

تحسين الكفاءة التواصلية اثناء التداخل الثقافي للمتعلمين العراقيين الدارسين للغة
الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية عن طريق استخدام المواد الاصلية

Enhancing Iraqi EFL Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence by the Use of Authentic Materials

Mawaddah H. Ahmed Al-
Husseiny

مودعة حسين أحمد الحسيني

Dr. Omar A. Ilyas
Lecturer

د. عمر علي ألياس

مدرس

University of Mosul -
College of Education for
Humanities- Department of
English Language

جامعة الموصل - كلية التربية للعلوم
الإنسانية - قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

Mawaddah.eh70@student.uomosul.edu.iq

omarillyass@uomosul.edu.iq

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الملخص

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في إمكانية المواد الأصلية لتعزيز الكفاءة التواصلية اثناء التداخل الثقافي للمتعلمين العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. تحقيقاً لهذه الغاية ، تم تصميم دورة تجريبية بعنوان "اللغة والثقافة" لإجراء هذه الدراسة. خلال هذه الدورة ، تم استخدام المواد الأصلية بشكل مكثف طوال العام الدراسي ٢٠٢٠-٢٠٢١. عينة الدراسة هم خمسون طالباً من السنة الرابعة تم اختيارهم عشوائياً من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية / جامعة الموصل، للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢٠-٢٠٢١. تم جمع البيانات قبل التجربة وبعدها من خلال استخدام: (١) استبانة للتقييم الذاتي ، (٢) اختبار المعارف الخمسة، و (٣) مقابلات الكفاءة الشفوية. كشفت النتائج أن المواد الأصلية لها إمكانات واعدة لتعزيز قدرات الطلاب الخاصة بالتداخل الثقافي.

Abstract

The study investigates the potential of authentic materials to enhance Iraqi EFL learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence. To do so, an experimental course entitled 'Language and Culture' has been designed to carry out this study. Throughout this course, authentic materials have been intensively utilized for the whole academic year 2020-2021. The sample of the study is fifty fourth-year students who have been selected randomly from the Department of English/ College of Education for Humanities/ University of Mosul. Data were collected before and after the experiment through the use of: (1) A self-assessment questionnaire, (2) five-savoirs test, and (3) oral proficiency interviews. Results revealed that authentic materials have a promising potential to enhance students' intercultural abilities.

1. Introduction

Language and culture are interwoven and interdependent in the sense that neither of them can exist without the other. This perspective has become the central focus in the field of foreign language teaching (henceforth FLT), especially in the 21st century (Fantini, 2019: 14). As globalization increases, people around the globe have more direct and indirect opportunities to interact with one another. Such interaction includes individuals of different languages and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, a need to promote foreign language learners' (henceforth FLLs) cultural awareness has become one of the ultimate aims for FLT in modern literature (Csillik, 2019: 6).

To meet this aim, a trend of incorporating authentic materials (henceforth AMs) into foreign language classrooms has been increasingly encouraged (Mestari & Malabar, 2016: 126). This is mainly because AMs are culturally loaded which gives them the potential to promote FLLs' cultural awareness. Such materials are produced by and for native speakers of a community, such as movies, sitcoms, songs, newspapers, and so on. AMs are not modified or manipulated for educational purposes; thus they mirror various cultural aspects and language varieties present within target communities in an authentic and effective way (Beresova, 2015: 196). Mishan (2005: 155) argues that AMs have significant pedagogical implications as they serve as cultural mirrors that expose FLLs to real language use similar to that in real communication with native speakers.

Promoting FLLs' intercultural abilities has been the subject for research in the past two decades, given its necessity in today's globalized world. This gave rise to what is known today as Intercultural Communicative Competence (henceforth ICC) which can be defined as the ability to communicate with others who are different from oneself linguistically and, most importantly, culturally (Fantini & Tirmizi,

2006: 12). This competence is underlay by the rational that communication and culture are inseparable and interrelated, which places a need to rethink the efficiency of the communicative competence (henceforth CC) as far as global interaction is concerned (Alptekin, 2002: 60).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

AMs are not commonly integrated into Iraqi ELT curriculums nor in instructors' activities despite the rich literature that supports their powerful impact on enhancing learners' command over language. A huge body of evidence drawn from previous studies shows that exploiting AMs can bridge the gap between EFL classrooms and real-life communication, especially when interaction with real native speakers is not possible (Wong et al, 1995: 20). Therefore, it is argued that AMs can serve as mirrors that reflect various cultural aspects and exposes learners to real language use and varieties that are present within target communities (Autio, 2012: 41).

Given that today's world is in a phase of on-going globalization, it has become necessary for ELT in Iraq to address the cultural dimension of English language and its inevitable impact on real-life communication. Iraqi EFL learners need to be equipped with competences that would enable them to step beyond their own language and culture, and function successfully with others from the target communities. One such crucial competence is ICC. The need to promote Iraqi EFL learners' ICC can be attributed to the widely supported argument that proficient EFL learners, with no sufficient cultural knowledge and awareness, may cause serious offence, misunderstanding and communication break-downs when interacting with others from the target communities (Dai and Chen, 2017: 8). Without sufficient intercultural abilities, Iraqi EFL learners may fail to

deliver or interpret intended messages causing themselves to be perceived as inappropriate or culturally insensitive. Such inappropriateness, though unintended, may generalize some serious stereotypes against EFL learners' cultural groups. Therefore, lack of cultural knowledge and awareness hinders successful communication and may exceed to cause EFL learners to suffer from what Oberg (1954: 1) referred to as a "culture shock". Iraqi EFL learners are expected to suffer from the above, given that the cultural dimension is commonly ignored in ELT in Iraq.

1.2 Aims of the study

The current study aims at investigating the efficiency of using AMs as cultural mirrors to enhance Iraqi EFL learners' ICC. Utilizing AMs within foreign language classrooms has been repeatedly argued to have the potential to enhance learners' intercultural abilities. That been said, this claim is being investigated throughout this study. Adding to this, the study attempts to promote Iraqi EFL learners' ICC which is being repeatedly acknowledged as being one of the most essential qualities for FLLs in today's globalized world.

2. Theoretical Background

This section is dedicated for presenting a general theoretical background concerning the key concepts that are of relevance to this study.

2.1 The Concept of Authenticity

Although the concept of authenticity has long been a subject of interest in education, still there is little agreement regarding its meaning. Most authors agree that the concept of authenticity is interpreted as exposure to natural language produced by and for real native speakers of a particular community to convey some messages (Rogers & Medley, 1988: 467). Building on this, authenticity is related to language spontaneously generated with no modifications or any pedagogical considerations (Namaziandost et al, 2021: 2). Exposing language learners to such AMs is commonly believed to mark the classroom environment with authenticity.

2.2 Authentic Materials and Foreign Language Teaching

Morrow (1977: 13) defines AMs as “stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort”. Another feature that is commonly highlighted when defining AMs is related to the purpose behind their production. Accordingly, Porter and Roberts (1981) define AMs as real materials that “were *not* initiated for the purpose of teaching” (ibid: 37). In other words, such materials are authentic in the sense that they use real language which is originally “not intended for non-native learners” (ibid). Types of AMs can be classified into five main categories: (1) *Audio* (e.g., music, radio podcasts, interviews), (2) *Audio-visuals* (e.g., TV shows, movies, sitcoms), (3) *Visuals* (e.g., photographs, postcards, magazine pictures), (4) *Written* (e.g., poems,

speech scripts, food labels), and (5) *Realia* (e.g., flags, clothes, tickets and other real objects)

Throughout FLT literature, it has been increasingly argued that creating an authentic environment for FLLs by the use of AMs can positively develop their command over language. This perspective is underlay by the rationale that FLLs need to be exposed to real-life language, rather than artificial language input which is typically found in contrived textbooks (Belaid & Murray, 2015: 26). The notion of authenticity basically revolves around creating an authentic environment in which FLLs are exposed to real-life language similar to that used by native speakers. AMs are believed to contribute positively in this regard as they bring reality into FL classrooms and familiarize learners with how language is used communicatively (Beresova, 2015: 196). Building on this, bringing real-life language inside the classroom is believed to help FLLs generalize this authenticity outside the classroom, and use language effectively in real situations. AMs materials are given such potential due to the social communicative purpose that underlies their creation (Mishan 2005: 71). As such, it is argued that AMs have positive pedagogical implications, especially where interaction with real native speakers is not possible (ibid: 155).

2.3 The Concept of Culture

A review of literature reveals that defining the concept of culture is definitely not an easy task, although it has been a subject of interest for a very long time. Until this day, the nature of this concept and its components are still debatable. One of the earliest and most influential definitions of culture is that of Sir Edward B. Tylor (1871) who defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society"(Tylor, 1871: 1). In fact, Tylor is one of the first scholars who pointed out that culture is learned,

acquired and shared among members of a particular community, and it is not a genetically inherited quality. His perception of culture was revolutionary at the time against dominant ideologies of the 19th century that marked culture as a genetic entity (Hammersley, 2019: 23). Since Tylor's time, the concept of culture has become a central focus in anthropology, and later on, his works contributed significantly to the foundation of British cultural anthropology field (Edelman, 2019: 21).

Further attempts were made to better understand the concept of culture, and in the 1960s, Nelson H. Brooks (1960, as cited in Hua, 2019: 4) proposed his well-known influential classification of *Culture with capital C* and *culture with small c*. According to this perspective, *Culture with a capital C* refers to the formal and visible cultural elements that are accomplished and produced by a community. It includes, for example, music, literature, politics, art, holidays, etc. that are obviously perceived and transmitted from one generation to the other. On the other hand, *culture with a small c* includes cultural elements that are less visible, yet equally, if not more, significant. It includes, for example, values, standards, communication styles (verbal and non-verbal), behavioral patterns, aspects of daily living, and so on (ibid: 5).

Another interpretation of culture which matches Brooks' (1960) perspective is that of the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall. In this regard, Hall (1976, as cited in Fletcher, 2015: 63) has proposed his influential *Cultural Iceberg Model* in which he compared the concept of culture with an iceberg. According to his perspective, culture is similar to an iceberg in that only 10-20% is visible above the surface of the water, while 80-90% is hidden underneath (see *Figure 1*). The visible part of the iceberg stands for the surface culture that is made up of the cultural aspects that can be easily perceived by the five senses. It

includes, for example, costumes, food, celebrations, rituals, behaviors etc. On the other hand, the hidden portion of the iceberg stands for the deep culture that is comprised of invisible aspects that are not directly observable. For example, beliefs, values, assumptions, attitudes, etc. These invisible aspects that constitute deep culture underlie the observable aspects of the surface culture (ibid).

2.4 Language and Culture

Historically, studies that addressed the relationship between language and culture can be traced back to at least the nineteenth century. According to these studies, language and culture are perceived as being intertwined and interrelated. This notion has been largely supported by various scholars who agree that language and culture should be studied together since these two concepts are inseparable and interdependent (Byram & Grundy, 2003; Kramsch, 2013; Parks, 2020). In light of this perspective, language is the vehicle that transmits culture, and culture is the key that determines the way people decipher messages and communicate among each other (Kozhevnikova, 2014: 4462). As such, Reid (2014: 161) argues that “language without culture is a set of symbols which can be misinterpreted, if they are not understood in the right cultural context”.

Agar (1994: 60) proposes the term *languaculture* as an attempt to combine the two concepts of language and culture into one unit to highlight their inseparability. In fact, many scholars argue that language is a component of culture that has dual function: one as a means of communication, and the other as a carrier of culture (Young et al, 2009: 150). Culture cannot exist without language and vice versa. In this sense, culture cannot be transmitted without language, and language cannot exist without interaction between individuals of a particular

group. Such interaction inevitably leads to the establishment of a cultural system among these individuals along with the linguistic one. From this perspective, communication and culture are interlinked in a way that determines the messages (Maser &

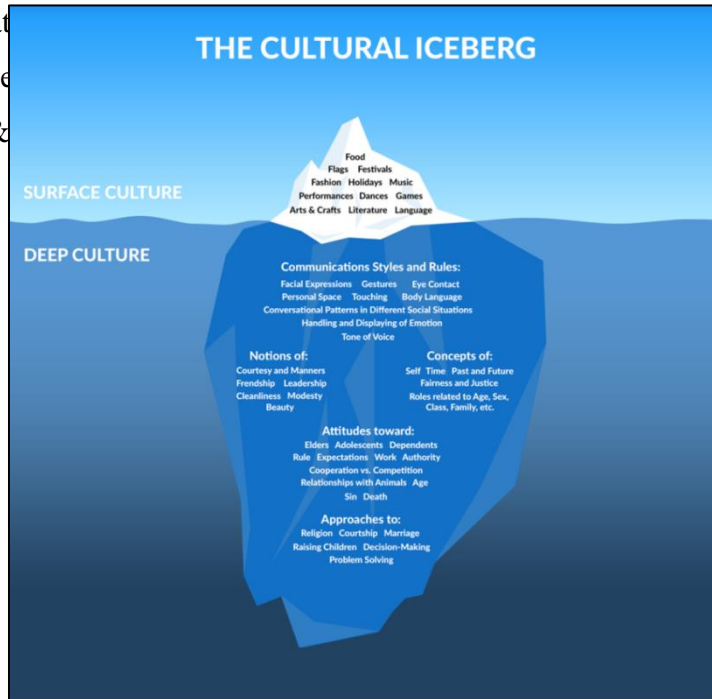


Figure (1)

Hall's Cultural Iceberg Model (adopted from Marsden, 2015)

2.5 Culture and Foreign Language Teaching

As globalization increases, people around the globe have more direct and indirect opportunities to interact with one another. Such interaction includes individuals of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which necessitates addressing the cultural dimension of language. As such, promoting FLLs' cultural awareness has become

one of the ultimate aims for FLT in modern literature (Griffith et al, 2016: 1). This can be attributed to the widely supported argument that FLLs with insufficient cultural awareness may cause unintended insults, misunderstandings, and communication failure due to their inability to convey or interpret intended messages (Dai and Chen, 2017: 8). As a result, FLLs may be perceived as being inappropriate or culturally insensitive in terms of their interlocutors from the target communities.

Lack of such cultural knowledge “can lead to becoming a fluent fool” (Bennet: 1997: 1). Such fluent fools “may be invited into complicated social situation where they cannot understand the events deeply enough to avoid giving or taking offense” (ibid). Similar arguments supporting the incorporation of the cultural dimension can be found throughout FLT literature, and are constantly on the rise. Consequently, the cultural dimension which has long been undervalued has become a central focus in FLT, especially in the 21st century.

2.6 The Concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Producing FLLs as intercultural speakers who can function effectively and appropriately across cultural diversity in today’s globalized world has become an essential aim for FLT (Tran and Duong, 2018: 3). Therefore, it is argued that the CC notion, with the native speaker as a model for FLLs, can no longer satisfy learners’ needs. As such, the notion of ICC (also referred to as IC) that addresses cultural diversity has been increasingly emphasized in FLT (Alptekin, 2002: 60).

Originally, studies that addressed cultural diversity can be traced back to at least the 1930s with works in cross-cultural psychology (Guilherme, 2002: 133). Over the years, cultural diversity began to gain more attention, and in the 1950s and 1960s it has been studied extensively in different fields. However, these studies were not

dedicated for FLT, but mostly for social psychology, anthropology and communication studies (Benmoussat & BenmoussaT, 2017: 185). Sinicrope et al (2007: 2) report that early research in cultural diversity emerged mostly from the need to resolve cross-cultural problems that hampered collaboration or diplomatic relations with others from different cultural backgrounds.

One of the most well-known early works in intercultural communication and cultural diversity is the work of Edward T. Hall (1959) who was the first to coin the term 'intercultural communication'. Therefore, he is recognized as the father of intercultural communication field (Zaharna, 2009:180). His works, along with many others, paved the way for further studies and later around the 1970s, the concept of intercultural communication started to gain importance in FLT (Sinicrope et al, 2007: 2). This shift of emphasis towards intercultural dimension resulted in the emergence of ICC along with many other terms that some authors use as alternatives to refer to the same concept.

Many authors agree that there is no one particular definition or conceptualization of ICC that is completely agreed upon. Byram (1997: 34) perceives ICC as being comprised of “Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others’ values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one’s self. Linguistic competence plays a key role”. Another conceptualization is presented by Fantini (2001: 1) who defines ICC as “a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself”.

Despite decades of research, still there is limited consensus regarding the nature and the components of ICC. In an effort to overcome this murkiness that characterized ICC literature, Deardorff

(2006) conducted a study which aimed to reach consensus on the definition and components of ICC. It is noteworthy that Deardorff uses the term IC as equivalent that refers to the same concept of ICC. In her study, Deardorff (2006: 244) invited a panel of 23 nationally (within USA) and internationally known authors to share their views regarding the definition and components of IC. Those authors have publications in intercultural topics, and are specialists in a variety of disciplines including intercultural relations, communication, anthropology, psychology, education, business and political sciences. A general agreement was found as most scholars agreed on one definition, that perceives IC as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2004, p. 194).

3. Methodology

This section is intended to describe practical procedures implemented in line with the aims of the current study.

3.1 Context of the Study: Commencing the Experiment

To clarify the followed procedures in this study, it is important to start with some description regarding the academic routine in the Department of English. As part of the official syllabus for the BA program, fourth-year students are offered different courses that address English grammar, general linguistics, poetry, drama, novel, language assessment and the elective course. As for the elective course, it is the department's policy to offer different elective courses each year to which fourth-year students are assigned (either randomly or by students' choice). As such, for the sake of carrying out this study, an experimental course entitled "Language and Culture" has been designed. This course has been assigned as one of the elective courses, and it has been integrated into the departments' official BA program. Throughout this experimental course, AMs have been intensively utilized to fulfill the aims of the current study.

3.2 Experimental Course: "Language and Culture"

The course Language and Culture started on the 14th December 2020 and continued till 10th July 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq issued some regulations regarding the educational system, which the current study had to comply with. Following these regulations, the course was offered online for some time; however, the blending teaching system was utilized for some months; namely, December, June and July.

As for the timetable, the Department of English allocated two successive hours for the course Language and Culture on weekly basis.

Besides these two hours, the students are occasionally invited to watch some selected movies online with the course instructor and the researcher. The choice of these movies is made in line with the cultural themes that are the central focus of this course. These themes are: Holidays, Myths, Legends, Superstitions, History, Geography, Language Varieties, Social Norms and Hidden Values and Beliefs. It is noteworthy that there is no clear line between all of the aforementioned themes as they are inevitably interrelated. Nevertheless, based on relevant literature, these themes have been selected to ensure organized distribution of cultural topics throughout the whole course.

3.3 Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the current study is 286 forth-year undergraduate students at the Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul, for the academic year 2020-2021, the morning study. This population is chosen with the rationale that; aside from postgraduate studies, fourth-year students represents the most advanced language learners who have spent more years studying English. As such, they are expected to have developed sufficient language proficiency level and critical thinking abilities that are needed in the current study. Moreover, fourth-year students, as adult learners with higher rational thinking, are expected to show deeper understanding regarding their own cultural identity. Such cultural maturity is crucial for making critical and neutral comparisons with the introduced target culture.

As for the sample, 50 students are chosen from the aforementioned population following the simple random sampling strategy. Accordingly, participants were selected randomly from the whole population. The rationale behind choosing this sampling strategy is related to its acknowledged high external validity and generalizability.

3.4 Model of the study

This study utilizes a modified model that emerged from the adaptation of both Byram's (1997) and Fantini's (2001) ICC models. According to Byram (1997), ICC is composed of Linguistic Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, Discourse Competence and Intercultural Competence. The components of Intercultural Competence are the following five *savoirs*: (1) Attitudes, (2) Knowledge, (3) Skills to interpret and relate, (4) Skills to discover and react, and (5) Awareness. In his model, Byram has suggested some well-studied objectives for each of the aforementioned *savoirs* that can be utilized as criteria for teaching and assessment.

As for Fantini's (2001) model, ICC is composed of Personal Characteristics, Three Areas/Domains (relationships, communication and collaboration), Four Dimensions (Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills and Awareness), Language Proficiency and attainment levels. Throughout literature, it has been admitted that Byram's and Fantini's models are similar in that both of them recognize attitudes, knowledge, skills and awareness as the backbone of their ICC model. Byram labels these intercultural abilities as *savoirs*, whereas Fantini describes them as *dimensions*. Fantini's model, however, is more comprehensive, as it has been claimed in literature. This is basically because Fantini's model has emerged from a multinational perspective that is argued to be more applicable within wider range of cultural contexts. Nonetheless, although Fantini has acknowledged attitudes, knowledge, skills and awareness as integral parts of ICC, he did not give any specifications regarding what constitutes them. In other words, these four dimensions are left broadly open and are vaguely addressed with no reference to how they are identified. Unlike Fantini's broad identification of these

dimensions, Byram has dedicated more than 100 pages describing and analyzing them into specific objectives in order to establish the outlines of these intercultural abilities.

As such, the model utilized in this study is the outcome of integrating Byram's (1997) identified objectives for the five *savoirs* into

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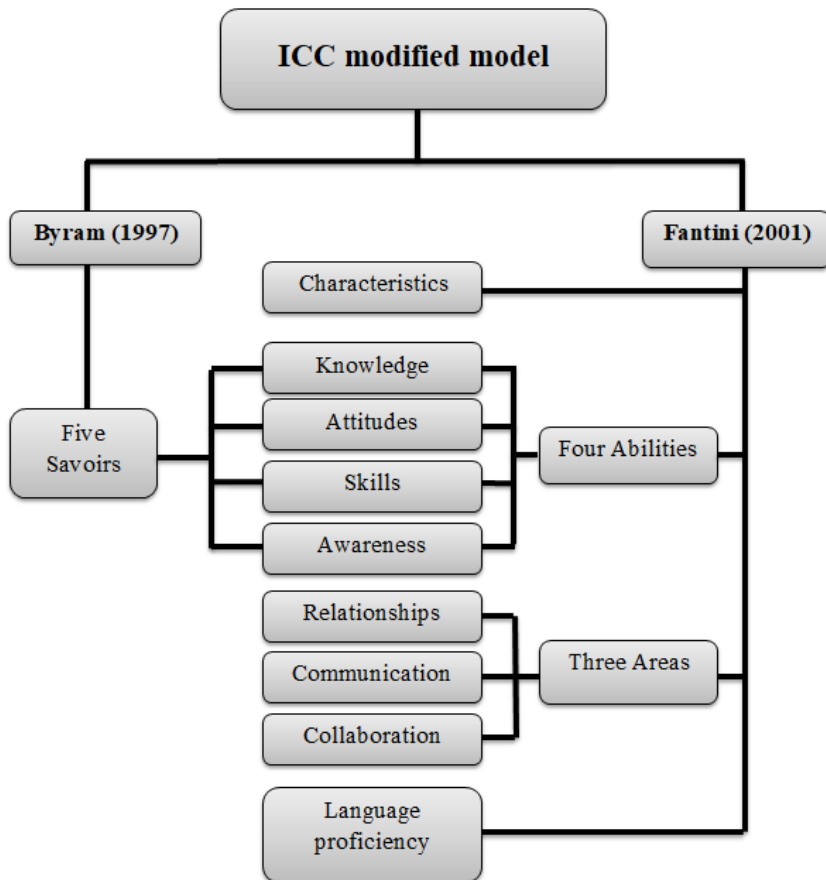


Figure (2)**ICC modified model****3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

In order to elicit data necessary for the sake of experimentation, the current study utilizes four data collection instruments. These instruments or tools are: (1) self-assessment ICC Questionnaire (henceforth ICCQ), (2) Five-Savoires Test (henceforth FST), and (3) Oral Proficiency Interviews (henceforth OPIs).

3.5.1 Self-assessment Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire

This self-assessment ICCQ is constructed based on the modified model mentioned above. Accordingly, this questionnaire is made of five parts; Part One includes items intended to collect participants' background information. Whereas Part Two, Three and Four include 5-point Likert scale items that are intended to address some intercultural aspects based on the model of this study. As for Part Five, multiple-choice items are utilized to draw on participants' language proficiency

3.5.2 Five-Savoires Test

This FST is constructed in line with Byram's (1997) and Fantini's (2001) models that perceives attitudes, knowledge, skills and awareness as the basic components of ICC. However, as it has been mentioned earlier, Fantini's identification for these components is way too broad and vague given that he did not specify what constitutes them. In contrast, Byram (1997) has developed specific objectives in order to outline these components, and to serve as guidelines for

teaching and assessing ICC. That being the case, Byram's objectives for the five savoirs are utilized here as criteria for the construction of test's items. Accordingly, the test is made up of five parts that correspond with Byram's five saviors: (1) Attitudes, (2) Knowledge, (3) Skills to Interpret and Relate, (4) Skills to Discover and/or Interact, and (5) Awareness).

3.5.3 Oral Proficiency Interview

The OPI is constructed to test students' oral proficiency drawing on their Fluency, Pronunciation, Grammar and Vocabulary. These interviews include questions collected from a number of mock IELTS and TOEFL tests, and others that were constructed by the researcher. It needs to be highlighted here that the study faced some restrictions that hindered assessing language proficiency comprehensively, as it has been planned, due to COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, the initial plan for this study included assessing the four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking by utilizing a mock IELTS test. However, due to COVID-19 pandemic, it was proven difficult to assess all four skills; thus, only students' oral proficiency was assessed through the use of OPIs. These OPIs were conducted online using Google Meet service, and students' performance was evaluated using Marek and Wu's (2011) 5-point scale rubric.

3.6 Administration of Instruments

Due COVID-19 pandemic, not all instruments could be implemented face-to-face. Accordingly, it was agreed only the FST is to be conducted face-to-face so as to ensure that the obtained data is authentic and reflects students' real intercultural abilities. This decision is supported by the issue that students may resort to the internet to answer test's items or ask others around them. As such, only the FST was conducted face-to-face, whereas the ICCQ and the OPIs were carried out online.

As for pre-tests, the pre -FST was executed on the 28th December, 2020. The test started around 11 a.m. and ended approximately at 12:20 p.m. In addition, the pre-ICCQ was posted online on the 28th December in three Google forms (i.e., questionnaire items were distributed on three forms) to make it easier for the students to fill. Students were given a timespan of six days to submit all forms so they can respond to all items according to their own pace. As for the pre-OPIs, they were conducted online using GoogleMeet on the 29th and 30th December 2020. Following pre-tests, students were intensively exposed to AMs throughout the whole experimental course Language and Culture that lasted for approximately six months. When the course finished, students were post-tested. Accordingly,

The post-FST was administered on the 4th July 2021, and it lasted from 9 a.m. till approximately 11 p.m. As for the post-ICCQ, it was posted online on the 4th July 2021 in three forms, the same way the pre-ICCQ was offered. Students were asked to fill the questionnaire throughout the week to allow them enough time to respond at their own pace. Similar to the pre-OPIs, the post-OPIs were carried out online using GoogleMeet on the 6th, 7th and 8th July 2021.

4. Data Analysis

Data were first statistically diagnosed to decide on the suitable type of statistical tests that are to be used; in other words, whether to use parametric or nonparametric tests. This decision is basically made in light of data normality distribution test that investigates whether or not data are distributing normally in line with the normality distribution curve hypothesis. To this end, Shapiro-Wilk normality test has been utilized, and results revealed that data collected from all three instruments did not undergo normal distributing. That being the case, the nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test has been implemented to assess whether or not there are statistically significant differences in pre-posttests. According to this test, there is no statistically significant difference if P-value is higher than 0.05. However, if P-value is less than 0.05 it serves as an indicator that there is a statistically significant difference.

4.1 Self-assessment Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire

Looking at pre-post ICCQ, results reveal that there are statistically significant differences in students' responses for the domains: Personal Characteristics (P-value=.038), Knowledge (P-value=.005), Skills (P-value=.031), Awareness (P-value=.019) and Intercultural Areas (P-value=.027). This is proven by the computed significant P-values for the aforementioned domains which were found less than 0.05. As for the domains Attitudes and Language Proficiency, it was found that students' responses did not yield any statistically significant changes given that the computed P-value is higher than 0.05 (*Table 1*).

Table (1)
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Pre-Post ICCQ

| Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test | | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Domains | | Mean Rank | Z | P-value |
| pre-Personal Characteristics | | 20.04 | -2.870 | .038 |
| post-Personal Characteristics | | 26.96 | | |
| Four Dimensions/Five Savoirs | pre-Attitudes | 24.63 | -1.439 | .150 |
| | post-Attitudes | 25.23 | | |
| | pre-Knowledge | 22.43 | -2.811 | .005 |
| | post-Knowledge | 25.35 | | |
| | pre-Skills | 22.36 | -1.771 | .031 |
| | post-Skills | 25.39 | | |
| | pre-Awareness | 21.08 | -1.901 | .019 |
| | post-Awareness | 25.37 | | |
| pre-Intercultural Areas | | 24.61 | -1.892 | .027 |
| post-Intercultural Areas | | 27.21 | | |
| pre-Language Proficiency | | 24.10 | -1.339 | .166 |
| post-Language Proficiency | | 24.63 | | |

4.2 Five-Savoirs Test

Applying Wilcoxon's test, as presented in *Table 2*, shows that there are statistically significant differences in students' performance for all domains given that the computed P-values are less than 0.05. These P-values were found to be .002, .000, .000, .000, .000 and .000 for Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills(1), Skills(2) and Awareness respectively.

Table (2)

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Pre-Post FST

| Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Domains | Mean Rank | Z | P-value |
| pre-Attitudes | ١٤ | -3.105 | .002 |
| post-Attitudes | 20.23 | | |
| pre-Knowledge | 0.00 | -6.175 | .000 |
| post-Knowledge | 25.50 | | |
| pre-Skills(1) | 0.00 | -6.114 | .000 |
| post-Skills(1) | 24.5 | | |
| pre-Skills(2) | 0.00 | -6.101 | .000 |
| post-Skills(2) | 25 | | |
| pre-Awareness | 0.00 | -5.847 | .000 |
| post-Awareness | 22.50 | | |

4.3 Oral Proficiency Interviews

Nonparametric measurements are utilized to statistically analyze and compare the pre- and post-OPIs. To this end, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test has been utilized again to investigate whether or not there are statistically significant differences:

Table (3)

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Pre-Post OPIs

| Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Domains | Mean Rank | Z | P-value |
| pre-Fluency | 13.67 | -2.244 | .014 |
| post-Fluency | 15.94 | | |
| pre-Pronunciation | 11.68 | -2.030 | .042 |
| post-Pronunciation | 12.92 | | |

| Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Domains | Mean Rank | Z | P-value |
| pre-Grammar | 10.00 | -2.356 | .035 |
| post-Grammar | 11.62 | | |
| pre-Vocabulary | 13.00 | -.928 | .353 |
| post-Vocabulary | 13.87 | | |

As shown in *Table 3*, there are statistically significant differences in students' oral proficiency for the domains Fluency, Pronunciation and Grammar with a significant P-value of .014, .042 and .035 respectively (which are all lower than 0.05). However, no statistically significant difference is found as far as Vocabulary domain is concerned given that the computed P-value (.353) is higher than 0.05.

5. Conclusions

Looking into students' self-evaluation, it is evident that students have perceived some development in their ICC. This is indicated by the pre-post ICCQ statistical comparison (see *Table 1*). Accordingly, students' self-evaluation after the experiment is found to be higher in all domains except for Attitudes and Language Proficiency. Nevertheless, results associated with the OPIs' provided statistical evidence that students' proficiency has developed in terms of Fluency, Pronunciation and Grammar (see *Table 3*). Despite such observed linguistic development, it is difficult to decide whether this enhancement is attributed solely to exposure to AMs, or due to other courses that were offered alongside the experimental course. In other words, this linguistic development can be attributed to the development of students' academic proficiency. Shifting to pre-post FST, results reveal that students' intercultural abilities have profoundly developed after being exposed to AMs throughout the experimental course. This is evident in the noticeable enhancement in students' responses in the test. This enhancement is evident in light of the vast significant statistical differences between the computed mean ranks in pre- and post-test (see *Table 2*).

To conclude, the findings of this study reveal that using AMs as cultural mirrors can indeed enhance students' ICC. This is evident in light of the statistical analyses that indicated development in students' intercultural competency; in both self-evaluation and actual testing. Although this positive outcome has been repeatedly reported in literature by different studies within different cultural contexts, the use of AMs as cultural mirrors has not been given much attention in Iraqi contexts. The concluded benefits in this regard support the trend of incorporating AMs into Iraqi EFL classrooms as ambassadors of the communities they have come from.

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