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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Investigating the Importance of Integrating Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL Classrooms: Moroccan High Schools as a Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

In this super-globalized world, English has proven to be an effective tool that enables people worldwide to become familiar with other cultures rather than their own. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is essential in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) educational settings. Thus, this paper assesses the salience of integrating intercultural communicative competence in Moroccan EFL classrooms and the possible ways to do that. The data in this study was gathered through an online questionnaire targeting Moroccan high school teachers of English. The sample of this survey consists of 93 out of 100 participants. The data were qualitatively organized and analyzed in graphs. The results showed that teaching intercultural communicative competence is crucial for the students for communicative reasons. The analysis also demonstrated that ICC can strengthen students' intercultural awareness and help them quickly integrate into the global workplace environment. Nevertheless, the results revealed many obstacles that can hinder the integration of ICC in EFL classrooms. Such results provide significant implications regarding the extent to which ICC is necessary to assist students in navigating cultural and communicative challenges.

### KEYWORDS

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) - English as a Foreign Language (EFL) - Extra-Curriculum Activities – Culture Teaching.

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

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### 1. Introduction

During the last two decades, globalization has become the roadmap to reaching interconnectedness across the globe. This alteration has manifested a new vision toward cultural globalization that seeks a universal culture that is localized and open to universal diversity. Cross-cultural communication, which has become necessary, can be successful through a universal channel. English, which has become a worldwide language due to economic and political grounds, has managed to infiltrate cultural and physical borders. Internationalization has dominated every part of the world, especially with the unprecedented prevalence of the English language, which has facilitated communication and interaction between diverse communities worldwide. Thus, Douglas & Rosvold state that "with an increasing focus on internationalization in higher education (e.g., University of British Columbia, 2011), growing numbers of university-bound international and domestic students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds" (2018, p. 24). The world around us is blended, and humans need to find ways to coexist and live in harmony instead of sparking conflicts and stereotypes. Giroux (2005) argues that people need to look at borders positively because they "connect us to each other more than they separate us, especially as such borders are continually changing and mutating within the fast forward dynamics of globalization" (p. 21). Plus, possessing intercultural communicative competence helps a lot in understanding the complexities and discrepancies of this world.

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Similarly, Wilberschied (2015) explains that developing one's intercultural communicative competence "makes life easier and more pleasant" (p.2). Examining this trajectory leads to a process of investigation regarding English language teaching and the integration of culture. While there is copious research with references that link culture and language (Kramsch, 2014; Bayramova, 2016; Zygmunt, 2021), these works have not tackled the issue of culture teaching inside English foreign classes in detail. Moreover, although learners produce correct language using correct grammar and vocabulary, the communication process is incomplete without cultural awareness.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Intercultural Communicative Competence in English as a Foreign Language Settings**

This new digital era has influenced and changed the process of communication. Also, digitalization has paved the way for a more flexible and successful encounter between various cultures (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2023). From this stance, English language teaching required an aligned shift to cope with the current and diverse world. Since the English language has that universal presence because it is a *Lingua Franca*, it has become pivotal to change the pedagogical setting to encompass a cross-cultural model, as explained by Lo Bianco et al. "Global/local Englishes have gained even further power because of the success of US/American neo-colonialism through its communication technologies and mass media, including the internet" (1999, p.78). Additionally, cross-cultural interaction has become inevitable with the emergence of global education and citizenship because of world policies that serve the global economy and political relations. Therefore, second language teaching must be oriented to incorporate intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Sercu et al. have contended that "interculturality is not only concerned with communication between individuals, as it is also manifested by different means which involve the presence of two or more cultures in any work of art such as films, literature" (cited in Kerkache 2023, p.14).

Additionally, cultural content exists in Moroccan English language teaching textbooks. However, it is deficient or not being taught properly. Due to the presentation of cultural elements limited to surface culture, including holidays, celebrations, and food, English language learners in Morocco are not equipped to engage in authentic cross-cultural encounters. Henceforth, the utilization of intercultural communicative competence has imposed itself as it supplements learners with cultural awareness through the clear conception that explains the intertwined connection between culture and language. It also portrays culture as a critical constituent for effective communication, insisting on social practices and beliefs that are deeply instilled in language production and require meticulous comprehension. Thus, learners will understand the complexity of cultural elements, invest in apprehending their mother culture, and acknowledge the other culture not as an adversary or beneath their own culture but as an equivalent, consequently avoiding stereotypes that may be problematic in intercultural communication (Bennett, 1998).

### **2.2 The Elements of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

The term communicative competence (CC) entails the process by which an individual can decode and encode language effectively, and here, it is not only limited to the understanding and usage of grammar and vocabulary but also the comprehension of the social and cultural context in which the language is utilized (Cetinavci, 2012). Communicative competence, additionally, does not pay any attention to the individual fingerprint, which is constituted by his/her identity and culture in the intercultural environment (Hoff, 2020). Chaouche (2016) explains that rather than perceiving culture as a static element that a learner can accumulate via a transmission process, the new conception, which holds a dynamic perspective about culture, emphasizes an active process to deconstruct cultural beliefs and practices. This suggests that learners are required to dive deep to comprehend their cultural practices as well as the other cultures. From this stance, Byram has forged the concept of "intercultural speaker" (1997, p. 31) and has a structured set of qualities divided into knowledge, attitudes, skills, and disposition. These elements manifest a competent interlocutor in an intercultural context.

The knowledge aspect (*Savoir*), which is the first component, seeks to illuminate the necessity of grasping the dynamics of social groups of the native and foreign cultures. Aiming at gaining the complete picture, a particular social group's products and practices should be seen from the native's perspective (Byram, 1997, p.35). Further, it involves being aware of the unwritten rules of social behavior, appropriate forms of address, nonverbal communication cues, and other aspects of interpersonal interaction that vary across cultures (El Allame et al., 2020). Hoff (2016, p. 57) elaborates that "*Savoir Comprendre*" refers to "interpreting a document or event from another culture, to explain it, and relate it to documents from one's own." She argues that they are necessary for comprehending and making sense of cultural differences. In other words, it entails having the capacity to comprehend and interpret cultural customs, doctrines, and values while connecting them to one's cultural heritage.

It pays excellent vigilance to the importance of understanding cultural relativity, linguistic vigilance, and the importance of personal contact and dialogue when trying to understand another culture. According to Kramsch, a language pedagogy should provide authentic documents with their contexts of production and reception, and learners and instructors must be allowed to reflect upon

the "cultural fault lines" that underlie their classroom practices and discourse (Cited in Rashidi & Najafi, 2020, p. 625). While the previous elements of Byram highlight ICC, "Savoir Apprendre/Faire" stresses the usage of the accumulated cultural understanding and knowledge in real-time communication and interaction and evaluating the process. It is an essential dimension of intercultural competence and is crucial in developing effective communication and understanding across cultures (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020).

### **2.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence and Workplace: Which Relationship?**

While communication has always been a crucial means throughout humanity's history and the contemporary political and economic revolutions, our perception toward this process has alternated and brought to the light pivotal constituents. The cultural print of each individual is one of these fundamental elements. In the current globalized world, societies are becoming more pluralistic than ever; henceforth, the workplace environment contains various social identities with various orientations, not just mere encounters and relations (Lahti, 2015). Such settings dictate fabricating a healthy atmosphere for this cultural diversity to avoid miscommunication (Lahti & Valo, 2017). Profit-driven organizations are shifting their external and internal dynamics to adopt a cross-cultural vision. Whether to ensure a smooth encounter among the institution's staff or align with other national or international institutions, successful communication necessitates comprehending the other's identity and values. In addition to the potential gain that the digital revolution has paved the way for, rushing towards new international marketplaces demands identifying the natives' way of thinking and behaving and navigating through these without resulting in misunderstanding.

The workplace environment has changed as the world is becoming characterized by super-diversity. To trace such a shift, going back to post-WWII and scrutinizing the human capital losses around Europe, waves of immigration occurred to erect a robust European economy. However, as the working system was diverse with the integration of skilled or unskilled employees, power, privilege, and position in the workplace should have been discussed. Whereby immigrants had to assimilate without any negotiation. Similarly, with its slogan, the American Dream, the United States witnessed a massive wave of immigration. Here, the process of negotiating meaning between these different identities was stumbling due to racism, privilege, and power. However, "globalization and migration have challenged static, essentialist models of cultural interaction based on a nation state, a national culture, and a national language (i.e., the British culture and English language of the United Kingdom) to understand intercultural communication with "host nationals" from that country." (Holmes, 2017, The current situation: The need for, para 2). Conversely, the number of study abroad programs and requests for them has increased. This international mobility has led to the origination of concepts, such as global education and global citizenship, which were the doorway to an intercultural and diverse world. Universities, therefore, have designed a curriculum that facilitates cross-cultural interactions.

### **2.4 The Teachers' Role in Enhancing Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence**

Introducing intercultural communicative competence to EFL classes necessitates identifying the teacher's roles and the fundamental mechanisms to employ while teaching cultural elements. Although language teaching incorporates cultural elements, the intercultural spring draws new boundaries. Teachers are facing new challenges on the bottom-up level. As Cuartas Álvarez argues, the didactical tools, such as planning materials and the appraisal structure, still resemble a setback since there is no structured methodology (2020). Henceforth, the ascending of comprehensible pedagogy has become an urgency. Teachers' professional development that covers the integration of intercultural communicative competence both in didactics and pedagogy is scarce. Boosting teachers' cognition to attain a potent ICC can aid the acquisition of ICC in FL classrooms (Han & Song, 2011).

Another crucial aspect is explaining the negative impact of self-centeredness in intercultural environments. To demonstrate universal cultural diversity, reshaping the instilled perception of the superiority of one culture over others is critical. Learners should understand that cultures are equally important and that their own culture functions appropriately in its vicinity. The use of authentic material is fundamental to engaging learners. In intercultural settings, presenting both the L1 and L2 cultures shows how the two cultures function separately. Consequently, students are required to deal with cultural differences positively. Moreover, striving for a complete grasp of the targeted culture is challenging since culture is continuously altered. Therefore, teachers must instruct students to avoid envisioning the absolute grip of the targeted culture (Álvarez, 2020).

Teachers can enhance students' ICC through various channels and activities. Telecollaboration is one of the most effective and efficient tools for enhancing learners' ICC (Emir & Yangin Eksi, 2024). The latter refers to the communication process that gathers people from different geographical locations daily through Internet technologies, and it seeks to foster authentic cross-cultural communication. These instances of interaction occur via Zoom, video conferencing, WhatsApp, chatting groups, and emails. Connecting people from different cultures regularly expands second language learners' cultural awareness. In a study that investigated the encounters of USA and Poland students over six weeks via Zoom, the results depicted the growth of cultural awareness and the elimination of cultural stereotypes and bias judgments (Batunan et al., 2023). By relying on students' prior experience, comprehending one's own culture unlocks the way to cultural awareness that subsequently influences the structured objectives related to ICC by expanding the discussion and involving even low-level students. (Álvarez, 2000).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research questions

To attain the structured objective, the following research inquiries are formulated:

1. To what extent is intercultural communicative competence important in Moroccan high schools?
2. Do teachers work on developing students' ICC?
3. What sort of activities do they opt for to tackle such a skill?
4. What are the setbacks that prevent teachers from integrating ICC into their lessons?

#### 3.2 Design and procedure

This research paper investigates the importance of ICC in Moroccan EFL high school classes and utilizes a quantitative methodology. Employing an online questionnaire, the data collection process began targeting high school teachers across Morocco. The structured number of responses was 100 participants; however, the number of responses reached 93. After analyzing the data collected from the questionnaires, the operation of transforming these results into diagrams and graphs to attain answers to our research questions started.

#### 3.3 The research instrument

This study relied on an online survey questionnaire consisting of 17 questions to conceptualize an adequate comprehension of the importance of ICC in the Moroccan EFL high school and how to integrate it. The questions varied from a Likert scale to direct questions and were mainly divided into six sections.

The first section was related to teachers' years of experience (1 question), while section two tackled teachers' understating of ICC and how often teachers develop their students' ICC (5). The third section tackled the significance of ICC for learners (1). The fourth and fifth sections focused on, sequentially, the high school English curriculum and Moroccan high school guidelines and whether they promote the ICC or not (7) and obstacles that might arise while teaching ICC (2). The last section dealt with individual perspectives regarding how to teach ICC. Here is the questionnaire link.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dq4JxKrePxTPvKbiBXL9gsYiZpgFvZhoXzVICB1\\_9cl/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dq4JxKrePxTPvKbiBXL9gsYiZpgFvZhoXzVICB1_9cl/edit)

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Finding of research question 1: Years of Experience

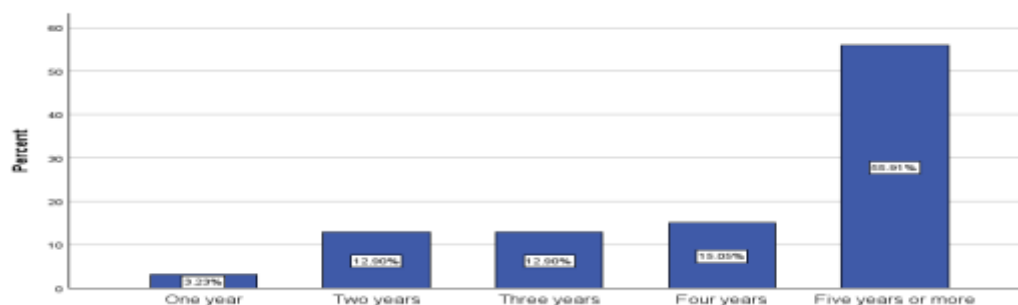
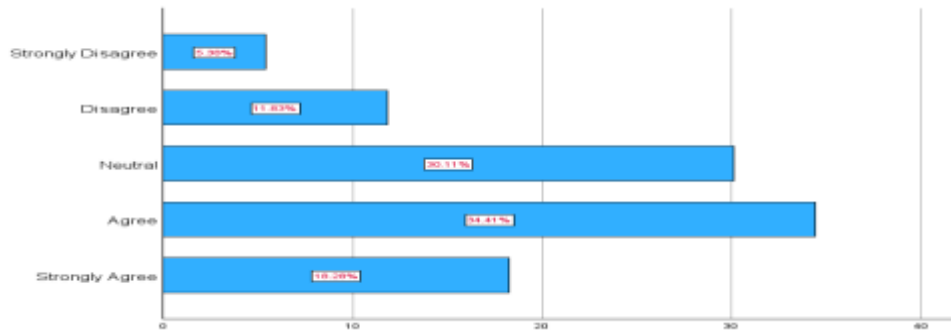


Figure 1

Our attempt to comprehend the importance of ICC in EFL in the Moroccan high school spectrum started with identifying teachers' years of experience. This factor affects teachers' perspectives concerning English language teaching, professional development, and classroom practices and interactions. This latter factor was discussed in numerous studies that indicated the correlation between teachers' experience and effectiveness; further, the findings stated that teachers' performance during their first year is the worst, and it improves in the second and third (Irvine, 2019). As shown in the graph, the total number of participants was 93. 55.91 % (52) have worked for more than five years in the EFL field, while 15.1% (14) have worked for four years. The remaining percentage is 12.9%(12) for those with three or two years of experience, and the final portion representing teachers with one year of experience is 3.2%(3).

**4.2 Finding of research question 2: The Connection between Language and Culture in EFL Settings**

Figure 2



When EFL educators were asked whether language can or cannot be separated from teaching culture, 17 participants stated that culture and language are firmly connected and cannot be isolated inside the classroom. Such indications signify that these educators believe that language and culture are intertwined and cannot be treated separately in the teaching process. As the graph illustrates, the highest percentage, 34.41% (32 participants) agree to the idea with less emphasis, which can be interpreted as language and teaching culture are not closely connected and can be treated separately in the classroom. 30.1% of the participants are neutral about the relationship between language and teaching culture. It suggests that many educators do not have a strong opinion or may be unaware of the implications of language and teaching culture in their teaching practice. Conversely, 17.2% conceive an opposite stance, with 11 teachers (11.8%) disagreeing and the remaining (5.4%) disagreeing decisively. This shows that a small but significant number of educators believe that language and teaching culture are entirely separate and should not be addressed in the classroom. These results highlight the different perspectives on the relationship between language and teaching culture among EFL educators. The concept of culture has always been a contentious issue in language teaching settings, as it is tricky and can have either a positive or negative impact. The question is how teachers should teach culture or how they must integrate it in EFL classrooms.

**4.3 Finding of research question 3: The Importance of ICC in EFL Classes**

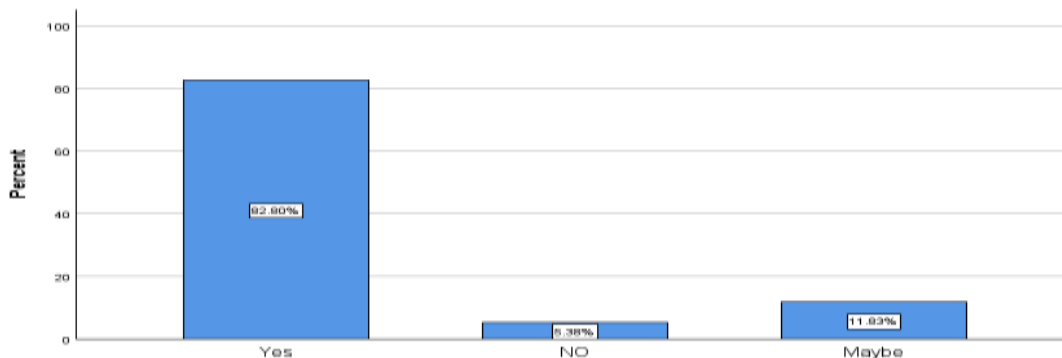


Figure 3

The findings associated with EFL educators' perceptions of the integration of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in the Moroccan EFL high school context can be analyzed as follows:

82.2% of participants (77) believe in integrating ICC in the Moroccan EFL high schools. Educators recognize the significance of addressing ICC in language education. The uncertainty position of 11.8% (11 participants) suggests that a substantial number of educators may need to be made aware of the implications of ICC or may need further education to understand its relevance better. With a percentage of 5.4% (5), educators may need help integrating ICC in the classroom. These participants do not perceive ICC as significant for encompassment in the Moroccan EFL context. Therefore, educators must be mindful of this and consider the implications for their teaching practice, as improving students' intercultural competence in the EFL/ESL classroom is a pivotal aspect of language learning and teaching.

**4.4 Finding of research question 4: Teachers' Level of Satisfaction with the Cultural Content in English Curriculum in Morocco**

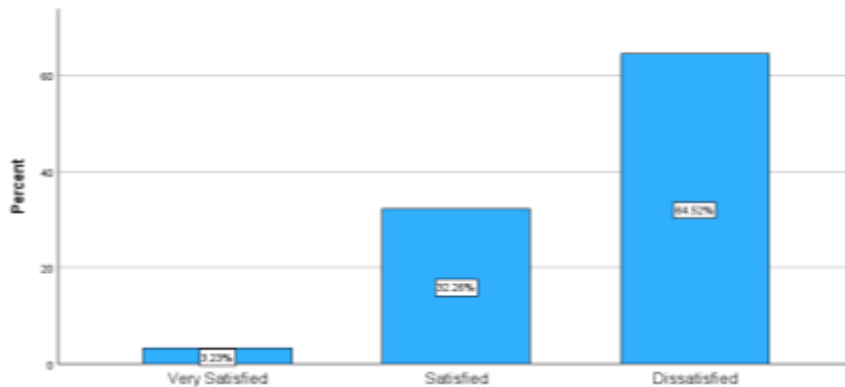


Figure 4

Inquiring about the level of satisfaction with the cultural content in the English curriculum in Moroccan high schools, the results came as follows: the highest percentage (64.52%) expressed their dissatisfaction. In comparison, 32.26 % of participants were satisfied. With a modest portion (3.23%) opposing the majority, some educators believed that cultural content in high school textbooks was satisfactory. The previous findings highlight a significant dissatisfaction among the participants with the cultural content in the English curriculum. Therefore, it is essential to address this frustration and consider the implications for curriculum development and educational practices. This will ensure the integration of cultural content effectively. Henceforth, it will meet the needs and expectations of educators and students alike.

**4.5 Finding of research question 5: Developing Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence**

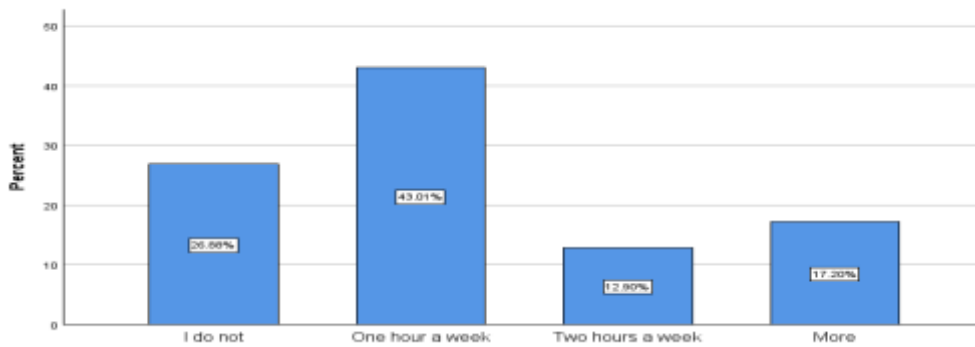


Figure 5

As most educators stress the connectivity between culture and language, our subsequent inquiry sought to identify how much time teachers dedicate to developing students' ICC per week. A portion of 26.88% of participants stick to the structured program and neglect to incorporate this competence in their yearly and semester planning or unit planning. About 74% of English teachers integrate this skill into their weekly planning. A representation of 40 (43.1%) participants devote one hour a week, which signifies these educators' awareness regarding the importance of ICC. Twelve teachers demonstrated more emphasis on allocating two hours per week, and the rest of the participants allocated more than two hours per week, which is quite surprising yet encouraging.

These results highlight the varying levels of dedication to the development of ICC among EFL educators in Moroccan high schools. The majority of educators acknowledge the importance of ICC, and they are actively working to integrate it into their teaching practices. Nevertheless, a significant minority of educators do not prioritize the development of ICC in their teaching practice.

#### 4.6 Finding of research question 6: Difficulties in Integrating Intercultural Communicative Competence in Language Education

The difficulty in integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in language education can be attributed to several factors. Some of the main challenges include:

- Time constraints: Teachers may face limitations in the time allocated for ICC activities, making it difficult to provide students with sufficient opportunities to engage with cultural differences
- Limited materials and resources: There may be a lack of appropriate materials and resources to support ICC integration, making it challenging for teachers to provide students with a comprehensive and engaging learning experience. Textbooks also fail to provide potential tasks that teachers could utilize.
- Students' lack of communicative skills: Students may need adequate communicative and linguistic skills in the target language, which can hinder their ability to engage in intercultural communication.
- Curriculum constraints: The curriculum may not provide enough flexibility or space for ICC integration, limiting teachers' ability to incorporate cultural content into their lessons. Further, the length of the high school program makes it difficult for teachers to prioritize cooperating ICC tasks.
- Lack of sufficient activities: The lack of time and resources to implement a sufficient number of activities that target ICC can limit students' opportunities to develop their cultural understanding and communication skills.
- Insufficient pedagogical training: The lack of adequate training in pedagogy poses a significant hurdle for teachers. This gap in their professional development makes it challenging for them to effectively teach ICC.

To address these challenges, it is essential for educators, administrators, and policymakers to prioritize ICC integration in language education, provide appropriate training and resources, and promote a more flexible and open approach to teaching and learning.

#### 4.7 Finding of research question 7: How often do Teachers Resort to Extra-Curriculum Activities to Enhance Students' ICC?

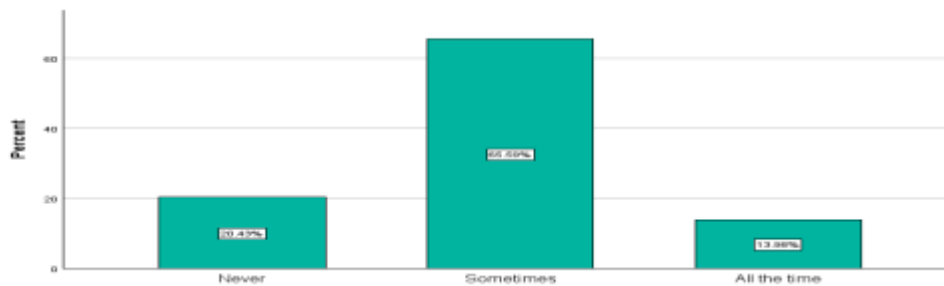


Figure 6

While developing and integrating ICC might require stepping out of the classroom atmosphere, extra-curriculum activities (ECA) are the profound mechanism to integrate and ameliorate students' ICC. Nevertheless, there is no unified definition of the notion of extracurricular activities. However, it is generally seen as any activity, such as sports, school clubs, vocational clubs, and special interest groups, which scholars and youth encounter outside the classroom perimeter (Bartkus et al., 2012). It is a social bridge for students to be civically active among peers. In the Moroccan context, the utilization of this instrument varies among teachers. Among the participants, 20.43% do not opt for these activities. This rate is significantly high compared to educators who employ ECA constantly. Only 13.98% of teachers are actively and regularly engaged in ECA. With a rocketing percentage of 65.59%, in contrast with the two previous outcomes, these participants utilize ECA sometimes. Such an indication supports the capability of ECA to enhance students' ICC. The classroom atmosphere might be intimidating for some students, who tend to prefer ECA to shine, and, as educators, it is our role to locate learning problems and possible resolutions to foster an inclusive and supportive classroom atmosphere for students who may prefer ECA.



**4.8 Finding of research question 8: Moroccan High School English Textbooks Provide Materials to Teach Intercultural Communicative Competence**

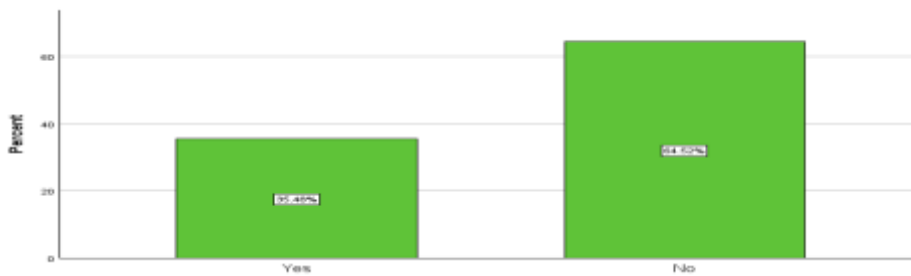


Figure 7

Moving toward the textbooks that structure teaching English in Moroccan high schools, we have examined whether Moroccan high school textbooks provide material to teach ICC. While 60 participants (35.48%) express that textbooks do not provide any material to integrate IC, the remnant segment asserts the existence of tasks and activities targeted to enhance students' ICC. This percentage was asked to provide what these tasks and activities aid them while tackling ICC, and the list is as follows:

- Ticket 1, Ticket 2, and Outlook
- Cultural units
- Some reading texts and listening activities
- Class projects
- Textbooks sometimes contain cultural activities that seek to enhance students' cultural knowledge.
- Some Christian festivities like Halloween
- Visa conversations
- Students react to some foreign values as being permissible or offending
- Exercises
- Comparing different cultures in terms of food
- Celebrations' differences

The data suggests that while some Moroccan high school textbooks may not provide specific material to integrate ICC, a significant number of respondents mention tasks and activities that can be used to enhance students' ICC. To effectively integrate ICC in the classroom, educators must know these tasks and activities and consider their implications for their teaching practice.

**4.9 Finding of research question 9: Tasks Related to Intercultural Communicative Competence Structured per unit in the Moroccan High School Textbooks**

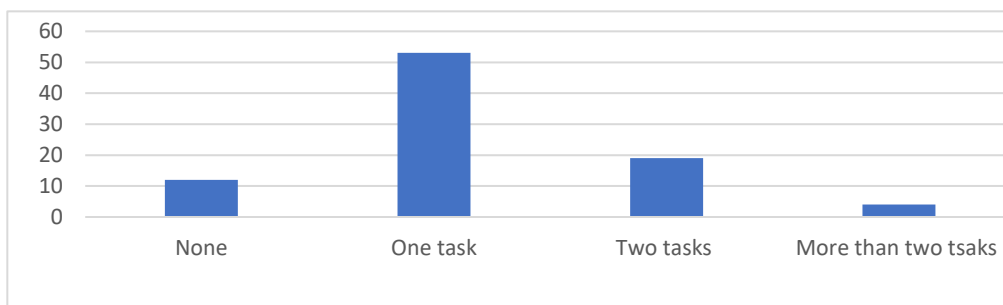


Figure 8

In correlation with the previous question, we explored the number of ICC tasks structured per unit. While 60.2% of participants asserted the presence of one ICC task per unit, 19 teachers believed that there are at least two tasks per unit. In addition, 4.5% of educators went beyond two tasks and suggested the existence of more than two tasks. Only 13.6% of the portion had a different viewpoint that stated the absence of ICC tasks in high school textbooks.

The findings of this study underscore the significant variation in the integration of ICC tasks in high school English textbooks in the Moroccan context. While a substantial number of participants affirm the presence of at least one ICC task per unit, a smaller



cohort of educators propose the inclusion of more than two tasks. However, a minority of educators hold the view that high school textbooks lack ICC tasks, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive approach to teaching ICC.

The research findings provide valuable insights into the integration of ICC in language education in the Moroccan context. For instance, the study 'Task-based Approach to Develop Intercultural Communicative Competence in College English Education' advocates using task-based approaches to foster ICC in foreign language teaching and learning. The study underscores the significance of designing tasks that are meaningful and focus on the expression and transfer of cultural knowledge through English (Cai & Lv, 2019).

Another study, "Investigating Intercultural Communicative Competence among Moroccan Students," explores Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding ICC teaching. This investigation of whether ICC is integrated into high school English textbooks accentuates the need for a comprehensive approach to teaching ICC that encompasses different aspects of language and culture (Lazrak, 2016). These insights from the research results provide a broader context for understanding the integration of ICC in high school English textbooks in the Moroccan educational system and the potential implications for language education.

**4.10 Finding of research question 10: In which Manner is Intercultural Communicative Competence Presented in Moroccan High School English Textbooks?**

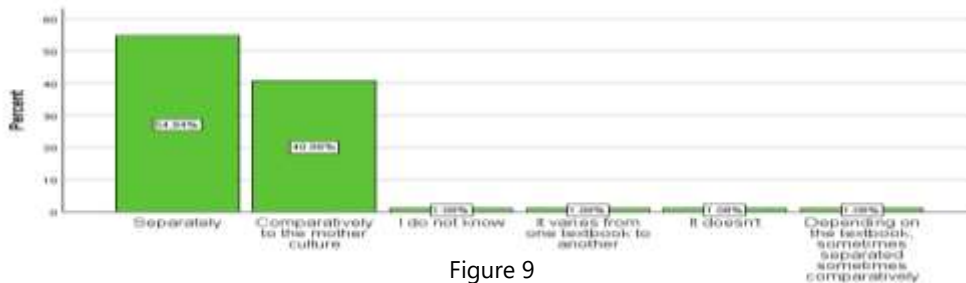
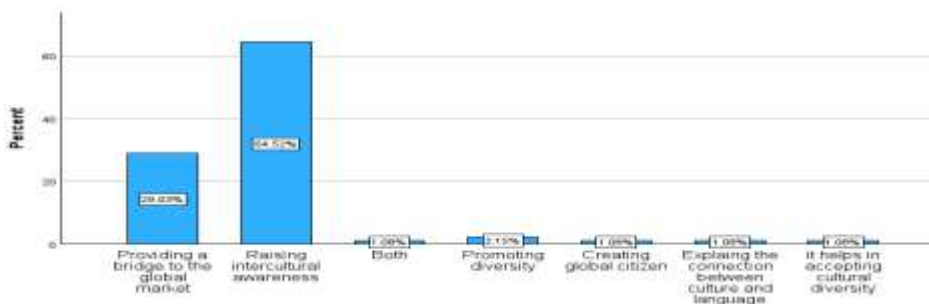


Figure 9

To inspect how these tasks are structured either separately or comparatively to the mother tongue, participants were given an option to express their perspectives if they do not match the two given alternatives. The results indicate that 54.84% of the participants stated that the presented cultural elements are arranged separately from the mother culture, while 40.86% expressed that the process of introducing cultural concepts is done comparatively to the native culture. Additionally, 1.08% of the participants had other responses, with one participant expressing uncertainty, another stating that cultural elements are neither arranged separately nor comparatively, and a participant mentioning that the approach varies from one textbook to another. These results suggest that there is a diversity of perspectives among educators regarding how cultural elements are structured in high school English textbooks in the Moroccan context. While a majority believe that cultural elements are arranged separately from the mother culture, a considerable number also express that the process of introducing cultural concepts is done comparatively to the native culture. The varied responses and the differences between textbooks highlight the complexity of integrating cultural elements in language education and the need for a nuanced and adaptable approach.

**4.11 Finding of research question 11: Integrating Intercultural Communicative Competence in Moroccan EFL can help in**



To identify the purpose behind integrating ICC for the targeted portion, we inquired about whether the ICC integration can help provide a bridge to the global market or raise intercultural awareness. Sixty participants stated that the ICC fosters intercultural awareness, and with a percentage of 29.03%, educators expressed that ICC generates a bridge to the global market. Further, 1.08%

of teachers stated that the ICC helps in both. Other responses mentioned explaining the connection between culture and language 1.08%, creating global citizens 1.08%, and helping accept cultural diversity 1.08%. The last percentage communicated that it helps in promoting diversity. These results suggest that educators perceive the integration of ICC in language education as serving various purposes, including fostering intercultural awareness, generating a bridge to the global market, and promoting diversity. The diverse range of responses highlights the multifaceted nature of ICC and its potential impact on language education and the development of global citizens.

**4.12 Finding of research question 12: Do you think that the Moroccan High School English Guidelines Highlighted the Notion of Intercultural Communicative Competence in a Paramount Manner?**

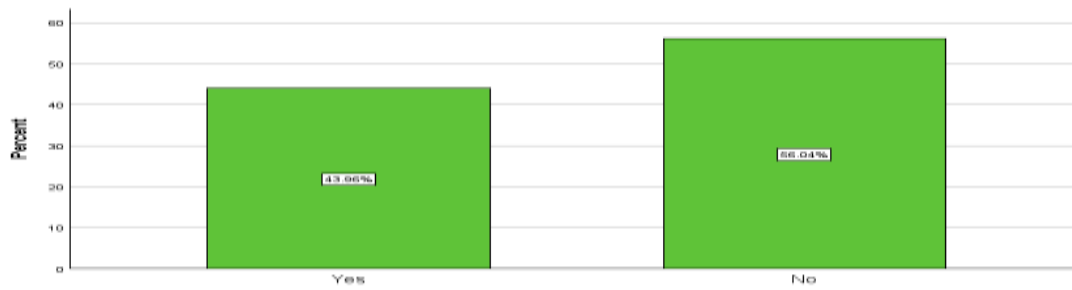


Figure 11

Moving to the Moroccan High School English Guidelines (MHSEG), which govern and explain the Moroccan vision regarding the purpose behind teaching English and the goals intended to accomplish these guidelines, mention the concept of culture in the five Cs. However, our concern is whether it is regarded as a vital constituent for English language teaching or whether there is no difference between it and the remaining elements. We asked teachers whether MHSEG mentions ICC with profound prominence. More than half of the participants, 56.04%, stated that MHSEG had not mentioned ICC significantly. This suggests that the MHSEG may not emphasize ICC as a vital constituent for English language teaching, and there may be little discrepancy between the cultural element and the remaining elements within the guidelines. Additionally, 51 participants (43.96%) consider that the cultural element constitutes the ICC. Such results designate that there may be a perception among some educators that the cultural element, as mentioned in the guidelines, is synonymous with ICC.

The results offer further insights into integrating culture and ICC in the Moroccan educational context. For example, the study "Multilingual Education in Morocco and the Question of Cultural Identity" emphasizes the importance of promoting critical thinking strategies in high school English textbooks to enhance English language skills, appreciation of local cultural identity, and openness and respect for other cultures (Elboubekri, 2013). This highlights the interconnectedness of language, culture, and identity and the need for a comprehensive approach to teaching English that encompasses these elements. Furthermore, the study "Culture Teaching in Moroccan EFL Secondary Schools" explores how culture is being treated by teaching practitioners in Moroccan secondary EFL classrooms, shedding light on the practical application of culture teaching in the Moroccan context (Akharraz, 2021). These insights from the search results provide a broader context for understanding the integration of culture and ICC in the Moroccan educational system and the potential implications for English language teaching in high school settings.

**4.13 Finding of research question 13: How do the Moroccan English High School Guidelines Suggest Prompting Intercultural Communicative Competence?**

With the variant perspectives coercing mentioning ICC in MGEHS, our concentration has shifted towards how these guidelines suggest prompting such competence. While some points of view assert that the guidelines have no trace of ICC, others have a different opinion. Whether through a comparison process that exposes both the mother and target culture or presents the elements of the target culture separately, students are encouraged to identify their native culture and discover other foreign ones. As the guidelines suggest, authentic materials enable students to draw connections and comprehend cultural diversity, subsequently promoting cultural awareness. The Moroccan English high school guidelines suggest promoting Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) through various activities that enable learners to understand the relationship among different cultural perspectives and practices. These guidelines also provide insights into how different cultures perform various celebrations, art, and entertainment.

**4.14 Finding of research question 14: How would you Integrate Intercultural Communicative Competence in your Classroom?**

Integrating intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in the classroom can be achieved through various strategies and activities teachers suggest. These include:

- Watch and discuss: Use videos to prompt discussions about different cultures and their communication styles.
- Comparison, or teaching it explicitly through videos or films: Comparative analysis of cultures through visual media can be used to explicitly teach ICC.
- Watching documentaries or films or bringing a native speaker to talk about a specific culture: Use visual and interactive resources to provide authentic cultural insights.
- Extra-curricular activities and the use of ICTs: Offer additional activities and leverage technology to expose students to diverse cultural experiences.
- Exposing students to different activities highlighting world cultures and how to accept them: Engage students in activities promoting cultural awareness and acceptance.
- Assign presentations and projects about different cultures: Encourage students to research and present on various cultural topics.
- Encourage participation in school projects and classroom presentations about cultural elements: Foster a classroom environment that values and promotes cultural understanding.
- Focus on activities that foster ICC about the job market: Connect ICC to real-world applications and professional development.

By implementing these diverse strategies, educators can effectively integrate ICC into their teaching practices, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and culturally aware learning environment.

## 5. Conclusion

As we are heading toward the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world has become extremely connected and heterogeneous, more than any other phase in history. The widely diverse world we live in today requires meticulous education that promotes the necessary skills to help individuals navigate different challenges. Individuals need to show some respect and open-mindedness toward various cultures. Thus, education specialists and teachers should integrate an intercultural approach in the EFL classrooms to teach learners valuable lessons about other cultures and how to detach themselves from ethnocentrism that may impede intercultural communication. Also, young learners need to discover how other communities live and act, which will enrich their knowledge and prepare them for future encounters.

The major purpose of this quantitative study has been to explore the importance of integrating intercultural communicative competence in EFL classrooms. The study has attempted to check whether Moroccan EFL teachers incorporate the ICC in their teaching practices or not, along with detecting some of the common obstacles that make the integration of ICC an arduous pursuit.

## 6. Study Limitations and Future Research

The study had a few limitations. First, the selected sample was limited to 93 out of 100 Moroccan EFL teachers from public high schools, which may not be representative enough to reach the desired outcome. Thus, more teachers should have been targeted to get a comprehensive view of their attitudes and perceptions. Additionally, while purposeful and informative, the questionnaire was insufficient as the only tool to generate data, and it would have been beneficial if I had opted for interviews to collect numerous perspectives from respondents.

Future research should extend the scope to include middle school teachers and university students as the target group to fully grasp the importance of enhancing the learners' ICC and whether this will improve learners' communicative skills. Future studies could also examine students before and after integrating ICC to assess its efficiency in actual contexts. Another issue that may be studied in the future is the drawbacks of teaching students foreign cultures, which may make them susceptible to cultural influence, especially since they are not mature.

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