مجلة جامعة الشارقة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية

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Effectiveness of an Acculturation Programme in Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in EFL College Students: a Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of an acculturation programme designed for college learners. The researchers utilized an experimental research design involving a pretest, a posttest and a control group, and collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The participants who joined a language enhancement programme (LEP) in different colleges were chosen by convenience (N=52) and were equally distributed to the study groups. The acculturation programme was specifically designed to stimulate and awaken the intercultural communicative competencies among the experimental participants during one academic year. Findings from the t-test comparisons, effect size and the Blake's gain ratio corroborate the effectiveness of the acculturation programme in developing intercultural communication competency in experimental participants. Qualitative data from the interviews affirm the results of quantitative data analysis, revealing six themes that verify the ICC survey results. Finally, the study concluded that the development of ICC skills can occur along with the development of language proficiency in college students.

Keywords: Cultural Content, Communicative Language Learning, Teaching Methods, Intercultural Communicative Competence, EFL, Acculturation Programme.

Introduction:

Acculturation is a concomitant process pertinent to language learning and is needed for language learners to accommodate to the target language and its culture. For acculturation to occur, there are necessary changes that need to be integrated into the socio-psychological behaviours of language learners. Prior research focused on the acculturation of immigrants in host countries and how this process affected their second language learning (Byram, 1994; 2008; McGilton, et al., 2006; Pretorius, 2017; Michalski, et al., 2017; Yilmaz, et al., 2017). However, research has not yet addressed acculturation processes in foreign language settings, which are discrepant from host countries (Bennett, 2008; Byram, 1989; 1994; 2008; Fageeh, 2011; Fahim, 2002; May, 2014; McLaughlin, 1987; Mekheimer, 2011). In host country settings, acculturation failure was attributed to the failure of immigrants in social adaptation and language accommodation, which renders them isolated from the host communities. Presumably, failure in foreign language learning may be attributable to fossilization of language learning skills and lack of acculturation. However, if language learners are subjected to both the target language and its culture, this will be conducive to better internalization of the target language and its culture as well (Holliday &Kullman, 2010; Aguilar, 2008; 2010; Alptekin, 2002; Citron, 1995; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; May, 2014).

Notwithstanding the significance of integrating culture and language in the foreign language curriculum, there is a limited number of studies conducted in the Saudi environment to develop and intercultural communicative competence in English as a foreign language (Fageeh, 2011; Karolak and Guta, 2015; Mekheimer&Aldosari, 2011; Mekheimer, 2011; Wu & Alrabah, 2014; Zaid, 2011). Due to the need for enriching current practices in EFL/ESP pedagogy and curriculum in higher education colleges, and the lack of rigorous research in developing intercultural competence in Saudi Arabia, the present study sought to measure the effectiveness of developing ICC in ESP students.

Literature Review

Lafayette (1997) appositely observed that the lack of integration of culture in the language curriculum content might be ascribed to limited training in teaching culture together with language or lack thereof among foreign language teachers. Byram and Wagner (2017) have saliently observed that the lack of training on teaching cultural aspects in language education programmes is due to a sceptic stance of language educators who "either doubt the validity of foreign language study because they believe that English suffices as a means of communication or they claim that language study in schools cannot prepare students to achieve the desired level of proficiency" (p. 141). One more reason is that foreign language learning requires substantial foreign culture learning, now that "learning new languages opens students' minds to the ways of other peoples and increases the opportunities for cross-cultural understanding" (Citron, 1995, p. 105).

Therefore, several researchers suggested that acculturation materials should extensively be embedded in the foreign language classroom explicitly or implicitly to provide easy access to the target tongue for FL learners (Brooks, 1969; Citron, 1995; Deters, 2009; Harumi, 2002; Ilieva, 2005; Mekheimer, 2011). In addition, in foreign language teaching settings in non-native countries and in acquisition settings in native-speakers' natural environments, linguistic competence incorporates an implicit, yet equally significant portion of the acquisition of cultural awareness skills, knowledge of self and others both in interpersonal and inter-societal interactions (Kramer, 2002).

The literature on language and acculturation in the target language environment is abundant in research and theory that explain how acculturation builds up to the development of language learning (Aguilar, 2010; Byram, 1997; Balboni & Caon, 2014). In a word, one can infer that acculturation to the target language culture involves some level of intercultural communication competence - a process that, in turn, involves linguistic competence and extra-linguistic competence, including the mental representations of language and its pertinent culture and their

implementation in the social context, governed by the 'grammars' of socio-cultural competence (Balboni & Caon, 2014).

Scholars indicated that intercultural communication competence could be nurtured in the language curriculum and it can be integrated into foreign language teaching (Byram 1997; Humphrey, 2007; Kramsch, 1993). Acculturation programmes that integrate ICC should adopt a dynamic approach to ELT (Balboni & Caon, 2014; Borghetti, 2017; Byram & Wagner, 2017; Fernandez & Pozzo, 2017; Mitchell & Benyon, 2018). Appropriate integration of culture teaching into the teaching of foreign languages can inform not only the pedagogical practices and curricular designs, especially in higher education settings, but can also improve learners' linguistic competence and cultural learning (Damen, 1987).

Researchers suggested that for incorporating culture in language education, a combination of intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills and intercultural attitudes should be introduced as the basis for developing learners' intercultural competence (Banks, 2013; Banks & Banks, 2012; Bennett, 2008; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2014; Franklin, 2009; Gorski, 2010) through a process known as languacultural acquisition (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

Hence, Aguilar (2010) emphasized that the best teacher is not a native or non-native speaker; however, it is the one who helps students connect between their culture and other cultures in addition to awakening the learners' curiosity about cultural differences and otherness. Alptekin (2002) states that bilinguals who are interculturally aware serve better than monolingual native speakers in instruction and instructional material should comprise international and local contexts which are related to the learners' lives.

Research questions

The main research question underlying this study can tacitly be formulated as follows: What is the effectiveness of an acculturation programme in developing intercultural communication competence? Sub-

questions follow:

1. How effective is the acculturation programme used in this study in developing intercultural communication competence in EFL college students?
2. What are the perceptions of the experimental participants of the quality of the acculturation programme and the development of their ICC?

Hypotheses

The following are the underlying hypotheses:

1. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and control group participants on pretesting on the Intercultural Communication Competence Survey.
2. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group participants and the experimental group participants on post-testing on the Intercultural Communication Competence Survey.
3. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group participants and the experimental group participants on pretesting and post-testing on the Intercultural Communication Competence Survey.
4. Learners' perceptions of the quality of the acculturation programme are relevant to (difficulties with) language use in communication, cultural awareness and span of communicative language use inside the classroom and in real-life language use contexts.

Research Methodology

Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to collect quantitative data through an experimental study that involves a research

design of the type: pre-test, post-test, control group design. In addition, it sought to collect qualitative data from interviews with the participants to validate the quantitative findings. The figure below summarizes this mixed-methods approach:

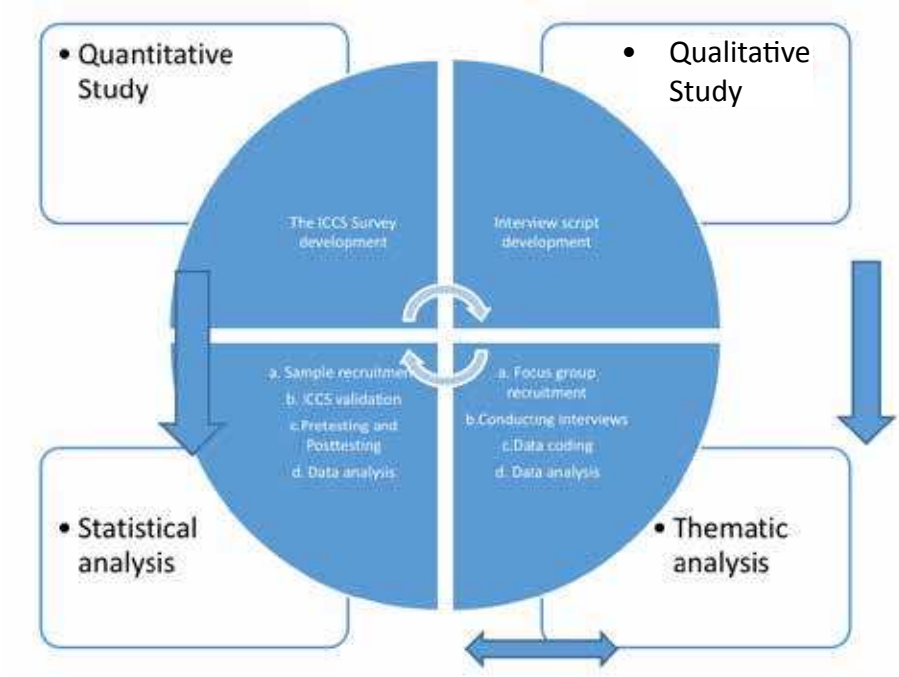


Figure 1: The Mixed-methods Approach Scheme for the Study

Participants

The participants in this research study were ESP college students from the colleges of Science, Computer Sciences and Applied Medical Sciences, at King Khalid University. They were invited to attend the Language Enhancement Programme (LEP) in the CLT. Twenty-six male students (13 from the college of applied medical science, 7 from the college of science and six from the college of computer sciences) registered to attend the LEP where they took the acculturation programme. Another group of 26 students (14 from the college of applied medical science, 5 from the college

of science and 7 from the college of computer sciences) agreed to take the questionnaires as a control group.

Instrumentation

a. ICC Acculturation Tutorials (The Programme)

The ICC acculturation tutorials consisted of reading articles on general concepts, terms, views and studies based on ICC. At the beginning of each tutorial, a designated native speaker teacher introduced the reading and asked the participants to critically think and reflect on the presented topics. Then the participants were divided into cooperative groups and were required to silently read and discuss the questions provided at the beginning and end of each reading text. They were also provided with videos and listening texts that tackled different intercultural topics such as verbal communication styles and culture, diversity and cultural differences, cultural values, barriers to effective intercultural communication, social class and intercultural communication, how to relate to others in an e-world, different communication codes, discrimination and ethnicity, similarities and differences between people. At the end of each tutorial, the students were asked to relate what they read, viewed or listened to and comprehended to their real-life experiences and situations in their life situations. The tutorials included reading materials that were particularly selected to comprise socially and religiously acceptable content. Home assignments included guided readings, excerpts from novels and short stories, movies and listening materials on different aspects of Western cultures.

b. The Intercultural Communicative Competence Survey

The Intercultural Communicative Competence Survey (ICCS) for EFL College Students is a 13-item survey for measuring intercultural communicative competences in EFL college students. This instrument was developed and validated by the researchers in an independent validation study (Aldosari and Mekheimer, 2018). The Intercultural Communication Competence Survey of Aldosari and Mekheimer (2018) is made up of an introduction, demographic information and the main part which comprises

3 sections comprised of 13 items on a five-point Likert scale. The final open-ended part is designed to seek written comments, if any. The three sections of the questionnaire are:

1. Motivation (4 items)
2. Tolerance for Uncertainty (4 items)
3. Self-and-Other Knowledge (5 items)

Validity

The ICCS was sent out for nine reviewers in the English department to check whether the preliminary version was suitable in terms of form and content. Some minor amendments were done to the number of items and the wording of some of these items. To check the construct validity of the questionnaire, an exploratory factor analysis was run to execute a principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS version 25. Before performing PCA, the suitability of the data for the factor analysis was assessed (See Aldosari & Mekheimer, 2018). The Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin value was (0.679) that was higher than the recommended value of KMO ≥0.6 (Kaiser, 1974) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Psychometric Properties of the Survey: Reliability

In Section 1 addressing Motivation, the Cronbach's alpha value method, regarding the reliability of the given test, has been confirmed at 0.942. For Section 2, addressing Tolerance for Uncertainty, the Cronbach's alpha value has been confirmed at 0.989. For Section 3, addressing self-and other-knowledge, the Cronbach's alpha value has been confirmed at 0.956. The method of measurement used has been endorsed, meaning that the scale used in this research is reliable since all values indicate a reliability co-efficient of 0.988.

Table 1a: The reliability of the ICC Survey

Variables	Number of items	Reliability Indicator
Motivation	3	0.942
Tolerance for Uncertainty	4	0.989
Self-and other-Knowledge	4	0.956
All	20	0.988

For checking internal consistency of the ICC survey, the researchers computed the Pearson correlation coefficient for individual items in the ICC survey and the total score of the dimensions, as follows:

Table 1b: Pearson correlation coefficients of the Intercultural Communication Skills Survey items and total scores

Motivation		**Tolerance for uncertainty**		**Self-and-Other Knowledge**	
Items	**Person correlation**	**Items**	**Person correlation**	**Items**	**Person correlation**
1	**0.622	5	**0.739	8	**0.552
2	**0.521	6	**0.648	9	**0.621
3	**0.717	7	**0.688	10	**0.536
4	**0.715	-	-	11	**0.612
-	-	-	-	12	**0.483
-	-	-	-	13	**0.473

c. Interviews:

A question guide was developed based on a think-aloud technique with expert teachers in the department. Content questions on topics related to

ICC facilitators and inhibitors were developed. Applying probes to expand on ideas suggested by interviewees was followed. Informed consent was sued for a limited sample of interviewees to participate in the interview protocol.

Procedures

Both study groups were requested to answer a self-assessment Intercultural Communication Competences Measure (ICCM) before the intervention materials were given to the experimental group and the conventional ESP courses were delivered to the control students. The experimental participants attended a six-hour per week programme for acculturation in the LEP center for four months in the first semester and three months in the second semester (2017-2018). The acculturation programme was intended to develop and enhance the ICC skills in the experimental group. In the programme, the experimental participants received regular tutorials about intercultural communication. They were also exposed to well-selected cultural videos and audios as well as online assignments to develop their ICC skills. They were taught the programme by three Americans, one South-African and Two British instructors in comfortable and relaxing sessions in a roundtable classroom with learning facilities. Each of the six teachers was charged with participating in a two-hour session per week. The researchers coordinated the plan to present the programme materials to the participants. They were also interviewed after the acculturation programme was over. On the other hand, the control group studied the prescribed ESP textbooks unattended by the acculturation LEP programme.

A 7-month period of intensive acculturation by six native speakers of English from different western cultures (about 168 immersion hours) was thought to be sufficient to awaken their intercultural communicative skills. By the end of the second semester, all control and experimental participants were again assessed for their communicative competencies by administering the Intercultural Communication Competencies Survey (ICCS) to both groups to measure if there were any differences in their ICC assessment.

The ICCS conducted before the experiment and afterwards in addition to the interviews would provide quantitative and qualitative data for comparison. This ICCS is a self-evaluation form that taps into the participants' intercultural competence and communication skills from a western worldview. It sought to assess the participants' perceptions of determining their understandings of their sociocultural context and identifying issues that might affect their motivation for involvement in intercultural situations, effective communication across social and cultural differences of interlocutors and tolerance for uncertainty in such situations. This ICCS tapped into the participants' perceptions as regards their necessary communicative skills related to language use and intercultural sensitivity.

Results

To find out if there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two experimental and control groups on intercultural communication competence, a t-test was used for two independent samples, as shown in Table (2) below:

Table 2:Independent samples t-test comparing mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the ICCS pretest

Dimensions of ICC	Groups	N	Mean	SD	T	*p.* Value
Motivation	Control	26	3.01	0.65	1.953	0.056
	Experimental	26	3.41	0.83		
Tolerance for uncertainty	Control	26	3.28	0.68	0.452	0.653
	Experimental	26	3.38	0.93		
Self-and-Other Knowledge	Control	26	3.17	0.58	1.352	0.183
	Experimental	26	3.44	0.83		
Total	Control	26	3.15	0.47	1.514	0.137
	Experimental	26	3.41	0.73		

Table (2) above shows that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two experimental and control groups in intercultural communication competence and their constituent factors in the sub-dimensions of the survey; i.e., motivation, tolerance for uncertainty, self-and-other knowledge. The values of significance level of these factors were 0.056, 0.653, 0.183, respectively and the total score amounted to (0.137), which is greater than (0.05). This suggests that both the experimental and control groups were not equal on pretesting as regards their intercultural communication competences. This is explicable by the fact that these competences are variable from one participant to another due to acculturation and education levels as well as the level of proficiency and exposure to foreign language use in native or native-like settings of the target language. These results confirm the first hypothesis.

The main purpose of the comparison between control & experimental group members before having the courses is to prove that there were no any differences between the two group members before having the course, which is very important to test the effectiveness of the programme in improving students' ICC. To test if the differences between the two group members' levels were real or not, we used a further independent t- test (Table 3 below):

Table 3: An Independent t- test result of the comparison between control and experimental group before having the programme

Pretest	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.033	.858	-1.872	24	.073
Equal variances not assumed			-1.872	23.959	.073

Results in Table 3 above demonstrate that there are no statistically differences between the two groups levels because the significant value of the t-test was (0.073), which is greater than (0.05), indicating that the levels of the two group members on ICC were insignificant and thus the two groups were practically equal in ICC on pretesting.

Secondly, to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the two experimental and control groups in the post-test control concerning intercultural communication skills, an independent samples t-test was run, with also computing the effect size of the differences and Blake's ration, the results of which are shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Independent samples t-test comparing mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the ICCS on post-testing

Dimensions of ICCS	Groups	N	Mean	SD	*t-value*	*p*-value	Eta Squared	Blake's ratio
Motivation	control	26	3.14	0.69	4.660	0.001	0.303	1.30
	experimental	26	3.95	0.55				
Tolerance for uncertainty	control	26	3.28	0.80	3.261	0.002	0.175	1.18
	experimental	26	3.92	0.60				

Self-and-Other Knowledge	control	26	3.12	0.49	3.884	0.001	0.232	1.22
	experimental	26	3.74	0.64				
Total	control	26	3.18	0.44	5.052	0.001	0.338	1.37
	experimental	26	3.87	0.54				

Table (4) above shows that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the respondents in both the experimental and the control groups on post-testing in favour of post-testing on all dimensions of the ICCS (M=3.87, t=5.05). From the results in Table 4 above, it is clear that the mean score of experimental group after having the course was (3.87), and the average of the control group was (3.18), which shows that the levels of experimental group members on ICC were higher than those of the control group members. These results indicate improved performance of the experimental participants due to the acculturation programme in developing the competence of intercultural communication. These results confirm the second hypothesis.

To check the statistical significance of these results, we conducted a further independent t-test as shown in Table 5 below. The results show that there are statistically significant differences between the two group members' performance on the ICCS survey because analysis bore a significant t-value (0.000) which is less than (0.05).

Table 5: An Independent t- test result of the comparison between the control and the experimental groups after having the programme

Posttest	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.106	.748	-4.730	24	.000
Equal variances not assumed			-4.730	23.089	.000

Furthermore, the values of ETA squared concerning the results of the differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on post-testing were computed as shown in Table 4 above. ETA squared values were (0.303, 0.175, and 0.232) and the total value amounted to (0.338). These values indicate highly significant differences that confirm the effectiveness of the programme in enhancing intercultural communicative competence in the experimental participants. In addition, the modified Blake's gain ratio for the ICCS dimensions ranged between (1.18 and 1.30) and (1.37) for total score, which is within the range of efficiency defined by Blake, confirming the same results of ETA square analysis. This ratio interval is [0, 2] and the instructional programme is considered acceptably effective if the computed ratio is not less than 1.2(Pierce, et al., 2004). This demonstrates that the acculturation programme was effective in developing intercultural communication competency in the experimental participants.

To determine if there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control group on both the pre and post-tests for the intercultural communication competency, the paired sample t-test was run, together with calculating the effect size and Blake's ratio as shown in Table (6) below:

Table 6: Paired sample t-test results for differences between the mean scores of the experimental group on ICCS pretesting and post-testing

Dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	SD	*t*-value	*p*- value	Eta Squared	Blake's ratio
Motivation	Pre	26	3.41	0.83	2.760	0.008	0.209	1.43
	Post	26	3.95	0.55				
Tolerance for uncertainty	Pre	26	3.38	0.93	2.479	0.017	0.241	1.29
	Post	26	3.92	0.60				
Self-and-Other Knowledge	Pre	26	3.44	0.83	2.061	0.048	0.142	1.12
	Post	26	3.74	0.64				
Total	Pre	26	3.41	0.73	2.573	0.013	0.211	1.36
	Post	26	3.87	0.54				

Table (6) above shows that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group respondents on pretesting and post-testing in terms of the overall means scores of intercultural communication competencies, in favor of the experimental participants' post-testing mean scores (M=3.87, t=2.57). These results

indicate the effectiveness of the acculturation programme in developing intercultural communication competency.

As shown in Table (6), the value of ETA squared of the results regarding the differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post-test on the institutional communication skills of the respondents, was (0.209, 0.241, 0.142) and the total score amounted to (0.211), indicating a considerable effect size of the programme. This difference between the average scores of the experimental group members in the pre and posttests is due to the programme that is rich in cultural experiences. Table (6) also shows the Blake's modified gain ratio ranging between 1.12 and 1.43 and for the total score amounting to (1.36), that is, within the range determined by Blake to indicate the effectiveness of the programme between (1) and (2). These results confirm the third hypothesis.

Results from the Qualitative Data

The type of qualitative interviews used in this study is a one-off event lasting about 30 minutes with each participants done as one shot online. The interviews were structured since the researcher follows a pre-prepared, elaborate 'interview schedule/guide', which contains a list of questions-to be covered closely with every interviewee and the elicited information shares many of the aspects of intercultural communication that are comparable across participants. The interviews with the experimental participants helped to check the participants' experiences with intercultural communication to capture their trajectories of developing their intercultural communicative competences in their workplace in a way that connects seamlessly.

The interview protocol responses in this study were analyzed using MAXQDA software (MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2018, Release 18.0.7). MAXQDA is a software programme specifically for computing qualitative and mixed methods data qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research. This programme was used because it helped to deal relatively quickly with larger numbers of interviews by organizing and analysing qualitative data with the assistance of codes, memos and visualization

functions. Codes for the categories of responses were managed through six codes created for the interview protocol used in the present study bearing out six themes as follows:

Table 7: Themes of the Interviews

Codes	No of quotes that fit into the codes
Previous learning& self-awareness	11
Cultural aspects and roles	29
Language aspects in ICC	37
Affective aspects: motivations & attitudes	15
Socio-cognitive aspects & Other-knowledge	27
Difficulties in ICC with non-Arabs	18

1. Previous learning and self-awareness

The interviews with the participants elicited responses about their previous learning experiences in intercultural communication as part of their English language courses. Eleven of the interviewees concurred that they were taught how to interact culturally with non-Arabic speakers in previous ESP/EFL/EGP courses. They also concurred that previous learning could instill into them self-awareness about cultural differences between people. Many interviewees also assumed that previous foreign language courses not only provided them with self-awareness about cultural variations, but also about how to deal with these differences. According to another interviewee,

"In case I have to interact with people who can't speak Arabic, there are many problems in describing what was happening and sometime mistakes or misunderstandings happen".

It appears from the responses that fit within this theme that respect for other cultures and learning how to interact with people from different cultures and belief systems were important experiences, skills and knowledge areas

they learnt about in previous EFL/ESP courses. According to Interviewee 8,

"knowing the culture of a non-Arabic speaker makes it easier to communicate since you will have common grounds to talk about and you don't have to be afraid of saying something wrong".

Other interviewees emphasized that these courses were cautious about drawing the attention of EFL learners to religious differences, value systems and gender roles that they need to approach cautiously especially when they interact culturally with non-Arabic speaking individuals.

2. Cultural aspects and roles

Most interviewees indicated that they discussed issues related to intercultural communication and interaction such as values, beliefs system, gender roles and non-verbal communication as part of the native and target cultures. Highlights of these discussions included the hijab (veil for women) in Islamic countries, religious taboos, do's and don'ts that people in Muslim cultures need to adhere to. Some interviewees explained that religion is an important factor in judging intercultural differences. They also related these differences to behaviors, traditions, beliefs and social norms and mores. Some other interviewees said that the belief system, language and society values also contributed to what moulded their perceptions of cultural differences, which they learnt about in previous EFL courses. Among the most important aspects of culture that previous courses tended to pay attention to were differences related to gender roles, race, ethnicity, age, and social classes. According to one participant,

"Sex and gender, race and ethnicity, age and social class [are important cultural aspects that create differences]. Some cultures emphasize traditional male values".

Another participant indicated that religious values and traditions not only affect intercultural and linguistic communication, but also gear how we believe about others in terms of their religions, beliefs and behaviours in a way that we eventually become judgemental about it. The stance of

males versus females and inter-sex contact and communication were such culturally sensitive issues that they required particular attention when addressing these issues in the EFL classroom. Issues of relevance here included wearing the hijab, eating pork, and the reluctance of some women to talk to men. However, some participants indicated that although these were hot topics in intercultural communication, prior ESP/EFL courses dealt with them from a pure linguistic perspective and they were not emphasized in the language curriculum. One interviewee said,

"There are a lot of differences in cultural interactions… we learned ..to choose our words when we talk … and be careful about our opinions when we talk about a particular topic"

Notwithstanding these perceptions about intercultural awareness education in prior EFL courses, the responses of the participants in this regard indicate a high frequency of perceptions about the important topic that needs to be included in the target language curriculum. In addition, these responses also suggested that these issues were dealt with from linguistic perspectives and part of reading passages or vocabulary learning matters that touch upon the issues but not address them in sufficient depth.

3. Language aspects in ICC

Language aspects related to intercultural communication suggested the use of culturally sensitive language for solving problems with language communication in real-life situations. In workplaces occupied by many non-native speakers of Arabic, it is difficult to use Arabic as a medium of communication. Some interviewees indicated that sometimes communicators resort to body language, facial gestures and a pidgin of simple English and little Arabic to get themselves across others. Some indicated that they needed "non-verbal communication due to the fact that sometimes I cannot explain what I want or what I mean". Another interviewee said,

"Something that I want to improve [is] body language, eye communication, vocabulary, clear accent, and being good in grammar. I think if I have all this skill, I'll be able to have a great and stronger

intercultural communication."

They also suggested a need to learn pronunciation variations and dialectal varieties to help them understand non-native speakers of English or others who use a pidgin or creole language form. They also expressed their need to learn about culturally acceptable language used by men and women. According to one interviewee:

"[We need] just one aspect which is the formal language. [We need] to learn how to use language in formal occasions … this aspect of language of language formality versus informality…".

These needs for the target language course should include training in the cultural aspects of verbal (nuances in vocabulary, male versus female register, pronunciation, dialects, idiolects, accents, etc.) and non-verbal communication (facial expressions, body language, gestures, etc.) as the interviewees suggested.

4. Affective aspects: motivations & attitudes

Most interviewees indicated that the acculturation programme motivated them more to participate in intercultural discussions in English with non-Arabs. According to one interviewee, learning how to interact in multiple cultural situations "depended on the situation to use verbal communication or the non-verbal communication" in a way that could provide the communicator with the confidence needed to maintain a conversation. The programme and previous language and culture learning also helped them to form positive attitudes towards others or at least lessen their negative attitudes. According to an interviewee, learning about using appropriately cultural body language is a crucial issue we learn in the foreign language curriculum. Most interviewees understood that they might need to "explain for themselves if something was not culturally allowed to do".

5. Socio-cognitive aspects & Other-knowledge

For the participants' expectations, most interviewees believed that the programme had improved their socio-cognitive learning skills and their

knowledge of the others. They indicated that the programme helped them to be culturally aware and sensitive about topics of EFL courses improved their knowledge about other peoples inasmuch as they helped them develop their confidence in speaking English and increase their vocabulary as well as improve their conversational English. According to one interviewee, the programme could help him find about the cultural differences with others while developing a respect for their beliefs and behaviors as well as their mores and traditions. According to another interviewee,

"Knowing each culture has a way of communicating, improving communication skills and let others know our culture and how we communicate."

Others said they expected more cognitive teaching about intercultural communicative competence to improve their knowledge about others and expand their perceptions of themselves when they interact with others in an intercultural communicative setting.

Overall, the participants indicated that the programme helped them extensively to develop these intercultural communication and intercultural sensitivity skills with reference to knowing about others using culturally appropriate conversational strategies. In addition, the interviewees suggested that watching videos on the internet, movies on TV and episodes and drama could help them not only learn English but also learn more about the cultural differences and aspects of the target culture. The programme, most of them announced, could train them on how to tolerate with ambiguous situations and interact with others in good faith without over-estimating or under-estimating what others say in oral conversations.

6. Difficulties in ICC with non-Arabs

The interview protocol also elicited answers from the ten informants about the difficulties that they may encounter when they interact with non-Arabs in real life situations. Each interviewee indicated that they had some problems with communication; i.e., how to explain themselves in intercultural settings and how to understand and get themselves understood by others.

Others ascribed these difficulties to verbal language communication and the differences in accents, dialects or idiolects. Even if they could speak English fluently, they sometimes came across some foreigners who spoke English with an accent like Indians or Filipinos. This makes it problematic to understand what they really mean, and sometimes communication comes to a halt due to lack of understanding or misunderstanding the interlocutors.

To summarize the range of difficulties the participants indicated when they hold a communication exchange with non-Arabs, the responses pointed out that some of these difficulties have to do with the indigenous culture, the language varieties of communicators, accents and pronunciation, vocabulary and dialects and the creole language that they have to use in many cases. These analyses confirm the fourth hypothesis.

Discussion

This study assessed the development of learners' intercultural communicative competence based on pretesting and post-testing of ICC skills by a survey specifically designed and validated for this purpose. In the context of a foreign language class, the development of ICC requires awareness of the cultural context in which such communication takes place and flexible adaptation to different conversational styles (Byram, 1997). The literature review showed that many studies and writings on the topic recommended EFL teachers to provide the learners with the opportunities to realize these cultural differences by fostering activities and assignments that involve interaction with members of other cultures. The results showed that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups' respondents in the post-test, regarding the total score of the intercultural communication skills and the sub-dimensions related to: Motivation, Tolerance for uncertainty, Self-and-Other Knowledge, in favor of the experimental group respondents. Further ETA square and Blake's modified gain ratio values were analyzed. Findings from the t-test comparisons, the ETA values and Blake's gain ratio values corroborate the effectiveness of the ICC development tutorials designed for EFL college students for developing their intercultural communication competency. The hypotheses of the study were confirmed, given these

findings from both the quantitative analysis and the thematic coding of interviewees' responses.

The ICC survey findings tapped into the three constituents of ICC. Findings on the dimension of motivation corroborated prior research findings, too (Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000; Hall, 2001; Wiseman, 2003). Findings related to the dimension of self-and-other knowledge are also related to the development of sociocultural and intercultural awareness. This component also refers to intercultural sensitivity, which is the ability to perform effectively and appropriately in different cultural environments. The ability to learn about one's culture as well as the others' cultures was also developed by dint of the enrichment program used in this study. The finding affirms prior research that indicated that providing ICC experiences could bring in "changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills are taken as manifestations of changes in the underlying worldview" (Bennett, in Wurzel 2004, p. 75). These findings are also commensurate with prior research suggesting that these aspects about ICC development can be nurtured and developed in ICC programs and by adopting an FL pedagogy that raises intercultural awareness and their understanding of one's and others' cultures (Paige, 1993; Trujillo, 2003; Kramsch, 1998; Byram&Fleming, 2001; Citron, 1995). Finally, for tolerance with uncertainty, the participants revealed higher gain scores on this section of the ICC survey.

Prior research suggested that teaching ICC could help improve ICC skills in FL learners. In a similar fashion, prior research on language and culture indicated that both concepts are inseparable as culture teaching can be incorporated in language teaching by integrating intercultural communicative competence (Citron, 1995; Deters, 2009; Harumi, 2002; Ilieva, 2005; Kramer, 2002). According to Paige (1993), ICC development requires learners to be always in a state of healthy doubt that creates some sort of cultural relativism where learners are cautious about make judgments about others from different cultures due to the development of their sophisticated self-awareness. The provisioning of intense intercultural experiences as well as intercultural awareness tutorials can help in inducing this level of self-reflectiveness and self-awareness; these findings are also

congruent with prior research indicating that cultural awareness is a process of acquiring and developing consciousness of one's cultural presence through developing awareness about cultural diversity in societies (Trujillo, 2003). In this regard, the study concluded that adequate ICC development and training should be integrated in FL education curriculum which is also a highlight in prior research findings (Byram& Wagner, 2017; Fernandez &Pozzo, 2017; Liaw, 2006).

Overall, the findings from the ICC survey analysis after the experimental intervention are in consistence with prior research, which showed that providing medical students and professions with ICC courses would help them develop their ICC skills (Babitsch, et al., 2008; Hewett, et al., 2009; Schouten, et al., 2009; Pretorius, 2017; Satu, et al., 2013; Schyve, 2007; Schwei, et al., 2015; Segalowitz, &Kehayia, 2011; Stewart, 1995; Van de Poel, et al., 2015; Watson, et al., 2012).

Conclusion:

Developing EFL college students' intercultural communicative competences and skills has been an inspiring and interesting research area in English language teaching (ELT) research. This study, congruent with prior research, advocated the need for effective intercultural communication strategies as part of their foreign language curriculum. The participants in the survey analysis and the qualitative data analysis confirmed that language proficiency was a significant factor in the increase of ICC interactions and successful communication across cultures by effective using of the target language to deepen the understanding of the intercultural aspects that influence communicative acts.

Curricular provisioning on ICC development can help integrate intercultural communication skills into the FL syllabus in a way that makes FL teachers capable of facilitating and guiding the FL learners' intercultural sensitivity and ICC. In addition, this study was basically grounded in the postulation that the development of intercultural communicative competence is consistent with the development of language skills and knowledge about one's and others' cultures. Furthermore, culture and

language can be acquired and developed while language proficiency is being developed in the linguistic component of the curriculum.

This study advocates teacher-training programmes to focus on the integration of intercultural communication competence in EFL courses. This can be done in teacher education programmes and in colleges of arts and colleges of languages and translation that offer EFL education programmes. In addition, the present study also advocates the development of learner's intercultural sensitivity and ICC through providing supplementary ICC tutorials and models that are designed to train EFL learners on how to effectively interact with members of the target culture and to help them perceive cultural differences.

The growing multiculturalism in Saudi Arabia, especially in university settings requires that our foreign language learners be prepared to interact appropriately across cultures and in different multilingual, multicultural settings. Thus, nurturing intercultural competencies in these students to help them successfully communicate with others belonging to different cultures should be the core of the FL curriculum in the scientific colleges. Therefore, FL educators should be encouraged and trained to develop not only language proficiency but also intercultural learning competencies to qualify EFL students to make up to the expectations and challenges in their prospective workplace.

Further research that taps into the effect of the first language and the native culture on foreign language and target culture learning is also needed to reflect critically on intercultural communication development. In addition, a more maturely developed ICC development programme for medical students is needed to identify the impact of developing ICC through integrating cultural topics in the FL curriculum. Future research is also needed to examine, for example, the effects of ICC development materials selected for the EFL class and whether there is a correlation between the teachers' intercultural communicative competence, and how language educators integrate culture in their EFL teaching. More research is also needed to tap into the attitudes, motivation and emotions that result from an intercultural approach to teaching FL.

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فاعلية برنامج للتثاقف في تطوير الكفاءة التواصلية بين الثقافات لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في المستوى الجامعي: استقصاء منهجي مختلط

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ملخص البحث:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من فعالية برنامج للتثاقف مصمم لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المستوى الجامعي. وقد استخدم الباحثان تصميمًا تجريبيًا للبحث يشتمل على اختبار قبلي واختبار بعدي ومجموعة ضابطة، لجمع البيانات الكمية والنوعية. وقد تم اختيار المشاركين في الدراسة بأسلوب المعاينة بالمواءمة أو العينة العرضية (ن = 52) من ضمن الطلبة الذين انضموا إلى برنامج تحسين اللغة (LEP) في كليات علمية مختلفة ، موزعين بالتساوي على مجموعتي الدراسة. وقد تم تصميم برنامج التثاقف لتحفيز وإيقاظ الكفاءات التواصلية بين الثقافية التجريبية للمشاركين في المجموعة التجريبية لمدة عام أكاديمي واحد. وقد أثبتت النتائج من مقارنات اختبار النسبة التائية، وحجم الأثر ونسبة الكسب لبليك فعالية برنامج التثاقففي في تطوير كفاءة التواصل بين الثقافية في المشاركين من المجموعة التجريبية مقارنة بالمجموعة الضابطة. كما تؤكد البيانات النوعية من المقابلات نتائج التحليل الكمي من فعالية البرنامج التثاقفي، وكشف تحليل المقابلات الشخصية عن ستة محاور تؤكد نتائج تحليل الاستبانة المستخدمة في جمع البيانات الكمية. وأخيرا، خلصت الدراسة إلى أن تطوير مهارات الكفاءة التواصلية بين الثقافية يمكن أن يحدث جنبا إلى جنب مع تطوير الكفاءة اللغوية في طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بالجامعات.

الكلمات الدالة: المحتوى الثقافي، تعلم اللغة التواصلية، طرق التدريس، الكفاءة التواصلية بين الثقافات،اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، برنامج التثاقف.