizing a group discussion for 15 minutes. To assess the experiment, the researcher implemented a pre-experiment ICC questionnaire, a during-experiment ICC questionnaire, and an open-ended post-ICC questionnaire. As a result, the participants' intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes were improved. In addition, reading texts greatly increased the students' ICC, with intercultural understanding being the most important factor in determining ICC. Those intercultural reading texts inspired first-year university students to be open-minded and accepting of cultural differences.

Upton and Kassim (2019) applied an intercultural education training program to university students in Japan to increase the ICC in the EFL Japanese classroom. The sample was comprised of 18 junior students who received one semester of intercultural learning and cultural awareness, 90 minutes a week. To implement this experiment, the researcher used mixed methods research that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative tools. The quantitative tool was a questionnaire rated using a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree to strongly agree). However, the qualitative tools included reflection journals and semi-structured interviews with five volunteering students. The participants were provided reading texts explaining certain intercultural concepts in different situations. To assess the experiment, the researcher implemented the following instruments: pre- and post-questionnaires, weekly reflection journals, and interviews. As a result, the participants' intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes were improved together with a decrease in the fear of the unexpected.

Maghsoudi (2020) compared the English textbooks used in Iran and India. The study's main purpose was to investigate the percentage of ICC-inclusive content in the textbooks used in the two countries. Therefore, in the academic year of 2019-2020, the Iranian English curriculum (Prospect & Vision) and the Indian English curriculum (Standard English) at the high school level were analyzed. Qualitative analyses were duly conducted. As a result, the researcher concluded that the Indian English textbooks minimally and to a small extent promoted ICC, especially at the upper level, and specifically enhanced critical cultural awareness. However, the Iranian textbooks were totally deprived of any ICC context. Thus, the researcher was dissatisfied with the negligence of ICC contexts in these textbooks. He stressed that ICC teaching through multicultural material should be explicitly, but not implicitly, included in the English teaching material since the world is now a global village.

Arvelo and Nocito (2021) conducted a training course for lecturers at two public universities in Spain. The purpose of the study was to investigate the beliefs of the participants about the inclusion of ICC teaching in English medium instruction. The study sample was comprised of 21 female and male lecturers. The sample partook in a

four-module training program, each lasting four hours a week. Interculturality was one of the topics in which the participants were intensively involved. The researcher used the mixed method, where pre- and post-questionnaires were used as quantitative instruments and self-reflective reports as qualitative tools. The 20-item questionnaire was designed according to a 5-point Likert scale. The analysis of results showed that cultural awareness through intercultural in-class tasks should be included in English teaching, and internationalization of English teaching should be enhanced. They conceded that the participant's beliefs about the inclusion of ICC tasks before the training developed into more supportive stances in favour of ICC after the training.

Tambunan et al. (2021) investigated the ICC (ICC) level among university students in the northern universities of Indonesia. The instrument of the study was a 20-item questionnaire which made use of a 5-point Likert- scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The sample consisted of 89 participants; the females were 28, whereas the males were 61. The age of the sample ranged between 18 and 20. The participants were enrolled in an EFL course and tested for their cross-cultural understanding during the survey. This quantitative survey concluded that students lacked knowledge about cultures and how to understand intercultural communication. The study demonstrated the need to develop and enhance students' ICC in a language course. Multicultural activities incorporating ICC in the EFL classroom would develop intercultural awareness and reduce barriers to mutual understanding. The researchers recommended the inclusion of an intercultural curriculum in universities teaching English as a foreign language. The survey of empirical studies presented above suggests that using multicultural narratives to strengthen language skills in EFL classrooms has effectively promoted ICC among learners to varying degrees. Such texts have also been quite effective in developing language skills due to the involvement and motivation of learners, as well as collaborative learning techniques used in the classrooms.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explained in detail the ICC, its models, assessment tools, and implications in the EFL classroom. It also reviewed several empirical studies that integrated intercultural content through various approaches, such as project-based learning, document-based questions, novels, and intensive reading of multicultural texts. The research clearly distinguished between communicative competence and ICC. It also highlighted how the latter extends beyond language skills, including cultural awareness, sensitivity, and adaptability. The findings suggest that incorporating multicultural materials into EFL teaching promotes language development and helps students progress from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism and global competence. These highlighted aspects will guide teachers in improving EFL classroom practices and, consequently, help dispel cultural misconceptions about other cultures.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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