



## Intercultural Awareness and Language Pedagogy

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### ABSTRACT

Over the decades of language study and teaching linguists and scholars have come up with communicative competence (CC) theory. Currently, intercultural competence, a complementary subcategory of CC has been prioritized by a myriad of studies. Striving to replicate the previous findings of Sercu et al (2005), and observing the effects of intercultural awareness among Iranian EFL teachers on language pedagogy, the following steps were taken: a. Checking the teachers' intercultural awareness via a questionnaire by Sercu (*ibid*), b. Holding an intercultural workshop teaching 12 rules of it advocated by Byram (2000) and observing the manipulation of intercultural techniques, finally, c. pretesting and post testing the experimental and the control group. It is found that raising intercultural awareness amid Iranian EFL teachers had paramount effect on the learners' intercultural competence.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Awareness, Language Pedagogy, Intercultural, Competence

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### 1. Introduction

Since the emergence of the human being, the evolution of man has swung its own ups and downs ending in communicative competent creatures that have accommodated interfused findings into their whiteboards to understand each other. Culture and language have sprung or have had their own steps from simple language and culture maneuvers to a competent harmony between thought, ideology and identity. To inform the writer's view, Corbet (2003, p. ix) states that "culture is a constant backdrop to the everyday use of language".

Therefore, it is the role of both teachers and learners to reformulate the teaching methods, the concept of language learning and communication. Moreover, due to the new intercultural findings, integrating different cultural issues from different social contexts to the teaching and learning situations seems to be logical which would end in competent interlocutors. Accordingly, teachers would be the mediators and learners as diplomats who would preserve their own cultural values but acquainted to the target culture to be equipped to communicate and act appropriately.

This paper departs from a review on language, culture and intercultural language teaching, and proceeds to methodology, data analyses and discussion. Finally, it provides researcher's concept on the significance of intercultural language teaching.

### 2. Literature Review

The history of modern language teaching clarifies traces of focusing on cultural issues which are emphasized as the "fundamental purpose[s] of learning a language is to be able to read literature written in it". (Freeman et al., 2015. P.17). Grammar translation method, the first language teaching method, prioritized literary works in its techniques of language teaching. Back then, direct method also took its steps in introducing culture to the learning contexts. Accordingly, culture was seen more than fine arts, which means that learners had to study geography, culture and the target nation's attitudes. As a complementary step, audio-lingual method proposed that 'language cannot be separated from culture. And culture is the behavior and attitude of the target language' (*ibid*.p.44). Later in desuggestopedia, fine arts, music, and drama provided the



opportunities for positive suggestions, overcoming psychological barriers, and enabling suggestions to reach subconscious. Moreover, in communicative language teaching and content-based language teaching the authenticity was emphasized which means that in language teaching target culture is significant.

In dealing with culture in language teaching, Clouet (2008) categorizes the cultural issues as "Big C" or "high culture". "Big C" stands for the information needed to understand a language and society. It consists of history, geography literature, etc. Clouet believes that Gumperz and Hymes (1972) were the prominent scholars in introducing societal norms in language teaching. Then, knowledge on cultures was the information of what target society would do in different contexts. In the same vein, Kramsch (2009) expresses that "the word culture evokes the traditional nature /nurture debate". (p.4) She believes that culture is not limited as nurture, but a gift to force potentialities. All of the aforementioned steps led to the communicative competence. Clouet cites that communicative competence can be defined as "what a speaker needs to be able to communicate appropriately within a particular speech community". An emphasis on what a speaker needs means that a set of authentic subjects from the target context is required. "Consequently, learning a language no longer means acquiring communicative competence, in other words, being able to act in a foreign language in linguistically, sociolinguistically and pragmatically appropriate ways". Clouet (2012, p. 133)

To cover the shortcomings of communicative competence Bennet (1986) has proposed different theories on Intercultural competence. He proposed a six dichotomy of the dimensions of intercultural competence. He proposed a framework as the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) in which various dimensions of intercultural competence is introduced. They are categorized as follows: denial, defense, minimization and the other three as ethno relative model: acceptance, adaptation, and integration orientations (Bektas, 2014).

Having introduced the framework given by Bektas, I would rather apply a more comprehensive framework proposed by Byram (1990) cited in Bektas (ibid) which seems to suit the purpose of this study more appropriately based on the particular

state of the present study, although it was introduced earlier than that of Baktas (ibid).

In 1990s, Byram and Zarate (1994) came up with the components of intercultural competence as five savoirs or knowledge dichotomy given below has been adapted by Sercu et al (2005, p3) which is going to be used as the pivot of the study in this particular work.

*Table 1: Components of Intercultural Competence*

Knowledge	Skills/behavior	Attitude/traits
culture specific and culture general knowledge knowledge of self and other knowledge of interaction: individual and societal insight regarding the ways in which culture affects language and communication savoirs	Ability to interpret and relate Savoir-comprendre ability to discover and/ or interact ability to acquire new knowledge and to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction Metacognitive strategies to direct own learning Savoir-apprendre savoirs-faire	.Attitude to relativize self and value others . Positive disposition towards learning intercultural competence Savoir-être .general disposition characterized by a critical engagement with the foreign culture under consideration and one's own Savoir-e-s' engager

A quick glance at the model given above would indicate that communicative competence, i.e., the capability to interact in a foreign language in a linguistically, socio-linguistically and pragmatically appropriate way in a linkage to the intercultural competence deals with the interlocutors' ability in acting appropriately in the context of communication. Accordingly, an appropriate communication is possible when both communicative competence and intercultural competence are intervened. Table 1 shows the components of intercultural competence under three main headings as knowledge, skills/behavior and attitudes/traits.

Knowledge as the first savoir deals with the social groups' knowledge in and out of their normality, i.e. being able to have knowledge on both mother and target culture.

Skills and behavior refers to the ability of assigning meaning to a different cultural issue independently. It mainly deals with the autonomy of the ability of interpreting and relating the cultural issues in various communities.

The third dimension refers to the 'general disposition' of the interlocutors in regarding their own culture and the ability of forgetting ethnocentric attitudes and making relations between their own culture and target culture.

Since each people and nation have their own values and culture norms, people are thus, necessitated to learn and, suss out and ultimately recognize one another's

culture without which a perfect communication cannot ever occur. In this era the idea of pluralism and pluriculturalism are being understood as the phenomenal issues within the world of virtue. It plays a virtual role in globalization. Hence, a deep delve into intercultural competence in language teaching can train learners who are the mediators and diplomats of their own culture in the globalization era.

### **3. Methodology**

Attempts were made in order to follow the genuine procedures. The participants included male and female teachers and learners. In order to understand the effects of intercultural awareness on language pedagogy, first, teachers were tested with a qualitative standard questionnaire written and applied in a study in European context by Sercu et al (op.cit). Having tested the teachers as participants, in order to familiarize teachers with intercultural competence a 12-session-workshop was held. Due to the facts of the context of the present study, establishing workshops seemed to be essential to realize the effects of intercultural awareness on language pedagogy.

During the workshop stage, a book entitled 'developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching, a practical introduction for teachers - written by Michal Byram et al (2002) was applied to train teachers in 12 sessions.

At the third stage, in order to accumulate numerical data a qualitative questionnaire was distributed among the teachers to check the effects of the treatment on their intercultural awareness and methods of teaching. At the fourth stage, a semi structure-interview was held to elicit further information on the effects of workshop on teachers as for enhancing their intercultural awareness in language teaching.

Furthermore, due to the fact that the researcher tried to find out the effects of intercultural awareness on language pedagogy, homogenized English language learners at the intermediate level were selected. Having homogenized the learners, a set of observations were also conducted to check the learners' reactions over the cultural instructions of the teacher who had been trained. Further, students' feedbacks on cultural issues were recorded in a qualitative format and discussed in order to raise their awareness on the differences between the cultures. Afterwards, numerical data on the effects of intercultural awareness on

language pedagogy were collected, a test of cultural issues was given to the learners to check their internalized rules they achieved regarding the cultural differences. Then, a semi-structure-interview was held to elicit more information on the learners' reactions towards intercultural competence. The same process of gathering data on the experimental group was conducted on the control group who were in the same level. They had no intercultural instruction as regards what was intercultural competence, though. This was done in order to compare, contrast and find out the effects of conventional and intercultural methods of language teaching on language pedagogy. Finally, a test was selected and matched based on Byram's criterion in order to test the learners' intercultural proficiency as one of the factors of communicative competence.

### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

The participants, instruments, procedures and design of the study were scrutinized thoroughly to make it as clear as possible. This reports on the results of the quantitative /qualitative data analysis, namely the interviews as well as the results of the learners both in experimental and control groups in the two designed tests i.e. pretests and posttests. Then, the corresponding data out of the questionnaire was elicited. In so doing, one question was given to 10 teachers who had applied intercultural language teaching in the experimental classes consisting 70 learners. It should be mentioned that the open ended questions were also analyzed and, accordingly, interpreted given to 10 teachers. It starts with the demonstration of the means and the standard deviations of the participants' scores and proceeds to explaining the possible reasons of the differences among their scores in the two designed tests. The following table is provided to illustrate the data. Table 4.1 shows more expanded information related to teachers' gender.

**Table 1: Frequency and percentage of teachers' gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	3	30	30
Female	7	70	100
Total	10	100.0	

Having shown the frequency percentage of the teachers' gender, the researcher has provided another table which shows more detailed information of the learners' gender.



**Table 2: Frequency and percentage of the learners 'gender'**

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	41	58.6	58.6
Female	29	41.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

As illustrated in the tables above, 50 percent of the teachers are between 20 and 25 years old, 10 percent are between 26 and 30 years old, 30 percent are between 31 and 35 years old and 10 percent are between 36 and 40 years old. To make the data clearer table 3 is given below.

**Table 3: Frequency and percentage of learners' age in control group**

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-25	5	50	50
26-30	1	10	60
31-35	3	30	90
36-40	1	10	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

As mentioned earlier, learners were selected from one institute and their English language proficiency was intermediate. The minimum recorded score for the pretest is 10 out of 20, while the maximum score is 18. The mean score of this group is 14.07 with the standard deviation of 2.367. Comparing with the pretest, in the posttest the minimum score is 10 out of 20 and the maximum score is 20. The mean score is 15.46 with the standard deviation of 2.442. It shows that learners were to some extent homogeneous.

**Table 4: Measures of central tendency of the pretest and posttest**

Test	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	70	10	18	14.07	2.367
Posttest	70	10	20	15.46	2.442

The minimum and maximum scores of teachers' interview are 50 and 100 out of 100 respectively. The mean score is 80.6 with the standard deviation of 15.85. The following table illustrates some measures of central tendency scores. It also shows that homogeneity was somewhat observed.

**Table 5: Teachers' interview**

Test	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teacher score	10	50	100	80.6	15.85

During the study, the researcher tried to answer the following questions:

Q1. Is there a relationship between Intercultural awareness and language pedagogy amid Iranian EFL teaching?

To answer this question ANCOVA test was used and the following results are presented. First of all, the normality of the

data was evaluated by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test because the sample size is more than 50; accordingly, this test is more efficient than Shapiro-Wilk test. The results are shown in table 6.

**Table 6: The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the normality of the data**

Group	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	.103	70	.062
Posttest	.103	70	.064

As the P-value is greater than 0.05, the normality of the data is acceptable in 95% of confidence interval. Homogeneity of Variances is the second precondition in ANCOVA which is also confirmed. Hence, Levene test is applied that results are shown table 7.

**Table 7: Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

Group	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pretest	.836	9	60	.586
Posttest	.615	9	60	.779

The P-value for the posttest and pretest are 0.586 and 0.779 respectively, that are greater than  $\alpha=0.05$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that null hypothesis which denies the homogeneity of the variances between the control and experimental group is rejected. To examine the reliability of covariate (Pretest) Kuder-Richardson formula was used with the value of 0.95. Thus it shows a high level of reliability. The fourth precondition of ANCOVA is the regression slope as far as homogeneity is concerned.

**Table 8: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects Posttest**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	287.612	10	28.761	13.711	.000
Intercept	95.977	1	95.977	45.755	.000
Gro * PoT	287.612	10	28.761	13.711	.512
Error	123.759	59	2.098		
Total	17136.000	70			
Corrected Total	411.371	69			

A quick glance at the table above would indicate that the F value for Group – Posttest is 287.612 and the P-value is 0.512 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the homogeneity of the regression slope is confirmed. The last step is the analysis of the relationship between the control and experimental groups in the posttest as shown in table 9.

**Table 9: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects Post test**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	268.070	10	26.807	11.037	.001
Intercept	99.208	1	99.208	40.846	.001
PT	102.127	1	102.127	42.048	.001
Gro	151.044	9	16.783	6.910	.001
Error	143.301	59	2.429		
Total	17136.000	70			
Corrected Total	411.371	69			

Due to the P-value intercept which is less than 0.05, it could be confirmed that there is a significant difference between the results of the Intercultural awareness and language pedagogy amid the Iranian EFL teaching.

Q2. Is there a relationship between EFL teachers' intercultural knowledge and learners' intercultural competence?

In the first hypothesis the normality of the data were proved; therefore, parametric tests are lucrative for the other analyses. To evaluate the relationship between EFL teachers' knowledge and learners' intercultural competence, paired T-test was applied according to the teachers' achievements. Table 10 indicates the result of Paired T-test for the equality of the means between the two groups of learners.

Table 10: T-test for Equality of Means

Teacher	Teacher Score	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
1	80	-5.461	6	.002	-1.857	.340
2	86	-6.358	6	.001	-2.286	.360
3	50	-.311	6	.766	-.143	.459
4	92	-5.435	6	.002	-2.286	.421
5	95	-6.222	6	.001	-2.857	.459
6	61	.444	6	.673	.571	1.288
7	97	-8.647	6	.000	-2.571	.297
8	70	-.760	6	.476	-.571	.751
9	75	1.125	6	.304	1.429	1.270
10	100	-6.299	6	.001	-3.286	.522

The result illustrates that the P-value related to the equality of the means for the numbers 3, 6, 8 and 9 is more than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . It indicates that the differences between the means of the pretest and posttest are not statistically significant. Hence, the groups of participants learning English with those teachers who got low score in the qualitative standard questionnaire have no significant difference between their pretest and posttest unlike the other group whose teachers got high score in the qualitative standard questionnaire. Thus, there is a relationship between the teachers' intercultural knowledge and the learners' intercultural competence.

Q3. Is there a relationship between Intercultural awareness, ethnocentrism and egocentrism?

Before applying any test on the data their distribution should be analyzed. Hence,

Kolmogrov-Smirnov Normality test was applied on the data set and the results are illustrated in table 11.

Table 11: Tests of Normality

	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Intercultural awareness	.174	70	.001
Ethnocentrism and egocentrism	.176	70	.001
Time span	.150	70	.001
Target culture adoption/adaption	.184	70	.001
Pedagogues' crafted methodologies	.163	70	.001
Learners' need.	.164	70	.001
Syllabi	.155	70	.001
Learners' target language cultural background.	.191	70	.001

As the result indicates due to the fact that the significant level is less than 0.05 for all the variables, there is enough evidence to accept the null hypothesis and, therefore, the data has non-normal distribution, so we should use nonparametric test in the next section. Accordingly, Spearman's correlation was applied. The results are shown in table 12.

Table 12: Spearman's correlation for Intercultural awareness, ethnocentrism and egocentrism

	ethnocentrism and egocentrism	
Intercultural awareness	Correlation Coefficient	.754
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	70

A glance at the above table indicates that the correlation Coefficient between the Intercultural awareness, ethnocentrism and egocentrism, according to table 12 is 0.754. Thus, due to the fact that the significant level is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Hence, there is a significant relationship between Intercultural awareness, ethnocentrism and egocentrism.

Q4. Is there a relationship between time span and target culture adoption/adaption?

In this section like the previous one Spearman's correlation was applied. The result is shown in table 13.

Table 13: Spearman's correlations for time span and target culture adoption/adaption

	target culture adoption/adaption	
time span	Correlation Coefficient	-0.004
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.971
	N	70

A short glance at the table shows that the correlation Coefficient between the time span and target culture adoption/adaption according to table 13 is -0.004. Thus, since

the significant level is more than 0.05, the relationship is not statistically significant. Hence, there is no relationship between the time span and target culture adoption/adaption.

**Q5.** Is there a relationship between pedagogues' crafted methodologies and learners' need?

Again Spearman's nonparametric correlation test was applied. The results are shown in table 14.

*Table 14: Spearman's correlations for pedagogues' crafted methodologies and learners' need*

		Learners' need.	Syllabi
pedagogues' crafted methodologies		Correlation Coefficient	0.699
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
		N	70

The aforementioned table shows that the correlation coefficient between pedagogues' crafted methodologies and learners' need according to table 14 is 0.914. Therefore, since the significant level is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the pedagogues' crafted methodologies and learners' need.

**Q6.** Is there a relationship between syllabi and learners' target language cultural background?

In order to answer the stated research question 6, spearman's nonparametric correlation test was applied. The results are shown in table 15.

*Table 15: Spearman's correlations for syllabi and learners' target language cultural background*

		Syllabi
Learners' target language cultural background.		Correlation Coefficient
		Sig. (2-tailed)
		N

As shown in the table above spearman's Correlation between the syllabi and the learners' target language cultural background is 0.493. Thus, since the significant level is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the syllabi and the learners' target language cultural background.

**Q7.** Is there a relationship between syllabi, their Intercultural awareness and language proficiency?

As for the nature of the data, spearman's nonparametric correlation test was also applied. The results are shown in table 16.

*Table 16: Spearman's correlations for the syllabi, their Intercultural awareness and language proficiency*

		Syllabi
Intercultural awareness and language proficiency		Correlation Coefficient
		Sig. (2-tailed)
		N

Table 16 shows that correlation coefficient between the intercultural awareness and language proficiency is 0.699. Thus, since the significant level is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Hence, there is a significant relationship between syllabi and their Intercultural awareness and language proficiency.

## 5. Conclusion

The interviews from the different categories have been compared and contrasted to find out the possible effects of the study's variables. In this research, 30 percent of the teachers were male while 70 percent were female. Besides, 41 percent of the learners were male while 29 percent were female. As for the age of the teachers, 50 percent were between 20 and 25 years old, 10 percent were between 26 and 30 years old, 30 percent were between 31 and 35 years old and 10 percent were between 36 and 40 years old. The learners were selected from one institute and their English language proficiency was at an intermediate level. The minimum score recorded for the pretest was 10 out of 20, whereas the maximum score was 18. The mean score of this group was 14.07 with standard deviation of 2.367. As compared with the pretest, in the posttest the minimum score was 10 out of 20 and the maximum score was 20, mean score was 15.46 with the standard deviation of 2.442. The minimum and maximum scores of the teachers' interview were 50 and 100 out of 100 respectively. The mean score was 80.6 with the standard deviation of 15.85.

Thus, the findings show that there is a significant difference between the results of the Intercultural awareness and language pedagogy amid the Iranian EFL teachers. The results also show that the groups of the participants who were learning English with those teachers who got low score in the qualitative standard questionnaire have no significant difference between their pretest

and posttest unlike the other group whose teachers got high score in the qualitative standard questionnaire. Finally, the analyses proved that there was a significant relationship between the Intercultural awareness, ethnocentrism and egocentrism as well as the pedagogues' crafted methodologies and learners' need. There was also found that there is a relationship between the syllabi, learners' target language cultural background, the syllabi and their Intercultural awareness and language proficiency. Further, the findings showed that there was no relationship between the time span and target culture adoption/adaption.

Moreover, based on the findings of the present study the following conclusions can be made:

1. Culture and language have sprung or have had their own steps from simple language and culture maneuvers to a competent harmony between thought, ideology and identity. To inform the writer's view, Corbet (2003, p.ix) states that "culture is a constant backdrop to the everyday use of language".
2. More emphases should be made on intercultural competence. In a similar vein, Willems (2002) and Savu, et al (2014) pointed out that it is high time to move towards intercultural language teaching methodologies.
3. Language teachers' unification is popped up where a common ground – intercultural language teaching – is established whereby commonalities and variations among nations are brought to consciousness to establish a common ground among the nations.
4. Intercultural language teaching can be a panacea to the egocentrism. In other words, learners will not feel a lack of social or moral behaviors in ease they explore what their egos are, through investigating their own identity via comparing it with the target culture appropriately.
5. Attempts should be made in order to have alternations in the policies of education especially language teaching whereby learners would get sensitized to differences and similarities to create a world where all are realized and respected.
6. As the title illustrates, intercultural awareness and language pedagogy can

provide a unanimity, and, to a large extent, agreement on various aspects of cultural differences via understanding and respecting the diversities which exist among the nations; i.e. unity within diversity. To support the aforementioned idea, Baraldi (2009) states that "CISV (Children's International Summer Villages), an international organization devoted to peace and international education, is based on the narrative that peace is possible if individuals and groups can learn to live together, in friendship" (p.32). Thus, it seems that language proficiency on its own cannot account for one's language proficiency level unless it is accompanied by intercultural awareness or competence.

7. In the process of intercultural communication, the emergence of a dominant culture is prevented and a shared one is obtained. The process requires the stoppage of ethnocentrism and idiosyncrasy. Thus, cultural commonalities are emphasized and hegemony is met concerning mutual interests and requirements.

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