
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Innovative Assessment Techniques for ICC at tertiary level: Kenitra School of Education Sciences and Training (ESEF) in Morocco: A case study

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| ABSTRACT

The scant nature of research endeavours that tried investigating the issue of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Morocco fuelled the motive behind this study. Therefore, this study aims at assessing the usefulness of novel ways of assessing ICC in the Moroccan educational context via investigating the perceptions of 60 EFL students at Kenitra School of Education Sciences and Training (ESEF) in Morocco to detect their point of views about the new potential ways of assessment such as portfolios, role plays and reflective journals in comparison with the standardized paper and pen-based modes of assessment. The study was geared by two main objectives: Attest the usefulness of plausible ways of assessing students' ICC with regard to students' perspectives and advocate and proscribe effective and efficient methods of assessing students' ICC via answering the following questions: Do ESEF students' find the current ways of assessing their ICC useful? What are the most effective and efficient assessment methods of ICC from students' perspectives?. Thus, the study adopted a quantitative design using an on-line questionnaire, to probe into students' attitudes and reactions, which generated useful findings that were analyzed in a simple and clear but eye-friendly statistical way. In brief, though the shortage of analogical studies, the results affirmatively backed up the realization of the study's objectives in the sense that a bunch of recommendations were set forth to be put into practice by practitioners and stake holders alike.

| KEYWORDS

Assessment, Intercultural Communicative Competence, perceptions

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 10 March 2026

PUBLISHED: 20 April 2026

DOI: 10.32996/bjtep.2026.5.4.2

INTRODUCTION

In a technology driven era and the win-win policy undergone by Morocco which is gauged by the guidance of his majesty the king Mohamed VI, with regard to its globally strategic locality amidst Africa and Europe, it is high time we thought about exploring novel ways of assessing the intercultural communicative competence of our university students as future work force that would gear the development of our country in a multi-dimensional geopolitical zone (Heydemann, 2007; Aydoun&Kenbib, 2015; Ghaicha, 2018; Qaissi, 2019; Higher Council of Education Training and Scientific Research, 2018, 2021). Henceforth, higher education worldwide, among which Morocco is not an exception, is becoming increasingly multicultural. So, the need for evaluative systems that measure students' abilities to communicate and co-operate transculturally has become rudimentary.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) might not only be a practical question as a communicative ability but it requires a social and ethical dimension to the interaction (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). This is particularly pressing for innovative assessment systems for Moroccan higher institutions like ESEF in Kenitra, wherein students are embarked in an educational milieu of Arabic, French and English with all paralinguistic ramifications (Aydoun & Kenbib, Cultural diversity and education in Morocco: Challenges and prospects, 2015; Hadri, 2022). Strikingly appealing, while the High Council of Education, Training and Scientific Research (2018, 2021) asserts that intercultural openness and communication are key national priorities, assessment practices remain largely traditional and summative (Qaissi, 2019).

In a nutshell, this literature review along with the study framework examine the emerging global models of ICC assessment and aims to pragmatically revise the Moroccan tertiary education methodological trends so as that the gap between educational practice and institutional policy would be bridged in the sense that high quality engineering measures in assessment should ensure efficient use of the right technical input needed to achieve the desired educational outcomes; the better engineered an education system is, the more capable it will be in producing relatively better education results (Ghaicha, 2018; Spolsky, 1999; Shohamy, 2001).

1. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Assessment and testing practices of a given country are double-edged as they can lead the country into a better destination wherein the pursuit of the social good thrives or, unfortunately, to a bitter fact that makes both the future of society and the credibility of its educational system at stake.

The conceptual shift from the traditional views of student assessment to more contemporary ways of assessment is, theoretically, very promising and inspiring as well (M.E.N, 2007, 2014), but it seems to be, practically, taking a very slow motion with regard to the whole building block formats of the standardized testing in higher education.

Language tests play a powerful if not a detrimental role in many people's lives, acting as gateways at important transitional moments in education, in employment, and in moving from one country to another (Amrous & Nejmaoui, 2017; Lazrak & Yechouti, 2017). Therefore, the rationale behind the study is investigating Kenitra ESEF students' perceptions about the usefulness of a variety of alternative ways and models of assessing their intercultural communicative competencies and postulating novel ways of assessing them.

2. RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The caveats of current assessment practices raise the researchers' concern about the pedagogical value of the contemporary testing and evaluation methods in a bound-less world, wherein global citizenship instead of localized one has become prevalent, as their current investigation seeks to reach the following objectives:

1. Attest the usefulness of plausible ways of assessing students' intercultural communicative competence with regard to students' perspectives.
2. Advocate and proscribe effective and efficient methods of assessing students' intercultural communicative competence.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is undeniable that there is a difference between research problems and research questions. The former refers to some types of difficulty that a researcher encounters or experiences during his or her study of a given topic or phenomenon (Kothari, 2008) whereas the latter engenders some "specific question[s] asked in the course of investigation to which a specific answer or set of answers is sought...before arriving at possible hypotheses" (Tavakoli, 2012, p. 49). Hence, the questions that were put forward are:

1. Do ESEF students' find the current ways of assessing their intercultural communicative competence useful?
2. What are the most effective and efficient assessment methods of ICC from students' perspectives?

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Though the proliferation of academic studies and research in the field of language testing and assessment in Morocco (Ouakrim 1986; Ennaji, 1987; Melouk, 1996; Bouziane, 2016; Lazrak&Yachouti, 2017; Ghaicha, 2018; Ghaicha&Elghazi, 2024), the results and implications of such endeavors reside with the researchers, shelves of libraries or international research journals sites in the sense that educational authorities in Morocco do not heed it much attention but merely launch new reforms as the case of the recent strategic vision 2015-2030 (El Ghazi, & Ghaicha, 2024).

Accordingly, this investigation will be a pragmatic leverage and plus in the academic sphere of educational research in Morocco and intentionally unveil the recondite enquiries of students about the usefulness of the current ways and models of assessing students' intercultural communicative competencies.

5. SYNOPTIC LITERATURE REVIEW

A neatly chosen set of studies, books, journals, articles and communiqués was shuffled and sieved so as to construct a synoptic literature review should guide the trajectory of this study.

So, the content of the literature review will tap at various related key issues in educational assessment research notably conceptual foundations of ICC, conventional assessment methods, the use of standards-aligned assessment tools, scenario-and simulation-based tasks, e-portfolios and reflective assessment, assessment for virtual exchange and COIL, innovative design principles for assessment in ICC and, finally, ICC assessment in the Moroccan scenario as the focal pillar of this study.

1. Conceptual Foundations of ICC

ICC is widely understood to include many components, which include cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Byram, 1997; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006). Byram's model specifying five interrelated competencies namely knowledge, attitudes, interpretive and relational abilities, discovery and interaction skills, critical cultural awareness. Analogically, Deardorff's (2006) process model is a clear ICC framework in which the key concepts are openness, curiosity, empathy, and adaptability. Both models recognize that ICC assessment is a combination of internal (dispositions) and external (behaviors). Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) further suggest that evidence of performance should determine an individual's ICC rather than self-reflection. For instance, in Morocco, these are in line with the goals set in the Educational Reforms focusing on skills diversification, and intercultural integration (HCETSR, 2018). According to Heydermann (2007), in intercultural communication, the assessment of ICC should include the communicative and functional along with the interculturally appropriate behavior of the individual.

2. In the Assessment of ICC, Moving from Traditional to Innovative Methods

2.1 Conventional Assessment Methods

Self-assessments such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, 2011) and reflective essays are widely used in ICC literature, yet do not adequately capture true competence (Griffith et al., 2016). These frameworks are more aligned with self-perception than ability (Norris et al., 2009). In Morocco, sanctioned ICC instruction is embedded in language teaching as research suggests a lack of a framework for standardized evaluation, and remains unassessed (Qaissi, 2019; Ghaicha, 2018).

2.2 Use of Standards-Aligned Assessment Tools

Standards-aligned assessment tools are a positive shift for formative and transparent evaluation. The AAC&U (n.d.) Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric describes the grading of development within self-awareness, empathy, and adaptation. Rubrics enable longitudinal observation of student growth (Luo & Chan, 2022). Ghaicha (2018) points out that assessment tools in Moroccan education should incorporate ethical consideration and learner agency reflecting the competence-based assessment vision in HCETSR (2021).

2.3 Scenario- and Simulation-Based Tasks

Scenario-based assessments (Holdsworth, 2024) and simulation techniques like the "Culture OSCE" Aeder et al. (2007) immerse learners into intercultural problem-solving. As these techniques involve adaptive behavior in the realistic application of knowledge, they are also innovative assessment methods. Ginsburg et al. (2015) showcases the reliability of structured simulation assessment frameworks when raters are trained and criteria are behaviorally anchored. Innovatively, Schelfhout et al. (2023) builds on this by using the Direct Intercultural Effectiveness Simulation (DIES) which measures intercultural effectiveness in the cognitive and affective domains. Within the context of Moroccan higher education, the task-based approach presented above will greatly assist educators in defining and teaching ICC in the manifestations of observable actions that meet the professional competency frameworks outlined in the (HCETSR, 2018).

2.4 E-Portfolios and Reflective Assessment

E-portfolios help with assessment over time and maintaining records of learning reflections, projects, and peer evaluations. Learners' collection, organization, and synthesis of information help document progress towards the semester goals and contribute to metacognitive development (Zheng, 2022). In the multilingual setting, Monib, Karimi, and Nijat (2020) demonstrate the use of digital portfolios to inspire intercultural self-reflection and global readiness. This framework model backs Ghaicha (2018) who emphasized the vitality of reflective assessment in the Moroccan education in the sense that there is an alignment with the envisioned shift towards learner-centered evaluation in Morocco.

2.5 Assessment for Virtual Exchange and COIL

COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) and VE (Virtual Exchange) programs enhance intercultural interaction and provide digitally mediated collaboration and opportunities for students to apply their communication skills in authentic global contexts (SUNY COIL Center, 2024). The typical VE assessment design comprises reflections, peer feedback, and discourse analysis

(Izmaylova, 2022; Marsee, 2025). Aydoun and Kenbib (2015) argue that the democratization of digital exchange provides Moroccan universities and higher institutions with cost efficient opportunities to globalize their curricula by providing intercultural experiences.

3. Innovative Design Principles for Assessment in ICC

The consolidation of performance, reflection, and collaboration in the ICC evaluative sequence will create a comprehensive system for ICC assessment (Griffith et al., 2016). Three primary concerns for *Kenitra ESEF* are the following:

- a. **Triangulation of Evidence:** Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2006) made a strong case for the triangulation of evidence principle. For ICC assessment, triangulate scenario-based tasks, reflection portfolios, and VE projects.
- b. **Local Adaptation and Fairness:** considered local adaptation and fairness in alignment of cultural and linguistic realities of Morocco and the rubric (Aydoun & Kenbib, 2015; Ghaicha, 2018).
- c. **Capacity Building:** Train the raters and strengthen ethical sensitivity and reliability (Ginsburg et al., 2015).

These principles are aligned with the Moroccan vision for education demonstrating equity, transparency and innovation in higher education (HCETSR, 2021).

4. ICC Assessment in the Moroccan Scenario

Since the Strategic Vision of Education 2015-2030, there have been Moroccan reforms to the policy that have prioritized cross cutting competences and internationalization (HCETSR, 2018). Nonetheless, literature still shows important issues regarding how to apply such policies in practice. Most evaluations in Moroccan education systems remain as Qaissi (2019) describes, "...essentially summative and centered on the purely academic dimensions of the intercultural outcomes." To add on, Ghaicha (2018) describes how performance and reflective practices are still scarce.

Recent empirical studies (Hadri, 2022; Monib et al., 2020) still show a growing awareness of the importance of ICC, although there are still no established frameworks for ICC evaluation within the institution. The High Council (2021) calls for evaluation systems that look one step beyond cognitive acquisition to include social and ethical dimensions, and *Kenitra ESEF* now has the opportunity to be the first to implement creative ICC evaluation within the scope of strategic national policies.

Conclusion

To evaluate ICC innovatively, assessments should move beyond standard testing and examine how students act, adapt and reflect in intercultural interactions. At Ibn Tofail University, as the incubator of ESEF, incorporating standards-based rubrics and assessments like simulations (Holdsworth, 2024), e-portfolios (Syatriana & Dzilarisy, 2025), and virtual exchanges (Marsee, 2025) provides a contextually appropriate way to assess intercultural competencies. Building on Byram's (1997) and Deardorff's (2006) frameworks and aligning with Moroccan reform policies, ICC can now be viewed as a tangible indicator of academic quality and graduate preparedness for global citizenship.

6. METHODOLOGY

This study quantitatively investigated *Kenitra ESEF* students' perceptions about the ways and methods that are frequently used at the institution to test their ICC either discretely or inclusively so as to detect the pitfalls and shortcomings of the ongoing ways and methods as to suggest novel ways and solutions to remedy the situation and gear towards more ICC pragmatically base-testing frameworks.

To address the previously raised enquiries, questions, the adoption of a quantitative research design is more advanced by the researchers' inclination to gain more freedom of exploring various ways to amass numerically accurate data and therefore warranted results as it was affirmed by Dornyei (2007). In short, the undergone approach was opted for to explore attitudes and perceptions of students in a way that wouldn't leave the room for bias or skewing factors of the numerical credibility of data and maximize the validity of the findings, therefore. Moreover, the security from subjective inconsistencies that this design grants the researchers back up the rationale behind its adoption.

6.1 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Previously mentioned, in a technology driven era and the win-win policy undergone by Morocco which is gauged by the guidance of his majesty the king Mohamed VI, with regard to its globally strategic locality amidst Africa and Europe, it is high time we thought about exploring novel ways of assessing the intercultural communicative competence of our university students as future work force that would gear the development of our country in a multi-dimensional geopolitical zone (Heydemann, 2007; Aydoun&Kenbib, 2015; Ghaicha, 2018; Qaissi, 2019; Higher Council of Education Training and Scientific Research, 2018, 2021). Accordingly, once Moroccan students' ICC is concerned, the actual chasm between the theoretical fantasy and daily reality in the field of education is at stake in the sense that the *status quo* of the Moroccan educational system is bleak, a fact that was warned against years ago (Melouk, 2001; Ghaicha, 2018; Elghazi & Ghaicha, 2024). Remarkably, testing ICC in Morocco needs more than just a lip service to be paid but a holistic and radical educational policy in order to, at least, alleviate the crisis of content that the Moroccan educational system is strained with (Sobhi, Cerbelle, & Alama, 2010).

On the aggregate, the study's focus is on both investigating students' perceptions of ICC assessing ways and postulating novel ways that would suffice a practically oriented approach of assessing students' ICC in a way that should prepare them for their global citizenship.

6.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Gathering data in a scientific way with specific goals and objectives in mind is doing research in its simplistic forms as Sugiyono (2010) advanced. This study adopted quantitative design to cater for the validity and sensitivity of the topic at hand. Accordingly, a Likert-scaled online questionnaire was administered to elicit the perceptions of 60 EFL students' at the ESEF of Kenitra about assessing ICC methods usefulness in Morocco.

6.3 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

Given the vitality and sensitivity of the topic, the number of participants was directed to yielding a large bank of data, using online Likert-scaled questionnaires, so that the results, discussions and interpretations of findings would be numerically fortified. In such a study, the participants should, preferably, exceed at least number of 30 respondents as it was argued by Dornyei (2003, p.74). Analogically, the avidity of the topic required getting in touch with Moroccan EFL students at the ESEF of Kenitra. In other words, the focus of both researchers based on non-discriminative sampling longing for neutral and valid data. Simply put, rejuvenating the old practices and mentalities as well as regenerate the engineering intra-treatments from within (WBDR, 2007).

In short, purposeful non-discriminative sampling was the right option to obtain authentic and valid data.

6.4 INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

6.4.1 QUESTIONNAIRE

The researchers opted for online questionnaire as the main research instrument to gather reliable and valid data. The questionnaire was sent to 60 ESEF students via personal e-mails bearing in mind that they are all students in the same institution wherein their personal information is of duly safeguarded. So, a Google form questionnaire was the most appropriate instrument format. The questionnaire relied on closed-ended questions so that the respondents would not have to spend much time with it, bearing in mind that they may not have time to generate responses for open-ended questions, and to ease the task of data processing and analyzing as well. Nevertheless, the researchers' route map was to use a multi-scale format for the psychometric reliability of data but due to the busy schedules of respondents, who are prospective EFL teachers, they adopted closed-ended questions.

6.4.2 VALIDITY OF INSTRUMENTS AND FINDINGS

The validity of results accuracy is vital in academic research regardless of whether it is a qualitative or quantitative research (Creswell, 2012, 2018). Simply put, the validity of the instruments preambles the piloting process and item analysis of the questionnaire to ascertain the practicality and the predictive validity of any academic research questionnaire (Creswell, 2018). Analogically, the questionnaire usefulness and design was neatly cross-checked again with the help of four colleagues who are EFL teachers in Sidi Moussa public high school and Kenitra ESEF, respectively.

Briefly, the researchers abide by the ethical standards ensuring the validity of the findings and safeguarding the respondents' confidentiality as well as reassuring the subjects that the information would only and exclusively be used for research purposes as the respondents' gender, marital status and other matters were discretely treated in order not to skew the investigation findings or interfere with the results discussion and interpretation in any potential way.

6.4.4 PILOTING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Piloting of a given questionnaire or survey is a small-scale of trialing questionnaires or surveys administered to a representative sample of the target population prior to the dissemination of the final version of the survey to the target population (El Ghazi, & Ghaicha, 2024). So, an online pre-test or pilot run was initiated in two groups of ESEF students at Ibn Zohr University in Agadir city via emailing the questionnaire to ten different students. Accordingly, this step insured that the target population did not encounter any difficulty in responding to the questionnaire.

Analogically vital, it should be noted that students who took part in the piloting share the same qualities as the main population nevertheless they were not involved in the main phase of collecting the data.

In a nutshell, the pilot phase was confined to fine-tune the main version, check its validity and practicality in terms of time and effort efficiency and anticipate the response rate.

6.4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Analyzing due data, quantitative research software were invested mainly Microsoft Excel and SPSS software in their simplistic forms through using the basic statistics that Google questionnaire platform provided to numerically analyze and represent the assembled data. Similarly, tabulation and graph forms and formats were adopted to sort out data from the Google form questionnaire.

7. RESULTS

The study’s results are presented quantitatively to safeguard the presence of validity and reliability standards and maximize its manifestation(Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

Being objective, consistent and clear was the heaviest researchers’ loading the sense that the findings were stated statistically in the form of pie charts and graphs to provide a clear and eye-friendly visualization of data. Equally important, the findings were meant not only to pundits in the field but to ordinary people alike that’s why findings were treated in a simple and plain jargon. Moreover, consistency and clarity principles were keenly treated by the researchers via creating a non-threatening milieu to the target respondents and making sure all items were crystal clear.

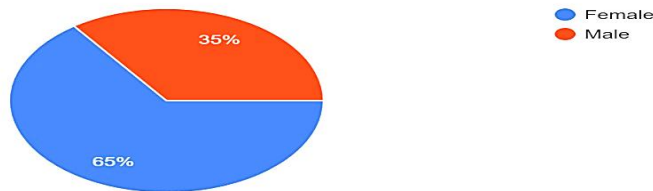
RESPONDENTS’ AGE INTERVALS

As the below pie should make clear, the major portion of respondents were between 18 and 22 years old constituting 88,3% while the three remaining categories share the rest of the pie in more or less the same ratio. So, statistically appealing, younger generation is leading the investigation which would have a positive impact on the topic discussion.

RESPONDENTS’ GENDER

As it should be noticed in the corresponding chart, 65% of respondents were females in the sense that the majority of respondents were ladies though the approximate difference of age. Females remain the dominant category in both sides be they above 22 years of age or below, however.

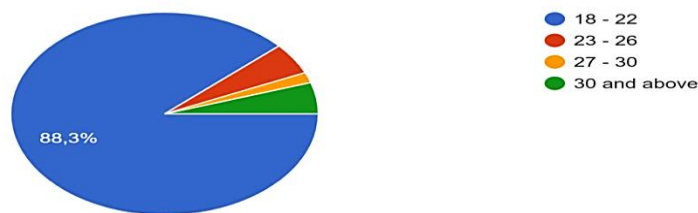
Gender
60 réponses



RESPONDENTS’ LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The displayed chart below shows that a bulky ratio of the population was undergraduate students constituting 83% of the whole sum in the sense that their needs for open intercultural communication would be greater than older respondents.

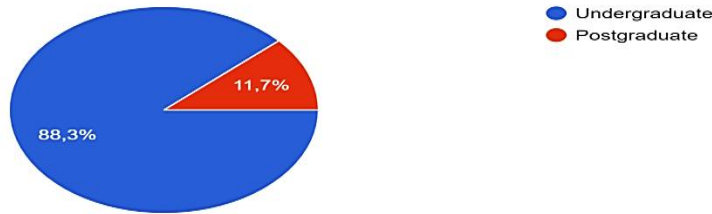
Age
60 réponses



RESPONDENTS’ SAY WITH REGARD TO INTERCULTURAL OR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP CLASSES

The chart below conveys that only 20% of respondents have had the chance to undergo the procedural conditions of either intercultural or global citizenship classes whereas 80 % were not lucky enough to do so. Hence, the need for more focused investigation behind the meagre presence of such classes is becoming rudimentary.

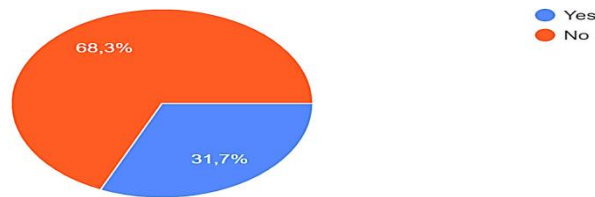
Level of education
60 réponses



RESPONDENTS’ SAY WITH REGARD TO ICC ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE

As gleaned from the chart below, the highest portion of respondents stated that they didn’t complete any form of ICC assessment as 68, 3% went for a negative answer to the question. In other words, the ratio is very significant once it comes to prior experience with ICC assessment.

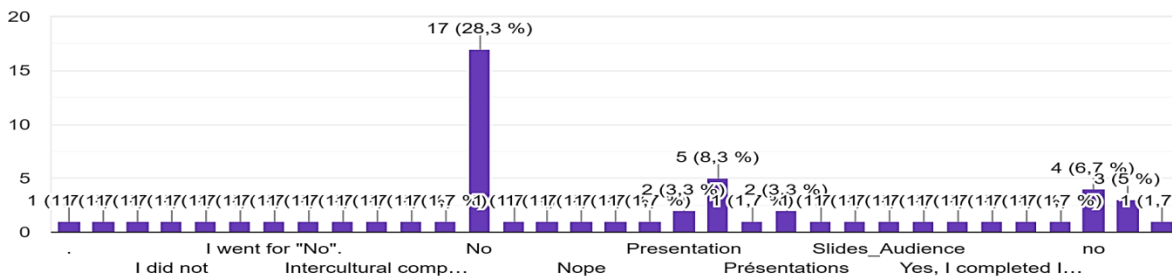
Have you completed any ICC assessments?
60 réponses



RESPONDENTS’ ENCOUNTER RATE OF SPECIFIC ICC ASSESSMENT METHODS

As the graph below depicts, presentations are the most frequent way of undergoing the evaluation and assessment of the respondents’ ICC in various educational sittings.

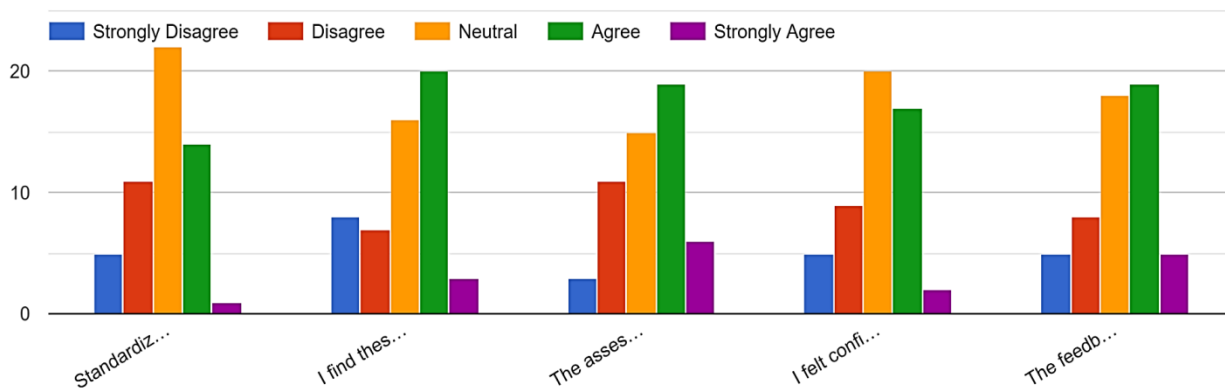
If yes, please specify (e.g., presentations, portfolios, simulations)
60 réponses



RESPONDENTS’ REACTIONS TOWARDS STATEMENTS ABOUT THE USEFULNESS OF SOME ICCASSESSMENT METHODS

The graphs below show that the majority of respondents agree that the mentioned methods would positively impact the development of their ICC as most stated that they feel confident and self-reliant once they are given the chance to showcase their talents in a variety of dynamic ways instead of undergoing old standardized ways of assessment.

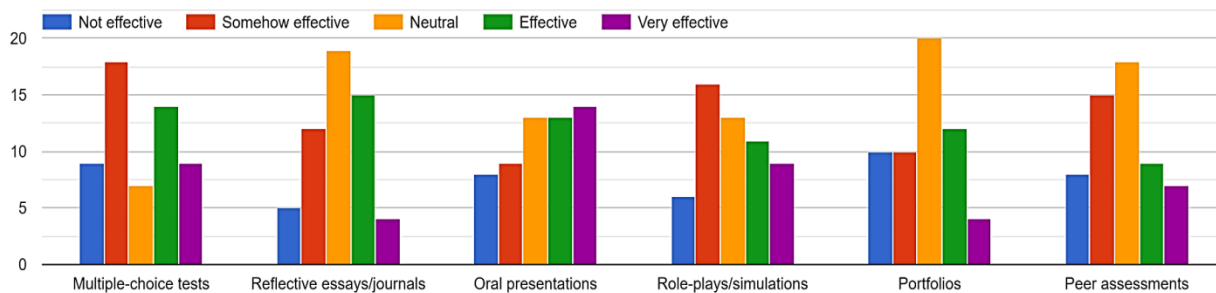
Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.



RESPONDENTS’ HOLISTIC RATING OF ICC METHODS IN TERMS OF EFFECTIVENESS

Strikingly alluring in the graphs below, both oral presentations and role plays or simulations were rated higher than all the other ways of assessing ICC followed by reflective essays or journals in the sense that standardized ways of ICC are rated less favoured.

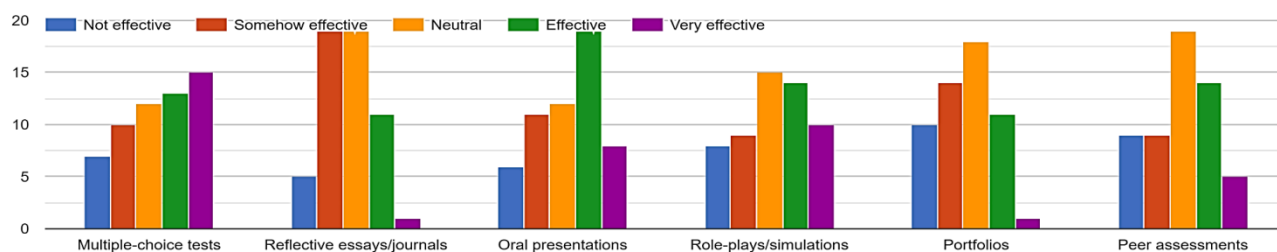
Please rate each assessment method based on its effectiveness in measuring intercultural competence.



RESPONDENTS’ ANALYTIC RATING OF ICC METHODS IN TERMS OF TIME EFFICIENCY AND USEFULNESS

Noticeably analogical with the previous section, these graphs show that oral presentations again were rated effective, followed by role plays or simulations at the expense of other methods taking into account the authenticity and practicality as well as the communicative nature of such methods.

Please rate each assessment method based on its efficiency (time, clarity, practicality).



8. DISCUSSION

According to the results above, it is high time the old and standardized methods potency regarding the evaluation of students' ICC had been put into question in a technology driven epoch. In other words, the status quo of ICC assessment is no longer fitting the requirements of modern life ramifications. Therefore, novel and dynamic methods of assessment must not be regarded as a luxury but a must and scaffolding lever if we are to equip the current generation with the right assets to function properly and pragmatically in a global world as it was backed up by the findings of Fantini (2009), Chen (2017), Bennett and Bennett (2018), Common European Framework of Reference (2020), Byram (2020, 2021) and Benattabou (2011).

As the foregoing discussion should make clear, novel assessment approaches as well as innovative ways that don't give only a lip service to the current upheavals in the job market but a critically and pragmatically oriented vision of assessing students' ICC are to be put forward if the concern is to prepare them for an age of digital nativism and artificial intelligence in the sense that without using communicative and performative ways of assessment such as oral presentations, scenarios, simulations, role plays, reflective journals and portfolios as the study has shown, the graduates would rather be left to the mercy of a multi-dimensional world that crowns individuals' capability of being immersed in multi-task sittings as well as inter-cultural exchanges with various maxims of interchange and conventions of socially divers behaviour. Analogically vital, previous studies have geared the debate towards the dynamic nature of assessment ways that emphasize not only content knowledge but procedural one alike to name but a few Ouakrime (1992), Bentahilaand Davies (1997), Byram (1997), Kerouad (2001), Liton (2016), Kealey and Protheroe (2016), Vande Berg (2018) and Olberding et al. (2021).

On the aggregate, the study has shown that assessing students' ICC through the sole usage of standardized testing must no longer be deemed than a state of administering tests for the sake of quenching the administrative thirst of stake holders and policy makers with numerical grades assigned to students so as they could be benchmarked either for a new academic level or suffice the habit of being labelled a graduate student. Hence, novel ways of assessment are to be put forward if the purpose is to cater for the requirements of an open era of multi-tasking and multi-culturalism wherein students are not anymore regarded as empty receptacles to be filled by knowledge and fueled by the desire of regurgitating the input that they have been exposed to in more or less similar ways but rather as active individuals who could shape and reshape their knowledge hand in hand with the contextual maxims or conditions they are put in. In other words, students' assessment should head towards performative training to the extent that students would no longer fret about grades and labels but life skills and procedural talents. Therefore, adopting scenarios, portfolios, presentations, reflective journals, role plays and simulations are proved to be the most efficient in assessing students' intercultural communicative competence regardless of the hurdles or logistic challenges that may humper the fair implementation of such ways in ICC assessment in Morocco.

9. CONCLUSION

The study has reached the objectives that were set forth as gauging sign posts for the investigation journey. Therefore, both theoretical and practical measures are to be taken into account if the status quo of assessment and testing of students' ICC in Morocco is to be bettered to go hand in hand with the job market current standards and communication multi-modality that students should be exposed to once they are out of school walls or districts (Byram, 1997; Liton, 2016; Davitishvili, 2017; Benttabou, 2020).

Analogically important, it is highly indispensable that testing students' ICC methods must shift from the old and standardized moulds to more dynamic and state-of-the art practices. Bluntly put, it is high time the educational stake holders took concrete measures that emanate from the job market needs not from sectorial or electoral perfunctory desires of certain political cliques or camps in the corridors of the ministry of education (El Ghazi, & Ghaicha, 2024).

Crystal clear, and without further ado, the most influential and instrumental ways of assessing rather than just testing students' intercultural communicative competence are the ones that ask students to do tasks and reflect upon them, not blindly regurgitate the input that was poured into their minds from a sage on stage, such as portfolios, presentations, scenarios, role plays and simulations.

10. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The aforementioned ideas in the discussion section consolidate the implications that were stated and ratified by various research endeavours in Morocco such as Ghaicha (2018), Benattabou (2020) and Ghaicha&Elghazi (2024) to name but a few. Therefore, for the Moroccan testing and assessment ship to dock safely on the golden shores of practical and pragmatic measurements of students' intercultural communicative competence, there should be a firm and honest steps towards the rationalisation and operationalisation of the following implications:

- A quick but ever-lasting revision of the theoretical foundations of testing students' ICC must be done on the basis of well-recognized models locally and globally.

- Life and soft skills shouldn't solely be measured by standardized ways of testing.
- High-order thinking skills assessment must undergo dynamic assessment models.
- Students' ICC must be assessed through assessment models that take the target language use domain (TLU) into account as in Bachman and Palmer (1996).
- The EFL testing literacy in Morocco must be given more than just a lip service to equip alumni with the right assets and skills so they could function properly and purposefully in the real world.
- Novel ways of ICC testing strategies are to be implemented as the new breed of EFL students in Morocco tends to be more pragmatically oriented than being able to sit for traditional exams or tests to parrot and rehash what they have been told, heard or seen.

Similarly vital, concerted and prudent actions must be carried out by both academic practitioners and political stakeholders to yield better results with regard to assessing students' ICC. Hence, this research should serve as theoretical if not forensic scaffolding for future research endeavors in EFL assessment and testing in Morocco.

In short, probing questions will ever exist as long as rigorous researchers are relentlessly digging for real solutions. So, the researchers hope that the implications above along with the aforementioned results would be taken seriously by the educational active interventionists not been put aside in the shelves of dusty wishes of inconsiderate political backbenchers in the long queue of previous awaiting studies in the forgotten misty corridors.

11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main challenge, that was among the motives of this study, is the scanty nature of research in Morocco that endeavoured investigating the issue of assessing students' ICC in the sense that the researchers had to look for analogical studies which were conducted in other territories mainly in Europe, Asia and America to suffice the need for theoretically and empirically grounded comparable studies.

On the aggregate, the researchers tried their best to convert any challenge to potential plus for the validity and reliability of the research findings and implications.

12. FUNDING OF THE STUDY

This research received no external funding. It was financed by personal means of the researchers themselves.

13. CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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