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**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
**Department of English**



**An Evaluation of Master 1 EFL Students' Understanding of  
Intercultural Competence**

**The Case of Master 1 Students at the department of English,**

**Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilments of the Requirements of a Master Degree in  
English Didactics

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## **Declaration**

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “An Evaluation of Master 1 EFL Students’ Understanding of Intercultural Competence” is our own work and all the sources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this work:*

*To the memory of my brother “ZOHIR” who left too soon before seeing what I have become*

*To my beloved mother “BOUFARMEL SAKINA” whose words of encouragements and push  
for tenacity ring in my ears*

*To my dear father “HOCINE” for his unconditional love and for being a constant source of  
continuous support*

*To my lovely sisters: “Ilham”, “Amira”, “Ahlem” who never saved any efforts to help me*

*To my wonderful brother “Ossama” and his wife “Razika”*

*To my sweet nefew “Zohir” and my beautiful niece “Abrar”*

*To my one and only friend “Walid” for his support, encouragement and precious help*

*To my close friends “Khaoula, Imen, Khaoula, Khadidja and Anissa”*

*To my lovely partner “Amani”*

*To all the people I love most*

***Khoul***

## **Dedication**

*With deep profound love, I dedicate this work to:*

*The most important people in my life, my parents, for their unconditional love, support, and prayers;*

*My dearest siblings: Amira, Imen, and Oussama;*

*My sweet nephews and nieces: Firas, Fadi, Adem, Djouri, and Miral;*

*My favourite middle-school teacher's memory, Bourahli Haider, for being the reason I love this language;*

*All my lovely close friends for the great time we had together and for being there for me;*

*My kind partner "Khaoula";*

*My classmates and teachers for being part of this journey;*

*All the ones I love.*

***Amani***

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## **Abstract**

The objective of teaching and learning a foreign language is nowadays defined in terms of the notion of intercultural competence. Students learn the language in association with its culture and are expected to develop intercultural competence to effectively and successfully use the language. This study, based on Byram's model (1997) of defining and describing intercultural competence, seeks to evaluate Master 1 EFL students' understanding of this notion. It has been hypothesized that Master 1 students might have formed an understanding of intercultural competence and might be aware of its different aspects. To test the validity of the formulated hypotheses, a questionnaire was administered to 70 Master 1 EFL students at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University and an interview was done with 10 other students. After analysing the obtained data, the findings revealed that students' understanding of intercultural competence is relatively good and that they are somewhat aware of its aspects. Furthermore, they are aware of the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning. Based on these findings, a number of pedagogical recommendations are given to students and teachers in addition to some limitations of the study.

*Keywords:* Intercultural competence, EFL students, understanding.

## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>EFL:</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>IC:</b>	Intercultural Competence
<b>ICC:</b>	Intercultural Communicative Competence
<b>DMIS:</b>	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity
<b>CEFR:</b>	Common European Framework of Reference
<b>ELT:</b>	English Language Teaching
<b>IDI:</b>	Intercultural Development Inventory
<b>ICSI:</b>	Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory
<b>MPQ:</b>	Multicultural Personality Questionnaire



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## **General Introduction**

1. Background of the Study
2. Statement of the Problem
3. Aim and Significance of the Study
4. Research Questions
5. Research Hypotheses
6. Research Methodology
7. Structure of the Study

## **General Introduction**

### **1. Background of the Study:**

Language teaching approaches, namely the communicative approach, were based on Hymes's communicative competence. Hymes (1966) introduced communicative competence as a reaction to Chomsky's competence and performance. It focuses on the speaker's ability to produce and understand sentences which are appropriate to the context in which they occur. The aim of these approaches was to enable learners to use the foreign language communicatively. However, learners failed to use the language in actual communicative situations mainly with native speakers, which is why the objective of language learning is nowadays defined in terms of intercultural competence. This notion is defined by Chen and Starosta (1999) as the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other's cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment.

As cited in Darla Kay Deardorff (2004), leading intercultural experts, primarily from the United States, conducted a study that was determined through a research methodology called the Delphi technique. According to Deardorff, this study was the first to document consensus among the experts on aspects of intercultural competence. The experts came to categorize and place these aspects into a model consisting of attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, skills, desired internal outcome, and desired external outcome. This model was a result of the need to assess the concept of intercultural competence, however, it required further development as its aspects are broad and can be developed into more specific and measurable ones.

With regard to developing intercultural competence, C. Lantz-Deaton (2017) conducted a study in which he examined the extent to which a group of first-year UK and non-UK students who study on an internationally diverse campus developed intercultural competence.

He assessed students' intercultural competence and explored their intercultural experiences over seven months. Lantz-Deaton reported that despite the high levels of intercultural contact and the positive intercultural experiences, students began in lower stages of intercultural development and most of them showed little progress. This study showed that positive intercultural experiences do not necessarily result in developing intercultural competence, yet it did not take students' will to develop intercultural competence into account.

Another study was conducted by Lisa Koskinen and Kerttu Tossavainen (2003). The study aimed at describing the process of gaining intercultural competence among British undergraduate nursing students during their study abroad in Finland. After analyzing the data that were collected from fifteen students, the researchers concluded that the students' intercultural desire is the key factor to the foundation of the entire process. This study focused on the students' intercultural desire and neglected the influence that being abroad could have on the process of developing intercultural competence.

Based on Yin's (2003) and Merriam's (2004) a qualitative study examined and analyzed how a small group of Colombian EFL learners fostered their intercultural communicative competence while being asked to critically reflect on several controversial cultural issues. The participants were tutored on some initial notions of the term ICC based on Byram's model then they were asked to read authentic news from the New York Times, the U.S News as a means to start building ICC. Consequently, news helped EFL learners to learn about controversial beliefs that belonged to deep culture. In fact, the results were consistent but more research on incorporating news in EFL education to develop ICC is needed in large educational setting.

Much of the literature about intercultural competence in general and on intercultural competence in EFL classes in particular focused more on its development either as a part of a learning process or as an end product of it. However, not much focus is put on the students'

actual understanding of this concept and its different aspects. Thus, more research is needed about this area.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Foreign language learning does not only focus on the linguistic knowledge but also on the use of the language. The main objective of foreign language learning nowadays is to give rise to learners who are able to effectively use the language in a culturally diverse setting, that is, to communicate successfully with individuals belonging to different cultures. Foreign languages are being learned in association with their cultures so that learners can understand the target culture and they are consequently expected to use this understanding while communicating with native speakers i.e. to develop intercultural competence. However, learners need to understand and to be aware of this competence in order to well develop it. Therefore, the main concern of this study is to evaluate Master 1 EFL students' understanding of intercultural competence at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia.

## **3. Aim and Significance of the Study**

This study aims at evaluating Master 1 EFL students' understanding of intercultural competence at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia.

It could be a significant endeavor for EFL teachers and students for considering the importance of students' understanding of communicative competence and its influence on the use of the language in communicating with individuals from different cultures.

## **4. Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Did Master 1 EFL students form an understanding of intercultural competence?
2. Are Master 1 EFL students aware of the different aspects of intercultural competence?



## **5. Research Hypotheses**

This study puts forward the following hypotheses:

- Master 1 EFL students have formed an understanding of intercultural competence and they are aware of its different aspects.
- Master 1 EFL students have not formed an understanding of intercultural competence and they are not aware of its different aspects.

## **6. Research Methodology**

The nature of the problem determines the choice of the method. In order to test the research hypotheses both qualitative and quantitative techniques will be used in gathering and collecting data. This study will be conducted in the English department of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University. To evaluate students' understanding of intercultural competence a questionnaire will be administered to 70 Master 1 EFL students who will be selected randomly and an interview will be done with 10 other students.

## **7. Structure of the Study**

As far as the structure of this study is concerned, the present research is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical part, while the second one represents the practical part of the study.

Chapter one is concerned with the literature review. It is divided into two sections: the first section introduces the concept of intercultural competence, whereas the second section sheds light on students' understanding of IC.

Chapter two interprets the collected data from both the questionnaire and the interview. In addition, it provides the needed analysis and the results to either confirm or reject the already stated hypothesis. This chapter also states some pedagogical recommendations for both

teachers and learners. It ends with listing the limitations that have been encountered during the accomplishment of this research.

## **Chapter One: Intercultural Competence and Understanding**

### **Section One: Intercultural Competence**

#### Introduction

1. Defining Intercultural Competence
2. Components of Intercultural Competence
3. Significance of Intercultural Competence
4. Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence
5. Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Learning

#### Conclusion

## **Chapter One: Intercultural Competence and Understanding**

### **Section One: Intercultural Competence**

#### **Introduction**

This section is devoted to introduce the concept of intercultural competence. It starts with providing a general definition of the concept then illustrating other definitions provided by different scholars which reflect their views of the concept. Then, it lists the components it is composed of. This section also stresses the significance of intercultural competence in situations of intercultural communication. In addition, it discusses Byram's model of intercultural competence (1997) with its two distinct parts along with referring to its position in studies related to the concept. At last, the section sheds light on intercultural competence concerning foreign language learning.

#### **1. Defining Intercultural Competence**

Intercultural competence generally refers to the ability to understand cultures and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully. However, defining the term intercultural competence has been a controversial issue as scholars did not agree on a precise and universal definition. They defined the term differently based on their views and perspectives. Byram (1997) defined intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries” (p. 7). That is, Byram stressed in his definition of intercultural competence the communication and interaction across one's own culture, however, this definition was later on extended. Byram et al. (2002) redefined the term as “the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and the ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their individuality” (p. 10). In other words, when interacting with people

of different cultures, individuals need to share a mutual understanding of each other's cultural values and beliefs.

According to Wiseman (2002), intercultural competence is “the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures” (p. 208). Wiseman stressed the importance of “appropriateness” when communicating with people of other cultures.

On the other hand, Huber & Reynolds (2014) claimed that it is necessary to understand several concepts related to intercultural competence to understand and define it. These concepts include identity, culture, intercultural encounter, and competence. According to them, identity is “a person's sense of who they are and the self-descriptions to which they attribute significance and value” (p. 13); culture is a composite formed from a material, social, and subjective aspects; intercultural encounter is “an encounter with another person (or group of people) who is perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself” (p. 16); and competence is “the capacity to respond successfully to types of situations which present tasks, difficulties or challenges for the individual, either singly or together with others” (p. 16). Intercultural competence, according to them, is, therefore:

a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either single or together with others, to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself,
- respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people.
- establish positive and constructive relationships with such people.
- understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural difference.

(Huber & Reynolds, 2014, pp. 16-17)

It is worth mentioning that scholars namely Byram refer to intercultural competence using different terms such as intercultural communicative competence, cross-cultural adaptation, and multi-cultural competence. For current purposes, the terms Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) will be used interchangeably.

## **2. Components of Intercultural Competence**

Researches in the field have resulted in identifying the components of intercultural competence differently. Scholars have little agreement on what the essential components are, and therefore they are still open to discussion. According to Deardorff (2006), intercultural competence encompasses:

- **Knowledge:**

- a) Cultural self-awareness in which individual's view towards the world is determined by the influence of his/her own culture.
- b) Culture awareness of people's assumptions, values, traditions and beliefs that have distinct cultural orientations.
- c) Sociolinguistic awareness including the communicative awareness that people of other cultural affiliations use unique language. Therefore, learning language skills to adjust speech is needed for accommodation.

- **Attitudes:**

Consists of flexibility, empathy, and openness to language diversities; tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty; and respect to individuals of other cultural affiliations.

- **Skills:**

- a) Skills of discovering information about other cultural perspective and interpreting others' practices, thoughts, and relating them to one's own.

- b) Skills of critically evaluating the cultural beliefs, values, practices, and discourse with the ability to respond to and to adapt individuals' way of thinking according to the context.
- c) Plurilingual skills to overcome communication breakdowns. These skills include the ability to use more than one language, the ability to act as a mediator in intercultural exchanges, and the ability to translate and interpret languages.
- d) Respect the other cultures' assumptions and avoid judgements and stereotypes.

Although, being aware of these three components is necessary to form intercultural competence, these components alone are insufficient; therefore, learners are required to practice and apply their intercultural knowledge, attitudes and skills during intercultural interactions.

### **3. Significance of Intercultural Competence**

Globalization, the development of science and technology, and the widening world markets require people to interact and communicate with others who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds \_which is known as intercultural communication (Baker, 2012). Intercultural competence is, therefore, the key to have successful intercultural communication. Kim & Hubbard (2007), as cited in Biswalo 2015, suggested that due to globalization there is a need to become aware of other cultures and to become sensitive to issues of cultural diversity. That is to say, people need to develop cultural awareness and understand the issues related to cultural diversity.

In intercultural communication, not being aware of the others' social and cultural norms may cause conflict and communication breakdowns (Biswalo, 2015). Therefore, people must gain intercultural competence so that they effectively interact and communicate with others and be able to deal with communication problems they may encounter and avoid possible misunderstandings.

Garcia and Biscu (2005) stated that intercultural competence enables people to understand other cultures as well as to be aware of the similarities and differences between their own culture and the other cultures. It also enables them to think and act beyond their cultures and to reflect critically on their cultural affiliations.

It is important to emphasize that intercultural competence does not involve abandoning one's own culture or being obliged to share other cultural norms and values. It rather involves being open to and interested in people of different cultural backgrounds and being able to understand and respect them (Bennett et al., 2003).

#### **4. Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

Scholars have developed different models of ICC in their attempts to define the concept. Bennett's (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), Byram's (1997) model, and Deardorff's (2006) static and dynamic models of intercultural competence are examples of these models. In studies of intercultural competence, Byram's model has an influential position because, according to Walinski (2012), it views the development of ICC as a combination of communicative competence and intercultural competence and it is the least complex and the easiest model to implement in practical assessment conditions.

Byram (1997), as cited in Walinski (2012), defined intercultural competence as "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" (p. 5). Byram considers linguistic competence in his definition. Byram's model (1997), drawn on his definition, is composed of two related parts: communicative competence and intercultural competence.

The communicative competence part consists of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. According to Gedik Bal (2019), these competencies



include those introduced by Canal and Swain (1980) and Van Ek (1986) to define Hymes' (1966) communicative competence. Canal and Swain's (1980) competencies are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Van Ek's (1986) competencies are linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, socio-cultural competence, and social competence. Therefore, this part of the model is strongly related to Hymes' (1966) communicative competence.

The intercultural competence part includes five *savoirs*: *savoir*, *savoir comprendre*, *savoir apprendre/faire*, *savoir s'engager*, and *savoir être*.

- *Savoir* (knowledge): refers to knowledge of social groups and their cultural practices and products. That is to say, how one's own and others' social groups function.
- *Savoir comprendre* (skills of relating and interpreting): refers to the ability to interpret a document/event from another culture and to explain it and relate it to documents/events from one's own culture.
- *Savoir apprendre/faire* (skills of discovery and interaction): refers to the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture/cultural practices and to operate knowledge, attitudes, skills in real-time communication and interaction.
- *Savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness): refers to the ability to evaluate critically on basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices, products in one's own culture and other cultures.
- *Savoir être* (attitudes): refers to curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one's own culture.

These five *savoirs* are strongly interrelated. Byram, as cited in Walinski (2012), argued that "the basis of intercultural competence is in the attitudes of the person interacting with

people of another culture” (p. 6). That is to say, “attitudes” (savoir être) is the basic element of intercultural competence without which the other four savors cannot be developed.

## **5. Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Learning**

Intercultural competence appeared thanks to globalization, the development of science and technology, the development of the world’s economy, and immigration. Benmoussat & Benmoussat (2017) stated that the concept of IC was originally used in social psychology which refers to the ability to achieve instrumental and social goals, i.e. social effectiveness. It was also used in studies of communication in which it denotes appropriateness, i.e. the suitable communication in a given situation in a particular culture.

In foreign language learning, the communicative approach was developed in the late 1960s as a reaction to the limitations of the previous methods. It aimed to enable learners to use the language communicatively, that is to say, the focus was on communication. This approach was based on Hymes’ competence and performance (1965) which focuses on the speaker’s ability to produce and understand sentences that are appropriate to the context in which they occur (Huang, 2014). One of the main shortcomings of this approach was that learners were able to use the language communicatively but not with native speakers of the target language. Therefore, there was a need to change the focus from communicative competence to intercultural communicative competence.

As learning a foreign language was no longer a matter of acquiring communicative competence but of becoming interculturally competent, one of the most significant changes was the recognition of the culture as a key component in the learning process. Researchers argued that language and culture are highly interrelated; language is a part of the culture and it reflects it. Byram (1997) stated that the acquisition of a foreign language necessitates the acquisition of the cultural practices and beliefs it embodies for particular social groups.

Therefore, learning a language without understanding its culture is useless. (Benner, 1991, cited in Eva Larzèn, 2005, P. 13) argued that schools should not only prepare the student for the existing society but also give them the readiness and the tools to surpass it and maybe one day change it for the better.

The intercultural dimension in foreign language learning has become the main concern for researchers in the field. This dimension emphasized effective cross-cultural communication based on the acquisition of a set of competencies as suggested in Byram's model of ICC (1997). Thus, teaching students a foreign language is based on making them interculturally sensitive as they act as mediators and consciously use culture learning skills (Sen Gupta, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

The present section was devoted to introduce the concept of intercultural competence. First of all, a general definition and definitions of different researchers in the field were presented to illustrate their views of ICC. Then, its components were explained. This section also shed light on intercultural competence significance in intercultural communication situations and discussed Byram's model of ICC as the most influential model of intercultural competence. Finally, the section stressed the use of intercultural competence in foreign language learning.

## **Section Two: Students' Understanding of Intercultural Competence**

Introduction

1. Intercultural Understanding
2. Intercultural Competence in EFL Classes
3. Intercultural Competence Development
4. Intercultural Competence Assessment

Conclusion

## **Section Two: Students' Understanding of Intercultural Competence**

### **Introduction**

After introducing the concept of intercultural competence in the previous section, the present section is concerned with students' understanding of intercultural competence. To begin with, intercultural understanding and the domains it encompasses. Then, it discusses the use of intercultural competence in EFL classes and emphasizes the role of teachers in helping students gain IC through creating a suitable environment for learners and acting like cultural mediators. After that, the light is shed on developing learners' intercultural competence. Finally, the section stresses the complex process of assessing intercultural competence and the attempts made to develop a valid method to measure the concept.

#### **1. Intercultural Understanding**

Intercultural understanding started to be an important concept in educational settings since it was recognized as one of the general capabilities identified by the Australian Curriculum. According to Hill (2006), intercultural understanding encompasses both cognitive and effective domains. The cognitive domain of intercultural understanding deals with the knowledge about one's own culture and other cultures, their differences and similarities as well as positive attitudes towards distinct cultures including respect and empathy, acceptance, open-mindedness and curiosity. However, the effective domain is considered as an important element of IC, it is known as "intercultural sensitivity" (Starffon 2003, 488). This concept is conceptualised in two ways: (1) the affective aspect of intercultural communication competence (Chen and Starosta 2000), (2) developmentally as the subjective phenomenological experience of cultural differences (Bennett 1993). Moreover, Chen and Starosta (2000) argued that intercultural sensitivity is a key component of the

effective aspect of intercultural competence that should be distinguished from intercultural awareness. In fact, knowledge is not enough without understanding the cultural context in which it occurs.

The Council of Europe (2002) stated that “education for intercultural understanding remains central to the Council of Europe’s activities to promote greater mutual understanding and acceptance of difference in our multicultural and multilingual societies” (p.5). Therefore, it emphasized the significance of developing intercultural understanding among learners by engaging them in diverse cultures which later enables them to act appropriately in multicultural states.

Van Oord (2005) argued that the concept of culture is interrelated with the concept of intercultural understanding. He stated that when we are “speaking of cultural differences, multiculturalism, cross-cultural communication, or intercultural education we are utilizing the anthropological approach to culture” (p. 176). However, this statement did not completely prove that culture is considered as a static entity in intercultural understanding.

The Australian Curriculum (2012) identified intercultural understanding as an important competency which all learners should develop and improve. It aims to enhance skills in three areas:

- **Recognising Culture and Developing Respect:**

This element includes the students’ identification, observation, description and analysis of the characteristics of their own cultural identities and those of others in which they acknowledge cultural differences and critically reflect about them.

- **Interacting and Empathising with others:**

This element involves learners' skills which enables them to move between cultures successfully by interacting with different cultural groups. Such practices encourage flexibility, empathy, adaptability, and respect among individuals.

- **Reflecting on Intercultural Experiences and Taking Responsibility:**

This element involves learners' capability to reflect on the meaning of experience as an important concept in intercultural learning. This reflection helps learners to better understand diverse cultural situations, effectively respond to intercultural encounters and identify the cultural influences.

Intercultural understanding focuses on sharing, creating and contesting different cultural perceptions and practices. Moreover, it aims at developing the critical awareness of the learners to become intercultural citizens in the world (Byram 2008).

## **2. Intercultural Competence in EFL Classes**

Lopez-Rocha (2016) stated that the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) implied intercultural competence in the field of foreign language learning because of the need to make students develop this competence so that they can interact appropriately in culturally diverse settings. According to Lopez-Rocha, CEFR also emphasised that students should act as social agents who are interested in other cultures. As intercultural competence becomes the main focus of foreign language learning, it is important to consider how students in the classroom learn about this competence. Baker (2012) argues that "the ELT classroom is an ideal environment in which both teachers and learners engage in multilingual and multicultural practices and thus to develop ICC to prepare learners of English to communicate in global settings" (Cited in Biswalo 2015, p. 43). That is to say, teachers help students to develop ICC through engaging them in different practices. Teachers inside the classroom play a vital role in helping students gain intercultural competence using certain methods, but first

of all, they need to be aware of ICC to implement their knowledge in the classroom and teach their students (Bal, 2019). According to Biswalo (2015), students' achievement of ICC would be determined by teachers' knowledge about ICC and the methods they would use to make this happen in their classrooms.

One key aspect of intercultural competence is the ability to understand one's own culture (Byram, 1997). Learners need first to understand their own cultural norms, values, and social practices to communicate successfully with people of other cultures (Huang, 2014). Therefore, in an ELT classroom, teachers should raise students' awareness of their own culture which leads to helping them interpret and understand other cultures. For this to happen, according to Nault (2006), teachers themselves need to be aware of ICC. He stated that they should act as cultural mediators in the classroom and encourage students to explore and understand their own culture and to use this understanding to relate to other cultures. For instance, "when teachers display positive attitudes towards students' cultures, in turn, students will learn from their teachers and this will enhance the development of their ICC" (Biswalo 2015, p. 44).

Holliday (2009) and Sybing (2011) argued that teachers also need to create an environment of acceptance and respect for all the students in the classroom. In other words, if students have different cultural backgrounds, teachers need to equally respect their cultures and to accept and consider the differences between them. According to these researchers, this will help students to learn from each other and to see that cultural differences are appreciated in the classroom. It will also allow them to analyse their own cultures and those of their classmates and to build mutual understanding, and therefore to gain ICC.

### **3. Intercultural Competence Development**



Intercultural competence is a core component of English language instruction in preparing learners for intercultural communication (Byram, 1997). Accordingly, Ahnagari and Zamanian (2014) stressed the need to develop IC among learners using a variety of tools. Gregersen-Hermans and Pusch (2012) stated that the development of intercultural competence is similar to the process of riding a bicycle as it is a complicated process that involves particular instructions and time. Moreover, Bennett (1998) argued that intercultural competence is “developmental in nature”. That is to say, it requires a process of learning that involves knowledge, skills, attitudes which consequently enables the learners to handle any multicultural incident.

Although intercultural competence has become a principal focus in education, the way of its development is still ambiguous. In this sense, Talkington, Lengel, and Byram (2004) pointed that developing IC is deeply related to one’s development of critical cultural awareness in addition to the need of teaching subjective cultures .i.e. to change the focus from teaching the historical, economical and political aspects of the culture to explore distinct worldviews and develop awareness among students. Therefore, this claim clearly explains that cultural knowledge is not enough without developing intercultural competence.

#### **4. Intercultural Competence Assessment**

Assessing intercultural competence is as complex and controversial as defining it. Deardorff (2004) stated that “in the past 30 years, even a definition of intercultural competence has not been fully agreed on among scholars” (Cited in Walinski, 2012, p. 4). Bal (2019) stated that “while assessors are used to testing knowledge and skills, the assessment of attitudes and awareness is scarce” (p. 30). That is to say, it is frequently current for assessors to assess knowledge and skills. However, assessing intercultural competence requires assessing attitudes and awareness, which is uncommon and exceptional.

According to Arasaratnam (2014), many attempts were made over the years to develop quantitative measures of intercultural competence. Consequently, a number of instruments have been designed to measure intercultural competence and closely related concepts.

One of these instruments is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) which is based on Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) and is widely used in intercultural research in several disciplines. IDI measures three ethnocentric and three ethno-relative levels of orientation toward cultural differences as identified in the DMIS (Arasaratnam, 2014, pp. 7-8). Another known instrument is the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI) that "approaches intercultural competence from the perspective of a person's ability to appropriately modify his or her behaviour when confronted with cultural differences, specifically as they pertain to individualistic and collectivistic cultures" (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992, Cited in Arasaratnam, 2014, p. 8). In other words, this instrument is concerned with a person's behaviour when interacting with others who have culturally different backgrounds; it measures his or her ability to change the behaviour accordingly. One other instrument is the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) that measures "five dimensions, namely open-mindedness, emotional stability, cultural empathy, social initiative, and flexibility" (Arasaratnam 2014, Van Oudenhoven & Van Der Zee, 2002; p. 8). This questionnaire was not initially designed to measure intercultural competence, however, the five dimensions it encloses have been found to be directly related to it (Arasaratnam, 2014).

Deardorff (2009), on the other hand, argued that assessing intercultural competence needs both direct and indirect methods due to its complexity. She stated that the assessment process needs more than one tool to ensure stronger measurement:

Given the complexity of this concept, it would be challenging if not impossible-for one tool to measure an individual's intercultural competence. For example, there are numerous questions to answer: "Intercultural competence from whose perspective, and according to whom?" and "Intercultural competence to what degree?."

(Deardorff, 2009, p. 74)

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques can be employed in the assessment of intercultural competence; quantitative data is collected through tests or inventories and presented with scores and qualitative data is collected through interviews and provide primarily words, concepts, and themes representing deeper insights (Bal 2019, Deardorff 2015).

Deardorff (2015) provided guidelines for assessing intercultural competence. They can be summarised as follows:

- Providing a definition of what is assessed (i.e. intercultural competence)
- Statement of outcomes
- Aligning methods with the outcomes
- Using multi-method (i.e. indirect and direct), multi-perspective approach (self and other)
- Developing assessment plan
- Evaluating the assessment

## **Conclusion**

This section was devoted to students' understanding of intercultural competence. First, it provided an explanation of intercultural understanding along with the domains that it encompasses. Then, it discussed intercultural competence in EFL classrooms and highlighted the vital role that teachers play inside the classroom to help learners gain IC. In addition to that, it stressed the development of IC; and finally, it was concluded with presenting an explanation of assessing intercultural competence with relation to the methods developed over the years to measure the concept.

## **Chapter Two: Fieldwork**

### Introduction

#### **2.1 Data Collection Procedures**

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## **Chapter Two: Fieldwork**

### **Introduction:**

This chapter is devoted to analyse, describe, and interpret the results obtained through the evaluation of students' understanding of intercultural competence. The prior aim of conducting this research is to confirm or reject the previously mentioned hypotheses. It covers the methodological approach followed; starting with a thorough description of the sample, and the questionnaire that was administered to the subjects at the department of English language at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University. Besides, this chapter presents the data analysis procedures that have been applied to analyse and discuss the gathered data. Two different tools were used to collect data, a questionnaire and an interview for students.

### **2.1. Data Collection Procedures**

The potential participants for this study were Master 1 EFL students at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University. The questionnaire for students was designed by Google Forms and posted online, with a return rate of 57.1%. The remaining 42.9% were printed off and administered to the subjects in the department.

The questionnaire is essentially a structured technique for collecting primary data. Brown (2001) defined questionnaires as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” ( p. 6).

The interview for students was done to discover the information which was not obtained through the questionnaire. It was a semi-structured interview in which follow-up questions were added based on the answers of the participants.

In discussing the advantages of the interview, Anderson (2002) stated that the interviewer can clarify questions and probe the answers of the respondent, providing more

complete information than would be available in written form. Moreover, interviewing enables the interviewer to pick up non-verbal cues, including facial expressions and tones of voice.

## **2.2. Population and Sampling**

The present study was conducted during the academic year 2020-2021 at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University and addressed to Master 1 EFL students at the department of English. Concerning the questionnaire, (70) students were chosen randomly according to convenience sampling among the total number of the (150) Master 1 students' population. Whereas, (10) students were selected from different groups to be interviewed. The selection of this sample was based on the consideration that Mater 1 EFL students have been exposed to the target culture in the previous academic years and are expected to develop their intercultural competence. Furthermore, to evaluate their understanding of IC as they are future teachers who should be interculturally competent.

## **2.3. Questionnaire for Students**

### **2.3.1 Description of the Questionnaire for students**

This questionnaire consists of eighteen (18) questions divided into three sections. Different types of questions were used: close-ended questions where students answer by “yes” or “no” or by selecting one answer from a set of options in addition to multiple-choice questions, as well as open-ended questions, where students are allowed to write out their own answers or to provide justifications and explanations when necessary.

#### **Section One: (Q1-Q3)**

This section consists of three questions that aim at getting clear insights about the relationship between culture and language. **Question (1)** seeks to show whether culture refers to people's everyday life, beliefs, customs, behaviour, and values; to a country's

literature, art, architecture; or both according to students' views. **Question (2)** is about whether learning a foreign language is more effective when it focuses on linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, or both. In **Question (3)**, students are asked whether cultural knowledge affects the actual use of language and are asked to justify their answers.

### **Section Two: (Q4-Q11)**

This section consists of eight (8) questions that are devoted to collect data about students' understanding of IC. **Question (4)** is designed to find out how aware are students of the elements of their own culture, whereas **Question (5)** is designed to find out how aware they are of the elements of the target culture. In **Question (6)**, students are asked to evaluate their ability to interpret documents or events from the target culture. **Question (7)** is about the students' frequency of relating documents or events from the target culture to documents or events from their own culture. In **Question (8)**, students state whether they have interacted with a native speaker from the target culture. Those who answer with 'yes' are asked in **Question (9)** whether they took into consideration their knowledge about what is and what is not appropriate and acceptable to the native speaker. **Question (10)** is about whether students compare their own culture to the target culture and try to find similarities and differences between the two. At last, **Question (11)** inquires which of the mentioned statements better describe students; in which they can tick more than one answer.

### **Section Three: (Q12-Q18)**

The last section consists of seven (7) questions that aim at getting students insights about intercultural competence in EFL classes. In **Question (12)**, students are asked to rate their intercultural skills. **Question (13)** seeks to find out whether intercultural competence is achieved only through education, in which students who choose that it is not achieved only through education are asked to give other ways to achieve it. **Question (14)** is about teachers' frequency of relating to the target culture when explaining the lessons. In

**Question (15)**, students are asked if they think culture is an essential focus in EFL classes and are asked to explain their answers. **Question (16)** is designed to find out whether teachers, in learning English, relate to the English culture, the Algerian culture, or both. In **Question (17)**, students are asked to name the modules that have enriched their knowledge about the target culture. Whereas in the last question, **Question (18)**, they are asked to suggest what could improve students' communication skills.

### 2.3.2 Analysis of the Students Questionnaire Results

#### Section One:

**Question 1: According to you,**

- a- Culture refers to people's everyday life, beliefs, customs, behaviours, and values**
- b- Culture refers to a country's literature, art, architecture**
- c- Both**
- d- Others (please specify).....**

**Table 2.1**

*Students' Definition of Culture*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	16	22.9
b.	-	-
c.	53	75.7
d.	1	1.4
Total	70	100

According to the answers, (75.7%) of the respondents defined culture as both people's everyday life, beliefs, customs, behaviours, values and the country's literature, art, and



architecture. While almost a quarter of the participants (22.9%) chose to define culture as people’s everyday life, beliefs, customs, behaviours, and values. One respondent that represents (1.4%) of the sample provided his/her own answer which was: “culture refers to our way of life according to our religion”.

**Question 2: Learning a foreign language is more effective when it focuses on:**

- a- The linguistic knowledge**
- b- The cultural knowledge**
- c- Both linguistic and cultural knowledge**
- d- Others (please specify).....**

**Table 2.2**

*The Effectiveness of Foreign Language Learning Based on its Focus*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	4	5.7
b.	7	10
c.	59	84.3
d.	-	-
Total	70	100

The results in the table above indicate that a significant percentage (84.3%) was given to option c, where participants agreed that learning a foreign language is more effective when it focuses on both linguistic and cultural knowledge. Next, (10%) of them thought that cultural knowledge alone is enough while (5.7%) is the percentage for those who claimed that focusing on linguistic knowledge results in more effective language learning.

**Question 3: Cultural knowledge affects the actual use of language?**

**a- Yes**

**b- No**

Please say how.....

**Table2.3**

*Cultural Knowledge Effect on the Actual Use of Language*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	68	97.1
b.	2	2.9
Total	70	100

It is worth mentioning that the majority of respondents (97.1%) thought that cultural knowledge affects the actual use of language where they justified their answers by arguing that any foreign language learner should be aware of the cultural background of that language and that the meanings conveyed may differ from one culture to another. However, (2.9%) of the respondents showed their disagreement by answering “No”.

**Section Two:**

**Question 4: How aware are you of the following elements of your own culture?**

**a- Beliefs and values**

**b- Behaviours and actions**

**c- Different social groups**

**d- Social/ cultural norms**

**e- Traditions**

**f- Stereotypes**

**Table2.4***Students' Awareness of the Elements of Their Own Culture*

Awareness	Fully aware		Somewhat aware		Not aware		Total	
	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>
a.	49	70	21	30	-	-	70	100
b.	50	71.4	19	27.1	1	1.4	70	100
c.	24	34.2	36	51.4	10	14.2	70	100
d.	29	41.4	32	45.7	9	12.8	70	100
e.	43	61.4	24	34.2	3	4.2	70	100
f.	21	30	28	40	21	30	70	100

The table above shows that (70%) of the whole sample claimed that they are fully aware of the beliefs and values of their own culture. The remaining (30%) were somewhat aware of this element. The second element has (71.4%) of students that are fully aware, (27.1%) for those that are somewhat aware and (1.4%) of them are not aware of this element. Third, as seen in the table, slightly above 1/3 of the respondents are fully aware of the different social groups, while (51.4%) of them are somewhat aware. Finally, (14.2%) is regarded to those who asserted that they are not aware at all. Fourth, (41.4%) is chosen by the fully aware students, (45.7%) is the percentage of the somewhat aware students while the rest of them said that they are not aware of the social/cultural norms with (12.8%). Fifth, most respondents (61.4%) are fully aware of their traditions, (34.2%) are somewhat aware while (4.2%) of them argue that they are not aware. The last element is opted for stereotypes, it has (30%) for each

of fully aware, not aware answers while the remaining (40%) is chosen by those whose answer is somewhat aware.

**Question 5: How aware are you of the following elements of the target culture?**

**a- Beliefs and values**

**b- Behaviours and actions**

**c- Different social groups**

**d- Social/ cultural norms**

**e- Traditions**

**f- Stereotypes**

**Table2.5**

*Students' Awareness of the Elements of the Target Culture*

Awareness	Fully aware		Somewhat aware		Not aware		Total	
	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>%</u>
a.	19	27.1	45	64.2	6	8.5	70	100
b.	20	28.5	46	65.7	4	5.57	70	100
c.	10	14.2	39	55.7	21	30	70	100
d.	13	18.5	41	58.5	16	22.8	70	100
e.	14	20	35	50	21	30	70	100
f.	8	11.4	27	38.5	35	50	70	100

Table 2.5 diagnoses students' awareness about the elements of the target culture. Above 1/2 of the participants are somewhat aware of the target culture's beliefs and values while (27.1%) of them are fully aware. The least percentage (8.5%) is regarded to those who

are not aware of this element. Concerning option (a), the highest percentage (65.7%) is gathered by the somewhat aware students whereas students that are fully aware of this behaviour and actions are (28.5%) of the whole sample. The rest (5.57%) are not aware. Moreover, (55.7%) of the students are somewhat aware of the different social groups in the target culture while (30%) of them are not aware. A minority percentage (14.2%) is regarded for students that are fully aware. Option (d)'s results are: (58.7%) are somewhat aware students, (22.8%) are not aware students and (18.5%) are fully aware students. Half of the sample (50%) are somewhat aware of the target culture's traditions, (30%) of them are not aware and (20%) are fully aware of this element. Finally, (50%) of the participants are not aware of the option (f), (38.5%) are somewhat aware of it while (11.4%) are fully aware.

**Question 6: How do you consider your ability to interpret documents or events from the target culture?**

**a- Very good**

**b- Good**

**c- Average**

**d- Poor**

**e- Very poor**

**Table2.6**

*Students' Views toward Their Ability to Interpret Documents and Events from the Target Culture*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	4	5.7
b.	28	40
c.	35	50

d.	3	4.3
e.	-	-
Total	70	100

Half of the students (50%) admitted that their level in interpreting documents or events from the target culture is average while (40%) of them claimed that they have a good level. (5.7%) argued that their level is very good. The least percentage (4.3%) presents the students who thought they have a poor level in interpreting events from the target culture.

**Question 7: How often do you relate documents or events from the target culture to documents or events from your own culture?**

**a- Always**

**b- Sometimes**

**c- Rarely**

**d- Never**

**Table2.7**

*Relating Documents or Events from the Target to the Native Culture Frequency*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	5	7.1
b.	57	81.4
c.	8	11.4
d.	-	-
Total	70	100

The vast majority of the participants (81.4%) asserted that they sometimes relate documents or events from the target to the native culture while (11.4%) stated that they

rarely do so. The least percentage (7.1%) is regarded to those who claimed that they always relate documents and events from the target culture to those from their own culture.

**Question 8: Have you ever interacted with a native speaker from the target culture (either face-to-face interaction or virtually through social media)?**

**a- Yes**

**b- No**

**Table 2.8**

*Students' Interaction with Native Speakers*

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<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	42	60
b.	28	40
Total	70	100

---

The noticeable conclusion that can be drawn from the table above is that most of the students (60%) have interacted with a native speaker from the target culture. (40%) of them answered with 'No' which indicates that they have not interacted with a native speaker from the target culture.

**Question 9: If yes, did you take into consideration your knowledge about what is appropriate and acceptable to them and what is not?**

**a- Yes**

**b- No**

**Table2.9***Students' Consideration of the Native Speaker's Culture during Interaction*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	37	82.2
b.	8	17.8
Total	45	100

As presented in table 2.9, the vast majority of students (82.2%) stated that, while interacting with a native speaker, they take into consideration what is appropriate and acceptable to them. Only (17.8%) of the sample admitted that they do not.

**Question 10: Do you compare your own culture to the target culture and try to find similarities and differences between the two?**

**a- Yes**

**b- No**

**Table2.10***Students' Comparison of the Native Culture with the Target Culture*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	59	84.3
b.	11	15.7
Total	70	100

According to the results, most students (84.3%) stated that they do compare their own culture to the target culture and try to find similarities and differences between them. While (15.7%) do not make this comparison.



**Question 11: Which of the following statements better describe you? (You can choose more than one answer)**

**a- I'm open to other cultures**

**b- I'm curious about other cultures**

**c- I respect people who have different cultural backgrounds**

**d- I'm ready to suspend disbeliefs about other cultures**

**e- I'm ready to suspend beliefs about my own culture**

**Table2.11**

*Students' Views toward Intercultural Competence Aspects*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	3	4
b.	5	7
c.	9	13
e.	2	3
a+b.	2	3
a+b+c.	12	17
a+c.	12	17
b+c.	16	23
a+b+c+d+e.	2	3
a+b+c+e.	3	4
a+b+c+d.	1	1.4
b+c+d.	1	1.4
c+e.	2	3
Total	70	100

The results in the table above shows that half of the participants are open to other cultures [a = 35 (a: 3) + (a+b: 2) + (a+b+c: 12) + (a+c: 12) + (a+b+c+d+e: 2) + (a+b+c+e: 3) + (a+b+c+d: 1); 50 %]. Next 60% of the students are more curious to know about these cultures [b=42 (b: 5) + (a+b: 2) + (a+b+c: 12) + (b+c: 16) + (a+b+c+d+e: 2) + (a+b+c+e: 3) + (b+c+d: 1) + (a+b+c+d: 1); 60%], then a highest percentage of them assert that they are respectful to people who have different cultural backgrounds [c=58 (c: 9) + (a+b+c: 12) + (b+c: 16) + (a+b+c+d+e: 2) + (a+c: 12) + (c+e: 2) + (a+b+c+e: 3) + (b+c+d:1) + (a+b+c+d: 1); 82.8%] . Whereas 5.7% of the whole sample are ready to suspend disbelief about other cultures [d= 4 (a+b+c+d+e: 2) + (b+c+d:1) + (a+b+c+d:1);5.7%. Finally, [e=9 (e:2)+ (a+b+c+d+e: 2) +( c+e:2)+ (a+b+c+d+e: 3); 12.8% is the percentage of those who are ready to suspend beliefs about their own cultures.

### Section Three:

#### Question 12: How do you rate your intercultural skills?

- a- Excellent
- b- Good
- c- Average
- d- Poor
- e- Very poor

**Table2.12**

*Students' Self-Evaluation of Their Intercultural Skills*

Option	F	%
a.	2	2.9

b.	35	50
c.	30	42.9
d.	3	4.3
e.	-	-
Total	70	100

The table above shows that half of the participants (50%) viewed their intercultural skills level as good. (42.9%) of them stated that their level is average while (4.3%) admitted that their intercultural skills are poor. A minority percentage (2.9%) declared that their skills are excellent.

**Question 13: Intercultural competence is achieved only through education?**

**a- Yes**

**b- No**

**Table2.13**

*Students' Views about Achieving Intercultural Competence through Education*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	53	75.7
b.	17	24.3
Total	70	100

The results above illustrate that (75.7%) of the students agreed that intercultural competence is achieved only through education whereas the remaining (24.3%) did not agree with that. Those who answered with 'No' believe that achieving intercultural competence requires interaction with people from other cultures, reading about other cultures, travelling, and watching movies/documentaries about other cultures.

**Question 14: How often does your teacher relate to the target culture when explaining the lessons?**

**a- Always**

**b- Sometimes**

**c- Rarely**

**e- Never**

**Table2.14**

*Frequency of Teachers' Relating to the Target Culture*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	8	11.4
b.	41	58.6
c.	21	30
e.	-	-
Total	70	100

About (59%) of the participants answered that teachers sometimes relate to the target culture. (30%) of them, on the contrary, claimed that they rarely do so. Only (11.4%) stated that teachers always relate to the target culture when they explain the lessons.

**Question15: Do you think culture is an essential focus in EFL classes?**

**a- Yes**

**b- No**

**Please explain.....**

**Table2.15***Students' Beliefs about the Importance of Culture in EFL Classes*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	61	87.1
b.	9	12.9
Total	70	100

A considerable number of students (87.1%) thought that culture is an essential focus in EFL classes because, according to their explanations, language and culture are interrelated and involving culture in EFL classes helps to better understand and master the language. On the other hand, (12.9%) did not see that culture is an essential focus in EFL classes because it is not important for learning a foreign language as they explained.

**Question 16: In learning English, do your teachers relate to?****a- The English culture****b- The Algerian culture****c- Both****Table2.16***The Most Referred-to Culture by Teachers*

<b>Option</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
a.	20	28.6
b.	6	8.6
c.	44	62.9
Total	70	100

The purpose of this question was to know which culture, the English or the Algerian, teachers relate to more in teaching English. Obviously (62.2%) of the respondents agreed that both cultures are used in the classroom. While (28.6%) of them perceived the English culture as the dominant culture related to by teachers. Only (8.6%) asserted that the Algerian culture is more used than the other.

**Question 17: What are the modules that have enriched your knowledge about the target culture?**

The respondents' most frequent answers are presented below:

- Civilization module
- Language and Culture module
- Literature module.
- Linguistics module
- Oral Expression module

**Question 18: What do you suggest to improve students' communication skills?**

In this question, students are asked to suggest and add any techniques that can improve their communication skills. They suggested the following:

- Practice the language as much as possible; engage with native speakers in interesting conversations.
- Watch movies/series and read books.
- Join communication clubs and interact with more competent people.
- Organize stress-free sessions to reduce stress, anxiety and shyness.

### **2.3.3 Interpretation and Discussion of Students Questionnaire Results**

The results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire for students provided answers to the previously stated research questions, and proved that most of the students have formed an understanding of intercultural competence and are aware of its different aspects.

To begin with, almost all students are aware of what culture is and of the importance and effect of cultural knowledge on foreign language learning. Question 4 revealed that almost all students are aware of the elements of their own culture; therefore, they are able to understand it which is a key aspect of intercultural competence as previously mentioned in Section Two. However, question 5 revealed that students' awareness of the elements of the target culture is relatively modest. The results also showed that students often relate documents and events from the target culture to documents and events from their own culture; nevertheless they are relatively able to interpret these documents or events. Moreover, students do compare their own culture to the target culture and do consider the cultural differences while interacting with native speakers. Furthermore, most students are open to and curious about other cultures and they respect people with different cultural backgrounds. These results are in line with Byram as he defined intercultural competence as "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" (Cited in Deardorff 2006,p.248).

Questions 14, 16, and 17 showed that students are exposed enough to the target culture inside the classroom. This is relevant to Baker (2012) who believes that "the ELT classroom is an ideal environment in which both teachers and learners engage in multilingual and multicultural practices and thus to develop ICC to prepare learners of English to communicate in global settings" (Cited in Biswalo 2015, p.43).

## **2.4 Interview for Students**

### **2.4.1. Description of the Interview for Students**

The interview for students was carried out with 10 Master 1 EFL students who came from different groups. Its schedule was semi-structured and the length of each interview was between 20 to 25 minutes. This interview comprised of 9 questions most of them were open-ended so that students could express their thoughts and views freely and that follow up questions could be added based on their answers. They are all structured to collect data concerning students' understanding of intercultural competence. The data obtained from this interview is going to be complementary to the data of the questionnaire.

### **2.4.2. Analysis of the Interview for Students**

#### **Student 1:**

Student 1 thought that understanding another culture means having an idea about the background of that culture and its elements: 'To know about its background, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, what is acceptable and what is forbidden in that culture' (Student 1).

Concerning the importance of this understanding, Student 1 claimed that understanding another culture is mainly important while communicating with people from that culture: 'It will help to communicate with them' (Student 1).

With regard to the relationship between language and culture, she believed that the two are interrelated and cannot be separated and that culture is necessary when learning a foreign language: 'When you study a language it is very important to know about its culture in order to know how to use the language appropriately' (Student 1).

She made it clear that she understands her culture well and that she is aware of its elements such as beliefs: 'I am aware of the different elements of our culture like our beliefs, our religion, and what we believe in. I know the things that are acceptable or forbidden to do and our



traditions' (Students 1). She added that these elements of culture play an important role in defining our identity.

Student 1 thought that understanding her own culture affects her understanding of the target culture in that it allows her to compare between the two: 'I try to compare between my culture and the other culture and what are the similarities and differences in their beliefs, behaviours, ... This helps me to understand them' (Students 1).

When interacting with speakers from the target culture, student 1 confirmed that she considers the cultural differences: 'Yes, of course. You must take some elements into consideration and I try to know more about their culture before interacting with them' (Student 1). She meant that learning about the other culture allows her to know the differences and thus to consider them during an interaction.

She explained Byram's *savoir apprendre/faire* with: 'When you know about another culture, you acquire lots of things and you try to take what benefits you and apply it in real life situations' (Student 1).

Concerning the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning, she argued that it is necessary for learners to know about the target culture so that they can communicate with its speakers: 'Since we are studying a foreign language, it is important to know about its culture in order to be able to communicate with its native speakers in different contexts' (Student 1).

Student 1 thought that learning about cultures along with interaction with native speakers will help students develop their intercultural competence: 'Through learning more about other cultures and trying to interact with individuals who belong to different cultures' (Student 1).

**Student 2:**

According to Student 2, understanding another culture means learning about it and its elements: 'To learn about the different customs, traditions, behaviours ...' (Student 2).

She argued that such an understanding is important as it facilitates communication with its members: 'Because from that we can communicate with the members of that culture and deal with them according to their lifestyle and how they behave' (Student 2).

Talking about the relationship between language and culture, she stated that they are related to each other and that: 'Different ideas differ from the difference in the use of language within one's culture' (Student 2). She meant that both language and culture affect the conveyed meaning.

Student 2 declared that she understands her own culture well: 'I think well' (Student 2), and that she is aware of most of its elements. As an example of these elements, she mentioned beliefs, values, traditions, and superstitions.

She thought that one's awareness of his own culture helps him understand the differences between himself and others: 'The individual should be aware of his own culture and this helps him to identify and understand the differences between himself and other individuals' (Student 2).

With regard to interaction with speakers from the target culture, Student 2 revealed that she considers the differences between her own culture and theirs: 'Yes, sure. I try to take into consideration their culture, for instance, what is acceptable to them and what is not' (Student 2).

Explaining Byram's *savoir*, she argued that the knowledge of social groups refers to knowledge of the different groups of individuals in that culture who are related to each other because they share some traits. She clarified that 'these traits are related to one's culture' (Student 2). She meant that one should be aware of the characteristics of the different social groups.

Student 2 argued that intercultural competence is important in foreign language learning, because it is required to be aware of the culture associated with the learned language: ‘Because learning a foreign language requires awareness of its culture and how it is related to the language’ (Student 2).

**Student 3:**

Student 3 thought that understanding another culture means being able to understand the behaviours of its people. She added that: ‘individuals need to communicate with others from different cultures to understand them’ (Student 3). She meant that one needs to communicate with people from other cultures to understand their culture.

She argued that this understanding is important because it allows you to know why people behave in certain ways: ‘by understanding different cultures you can understand why people do things the way they do’ (Student 3).

Concerning the relationship between language and culture, she stated that both are interrelated: ‘Language and culture are intertwined; there is no language without culture and no culture without language’ (Student 3). She also clarified that both language and culture are important for successful communication.

Student 3 revealed that she understands her own culture, however, she is not aware of all its elements: ‘Well, I do understand my culture but I think I’m not aware of the elements’ (Student 3). She clarified that she thinks she is aware of most of them but some are confusing to her, like stereotypes, superstitions, and even some behaviours.

She argued that understanding and being interested in one’s own culture will drive the person to explore and understand other cultures: ‘When you are able to understand your own culture and you are aware of its elements you can understand others’ cultures because if you are

not interested in your own culture you will never think of learning about other cultures and that's what allows you to be more open and accepting' (Student 3).

Talking about interaction with speakers from the target culture, Student 3 stated that she does not take the cultural differences into consideration: 'I never consider them' (Student 3). She justified her point by arguing that everyone is free and that sticking to one's own culture does not necessarily hinder communication.

As far as the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning is considered, she stated that being aware of the culture related to the learned language is necessary: 'Because learning a foreign language suggests being aware of the culture that it is related to' (Student 3).

She thought that students can develop their intercultural competence if they reflect on their own cultures and identities and compare them to different ones: 'By reflecting on their personal identities and cultures and also by comparing their cultures to other cultures' (Student 3).

#### **Student 4:**

Student 4 stated that understanding another culture means understanding its beliefs and values and the other elements: 'It means understanding the beliefs and values and behaviours of the people of that culture' (Students 4). She explained that it also means understanding what is acceptable in that culture and what is not.

She argued that this understanding is important because it results in a successful and appropriate communication and interaction with people from that culture: 'When we understand another culture we can communicate successfully and we can act and react in the right way with people from that culture' (Student 4).

Along with the relationship between language and culture, she stated that the two are related to each other and that: 'Language reflects culture' (Student 4); she clarified her point by arguing that people represent their culture using language.

Concerning her own culture, student 4 revealed that she understands it well: 'I understand my culture well' (Student 4). She added that she is aware of the elements of her culture, for instance, the norms and behaviours in her culture and that she respects these elements.

Student 4 thought that understanding her own culture affects her understanding of the target culture as it makes her compare the two to each other: 'It affects my understanding of another culture because it makes me aware of the differences between them and makes me compare them to each other' (Student 4). She explained that through this comparison she understands the other cultures better.

With regard to interacting with people from the target culture, student 4 admitted that she has never interacted with a native speaker not even through social media: 'I have never interacted with native speakers to be honest' (Student 4). However, she stated that she would consider the differences between her culture and theirs if she did interact with them.

She explained Byram's *savoir* with: 'I think it means to know the social groups in that society and how they act' (Student 4). On the other hand, she thought that '*savoir apprendre/faire*' means using what the speaker knows about the other culture during interaction with a speaker from that culture: 'I think it is when we use what we know about another culture when we talk to someone from that culture' (Student 4).

She thought that intercultural competence is important in foreign language learning because it enables learners to use their knowledge about cultures in order to communicate successfully: 'It is important because when learners communicate with people from other

cultures it makes them think about what they know about that culture and makes the conversation successful' (Student 4).

Student 4 thought that students develop their intercultural competence through interaction with people of different cultural backgrounds and through learning about cultures: 'I think they should know more information about cultures and talk to people from other countries to know their cultures' (Student 4).

**Student 5:**

From the fifth student's point of view, understanding another culture means all the knowledge a person has about a culture's lifestyle, attitudes, and origins: 'To be knowledgeable of other's way of living, artefacts, attitudes and so on' (Student 5).

She made it very clear that such understanding is important because it allows the learners to be closely attached to the language they are learning: 'It is really important because it helps us to have a better access to the language' (Student 5). It means that understanding the cultural background of any language is required during the learning of this language.

Concerning the relationship between language and culture, she highlighted the role of each one in affecting the other by stating that a good understanding of the culture results in mastering the language perfectly. Whereas, without this understanding, the learned language remains incomplete and ineffective: 'These two key terms complete each other; understanding a society's culture helps to understand its language and vice versa' (Student 5).

Student 5 thought that the lack of knowledge about the target culture is a challenge for EFL learners; however, it would not affect the language learning process as she stated: 'The best example could be the case of the Algerian learners, yes they have a little knowledge

about the English culture, still they can learn it and master it' (Student 5). That is to say, being less knowledgeable about the target culture will not negatively affect its learning.

In relation to being aware of her own culture, she admitted that she is very aware of it along with its elements. From her perspective, this awareness plays an effective role in everyone's way of living: 'For sure, I'm very aware of my culture, its traditions and beliefs. I believe that everyone should be aware of his own culture to know how to behave in different situations' (Student 5).

Speaking about how understanding one's own culture affects the understanding of the target culture, she thought that there is no such effect because each culture has its particular elements and characteristics by which no culture can change the other one: 'There is no relation between the two since every society has its own culture and language' (Student 5).

Student 5 also stated that, when interacting with speakers from the target culture, she considered all the differences between the two cultures to know what is appropriate to do or to say and what is not: 'Yes, I take it into consideration because there are some points that may be acceptable in my culture but not in another culture' (Student 5).

According to the interview, intercultural competence is important in foreign language learning. At this point, she strongly agreed that such elements should be a prior focus in any classes: 'To have a better access to the language you want to learn, you should have an idea about its cultural background' (Student 5). That is to say, teaching the language with its culture is what learners need.

Finally, concerning the best techniques students can rely on to develop their intercultural competence. She proposed some suggestions to enrich the learners' knowledge about the target culture: 'Read more about the other cultures, what is appropriate and what is not, how to correctly behave with people from other cultures' (Student 5).

**Student 6:**

The interview data revealed that student 6 identified understanding another culture as understanding the way people think in addition to their behaviours along with other cultural elements: 'It means understanding their way of thinking and their traditions' (Student 6). She also referred to the different attitudes each culture is following and the necessity of being aware of such distinctions.

It is worth mentioning that she related the importance of understanding another culture to communication. That is, the success of communication is based on having enough knowledge about that culture: 'If you want to communicate with others you have to understand their cultures' (Student 6).

With regard to student 5's point of view, student 6 totally agreed on the same idea in which she claimed that the relationship between language and culture is complementary. Therefore, no one of them can stand alone: 'The two concepts complete each other; if you want to study a language you have to start with its culture' (Student 6).

On the other hand, she declared that she is somehow aware of the different elements of her own culture: 'Not that much, we have lots of cities and each one has its own habits, traditions and so on, so I'm not fully aware of all of them' (Student 6). These sub-cultures may share some elements but not all of them, and this made it very difficult for her to know and differentiate between all of them.

As revealed by the interview data, she was confident to state that understanding your own culture has nothing to do with understanding the target culture. That is, one can perfectly understand his own culture but fails to do so with the target culture: 'You may understand your culture without being able to understand the target culture' (Student 6). She also stated that cultures are different and each one of them has its own traditions and beliefs.



Speaking about interaction with native speakers, student 6 argued that within any conversation she is always aware of the differences between the two cultures; in addition, she tries to avoid misunderstandings as much as possible which may occur during communication: ‘Yes, during the conversation I think carefully about my words; should I use this or that? Is it appropriate to use this word in this context or not?’ (Student 6) Moreover, she referred to the context as a particular concept that should always be taken into consideration while interacting with native speakers: ‘The appropriate use of words is hard between two languages, what is correct in a culture may be incorrect in another’ (Student 6).

Then, she made it very clear that intercultural competence is the main objective in EFL classes because it helps learners become native speakers of the language: ‘Well, the main purpose of foreign language learners is to master the language, so that they will be considered as native speakers, not as learners, that is why developing intercultural competence is the success of this learning’ (Student 6).

At last, she suggested that students should practice the language they learn more often and listen to videos to improve it as well as to enrich their knowledge about the target culture: ‘Listening to videos to improve speaking skills and reading books about the target culture’ (Student 6).

### **Student 7:**

As shown by the interview answers, student 7 believed that to understand another culture one should understand its elements such as beliefs, norms and actions: ‘It means to understand their norms, beliefs, traditions and how they speak or act with other people’ (Student 7).

According to her perspective, understanding another culture is important as much as learning its language. This understanding includes people’s behaviours, attitudes, actions and responding techniques: ‘It is important to understand their culture so that you behave and speak

according to it' (Student 7). She completed her idea by pointing that learners should respect the differences between cultures; that is, what is appropriate in a culture and not in another.

As stated by previous students in their answers, she also declared that language and culture are related to each other: 'Language and culture are both connected; we cannot fully understand one without the other' (Student 7). Again, she also emphasised the idea that these two elements need each other for better outcomes.

Later, she asserted that she is unsatisfied with her knowledge of her own culture and it only depends on the ways of speaking and behaving: 'I'm somehow aware of my culture in a way that I know how to behave, speak and act according to my understanding' (Student 7). For her, being an individual in this community means at least knowing its beliefs, values and traditions.

On the other hand, student 7 argued that understanding her own culture played a vital role in understanding the target one. Since she knows the differences between the two cultures, it is easier for her to understand the target culture: 'When you understand your culture you will automatically know the differences between yours and the target culture and that will help to understand it better' (Student 7). She made it clear that understanding one's own culture affects the understanding of the target one.

Talking about interaction with native speakers, she always took into consideration all the differences between the two cultures. Moreover, she highlighted the importance of such consideration to avoid communication breakdowns: 'Of course, this is necessary to avoid what we call conversational breakdowns or misunderstandings' (Student 7).

Concerning the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning, she linked it directly to communicate with foreigners and that foreign language classes' main focus is mastering the language and its objective is to become competent like a native speaker: 'To

appropriately interact with foreigners and avoid any misunderstanding while doing so' (Student 7).

Finally, she concluded her answers by suggesting some ways students should follow for developing their intercultural competence:

The more you interact with foreigners, the more you understand their culture and by this, you will develop your own intercultural competence. There are other ways like reading books or even watching movies (Student 7).

**Student 8:**

With regard to the previous students' answers, student 8 confirmed their answers where she asserted again that understanding another culture started from understanding its cultural elements such as beliefs, traditions, and behaviours: 'Understanding a culture means the ability to understand its norms, beliefs and the laws that govern that culture in addition to the way people under that culture think and behave' (Student 8).

She made it clear that such understanding is important in that it provides the learners' needs during the learning process: 'To benefit from that culture' (Student 8). In other words, learners have the opportunity to benefit from the target culture as they learn about it.

As far as the relationship of language and culture is concerned, she declared that the two concepts are related to each other: 'Simply, both are interrelated' (Student 8). She added that this relationship is needed to improve both linguistic and cultural knowledge.

She seemed unhappy to mention her lack of knowledge about her own culture where she described it as average knowledge: 'To be honest I'm not fully aware of it. I mean the things that I know are limited, let's say, I know beliefs, values and traditions of my region' (Student 8).

As revealed by the interview data, student 8 argued that understanding her own culture affects the understanding of the target culture: 'To understand your culture you need to interact

with others to discover their beliefs, traditions and so on... And this allows you to understand other cultures' (Student 8). She meant that interaction is the key to understand one's own culture and that this understanding results in understanding other cultures.

She also declared that when interacting with speakers from the target culture, she took into consideration the cultural differences: 'I have to do so because there are things that are appropriate in a culture but considered to be unappreciated and inappropriate in another' (Student 8). Like the previous interviewees, she emphasised the appropriateness of words' use to avoid communication breakdowns and misunderstandings.

Speaking of the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning, she believed that developing intercultural competence is the main focus of language teaching and that language should be taught along with its culture: 'Understanding the culture of a particular language helps u to master that language and become skilful and aware of everything as far as this language is concerned' (Student 8).

At last, she suggested that learners' intercultural competence will be developed by reading and learning about cultures. That is, they should know more about different cultures: 'They have to read a lot about the target culture' (Student 8).

**Student 9:**

In identifying the meaning of understanding another culture, student 9 strongly agreed with what has been already mentioned by the previous interviewees as she related it to the understanding of the elements of culture: 'It means to know about their traditions, beliefs and how they talk and act' (Student 9).

As far as the importance of this understanding is concerned, she made it clear that its significance is determined in raising awareness about the ways people behave: 'To know what is expected from you and how to act and talk with them' (Student 9). Meaning, when people

understand another culture, it becomes easier for them to act correctly and choose the appropriate utterances in conversations.

She asserted again that language and culture are related to each other and that learning a language should be based on the associated culture, that is, the cultural knowledge is important for the success of the linguistic knowledge: 'To know a language you need to know its culture and vice versa' (Student 9).

Results showed that student 9 is not really aware of her own culture because of the ongoing changes that occur in the society: 'I won't lie and say I know everything about my culture because things are changing over time, but I know enough to act according to it' (Student 9).

Speaking of the effect of understanding her own culture on understanding the target one, she thought that understanding her culture and being aware of its elements will positively affect the understanding of the target culture: 'When you know your culture you will know what makes it different from the target culture' (Student 9). That is to say, her knowledge of her culture allows her to know the differences between the two cultures, and thus understanding the target one as well.

Along with interacting with native speakers, she asserted that she took into consideration all the similarities and the differences between the two cultures. Then, she mentioned that such consideration will help her to behave appropriately: 'Yes I take everything into consideration so that I don't make a fool of myself during the conversation' (Student 9).

About the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning, she was certain to clarify that developing it is the main concern of EFL classes. Its significance, according to her, is determined when learners of the language become native speakers at the end: 'Gaining intercultural competence is the purpose of every foreign language learner' (Student 9).

Finally, she suggested interacting with native speakers as the best way to develop students' intercultural competence: 'I think the best thing they should do to develop intercultural competence is to interact with foreigners' (Student 9).

**Student 10:**

According to student 10, understanding another culture means understanding its elements along with the appropriate use of the language: 'Well understanding another culture means to know about its traditions, beliefs, customs and values' (Student 10). She also mentioned that religion must be included in this understanding.

As previously mentioned by student 6, student 10 strongly agreed on the same idea in which she also highlighted that understanding another culture is in particular important for communication: 'This understanding is important for communication; a correct communication is required to avoid misunderstanding that can occur because of the differences between cultures' (Student 10).

Her point of view about the relationship between language and culture didn't differ from that of the other interviewees. Indeed, she claimed that both of them are related and they clearly complete each other:

Well, I think they complete each other because if you know the language without knowing its culture; it will lead, as I have already mentioned, to misunderstanding and vice versa. All in all, we need to study both language and its culture to master the language appropriately' (Student 10).

Moreover, she admitted that her knowledge about the elements of her own culture is limited: 'I think, let's say I'm aware but not fully...maybe it depends on the situations' (Student 10). However, she claimed that she knows its beliefs, traditions and the appropriate ways to behave and act with people.

She stated that she benefited from understanding her own culture to understand the target one as she was able to compare between the cultures and behave according to each one of them:

‘Since I’m aware of both cultures, it becomes easier to find their differences and similarities’ (Student 10).

As revealed by the interview’ answers, student 10 also declared that within any interaction with native speakers, she considered all the differences between the two cultures and behave accordingly. She also stated that she does her best to overcome any misunderstandings: ‘Yes sure, this will reduce misunderstanding during interaction’ (Student 10).

Speaking of the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning, she strongly agreed with the previous answers provided by the other interviewees; she claimed that being intercultural competence is the main aim of foreign language learning; moreover, she reported:

If you’re going to use the target language in order to communicate with speakers from the target culture, you need to learn about the culture and eventually develop what we call intercultural competence. The learner can learn the language alone; however, it will not give them a full understanding of the target culture (Student 10).

Finally, she ended her interview by suggesting some ways of developing students’ intercultural competence: ‘They can communicate with speakers from other cultures, read books and watch videos about other cultures; moreover, if it’s possible to travel and observe their way of living and behaving, that would be better’ (Student 10).

### **2.4.3 Interpretation and Discussion of the Interview for Students Results**

The obtained results from the analysis of the interview for students revealed that they have relatively formed an understanding of intercultural competence. The findings showed that students are aware of the relationship between language and culture and the importance of understanding other cultures as well as the effect of understanding one’s own culture on understanding other cultures. This is relevant to the data obtained from the questionnaire. Moreover, the results revealed that students are aware of most elements of their own culture; furthermore, they take into

consideration all the cultural differences when interacting with speakers from the target culture. Questions 8 and 9 demonstrated that students are aware of the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning and of how it is developed.

## **2.5. Summary of the Major Findings**

The obtained data collected from both the questionnaire and the interview for students confirmed the already stated hypothesis that investigates if Master 1 EFL students have formed an understanding of intercultural competence and if they are aware of its different aspects, however, their understanding and awareness is relatively modest. The data accumulated from both students' questionnaire and interview allow for answering the questions posed at the initial phase of the study, which are:

1. Did Master 1 EFL students form an understanding of intercultural competence?
2. Are Master 1 EFL students aware of the different aspects of intercultural competence?

### **Students' Understanding of Intercultural Competence**

Based on the results of both the questionnaire and the interview, the students' understanding of intercultural competence can be said to be relatively good. Students' answers on the interview revealed that they are aware of the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language learning and how they can develop it. However, the results obtained from the questionnaire showed that most of them think that intercultural competence is only developed through education. Furthermore, the results showed that students are aware of the importance of understanding other cultures, which is a key component of intercultural competence, in making a successful and effective communication with people who belong to other cultures.



## **Students' Awareness of the Aspects of Intercultural Competence**

The analysis of both questionnaire and interview demonstrated that the students are aware of the aspects of intercultural competence. Results of both questionnaire and interview showed that students are, to a great extent, aware of their culture. This is relevant to Nault (2006) who stated that understanding learners' own culture is necessary for them to develop an understanding of the culture of others. Moreover, they are somewhat aware of the target culture. From the students' answers on the questionnaire, it might be stated that students are able to interpret documents and events from the target culture and to relate these documents or events to those from their own culture. Furthermore, students compare their own culture to the target one and when they interact with speakers from the target culture they take into consideration the cultural differences. Finally, after analyzing the questionnaire data, it was deduced that the majority of students are open to, respect, and curious about other cultures. These results are relevant to Byram's model of ICC (1997) because they include students' skills of relating and interpreting, skills of discovery and interaction, and their knowledge and attitudes towards the target culture.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter represents the practical part of the study including the analysis, discussion, and interpretation of the data gathered through a questionnaire and an interview for students. The results yielded from both tools to evaluate students understanding of intercultural competence showed that most of the Master 1 students have formed an understanding of intercultural competence and that they are aware of its importance in foreign language learning. Finally, it also showed that students are aware of the different aspects of intercultural competence.

## **General conclusion**

1. Putting it all Together

2. Pedagogical Recommendations

3. Limitations of the Study

**References**

**Appendices**

**Résumé**

**ملخص**

## **General conclusion**

### **1. Putting it all Together**

This piece of research aimed at evaluating Master 1 EFL students' understanding of Intercultural competence. It was divided into two parts: a theoretical part and a practical part. The theoretical part, in turn, was divided into two sections. The practical part provided the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the gathered data.

In the theoretical part of this study, the first section was devoted to introduce the concept of intercultural competence. It started with defining the concept from the perspectives of different scholars namely Byram (1997). Intercultural competence components were also presented, in addition to their significance in situations of intercultural communication. Moreover, this section covered Byram's (1997) model of ICC that is regarded as the most influential model of intercultural communicative competence. At last, it was concluded by discussing the reasons for using intercultural competence in the field of foreign language learning.

The second section of this part shed light on the students' understanding of intercultural competence. It explained intercultural understanding along with the domains it encompasses. Intercultural competence in EFL classes was then discussed emphasizing the vital role of teachers inside the classroom in helping learners gain IC. It also stressed learners' development of IC. Finally, IC assessment was discussed stressing its complexity and indicating the different methods that were developed over the years to measure this concept.

The practical part of this research was devoted to the fieldwork. For collecting data, a questionnaire and an interview were implemented for students. The obtained data were described, analysed, interpreted, and discussed to test the hypotheses under study. Finally, the

findings of the study showed that students have relatively formed an understanding of intercultural competence and are aware of its different aspects.

## **2. Pedagogical Recommendations**

The current study was an attempt to shed light on intercultural competence in foreign language learning. It aimed to evaluate Master 1 EFL students' understanding of this concept. In light of the reported findings, the most notable recommendations this study can suggest are:

- Teachers are advised to raise students' awareness of the importance of intercultural competence.
- Students should be more aware of their native culture.
- Students should interact more often with native speakers of the language to gain intercultural competence.
- Students are advised to enrich their knowledge of cultures so that they understand them better.
- Teachers are advised to encourage students to be more open to other cultures.

## **3. Limitations of the Study**

Every research faces some obstacles that may result in the inability to reach the data needed to generalize the findings; therefore, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that the current study was subject to the following limitations:

- The lack of previous researches on the topic under study was a major obstacle in writing the literature review of the research. Most of the previous researches on intercultural competence were concerned with its development.

- The lack of resources related to the topic under study caused some difficulties in conducting the research; precisely, in writing the second section of the theoretical part that was concerned with students' understanding of intercultural competence.
- The online submission of the questionnaire was time-consuming and did not result in gathering the needed number of answers; thus, it was required to administer it at the university.
- Students were not collaborative both in filling in the questionnaire and in doing the interview. It was hard to convince them to be interviewed.
- Some students did not provide answers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire.
- Both the questionnaire and the interview were conducted in a short period of time because students were allowed to be at university and have face-to-face classes for few weeks only due to the pandemic situation.

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX I

### Questionnaire for Students:

Dear student,

This questionnaire is a part of our piece of research work that seeks to evaluate Master 1 students' understanding of intercultural competence. You are, therefore, kindly invited to answer the following questions. The information you provide will be a valuable contribution to our research. Your answers will be kept anonymous and will be used only for research purposes.

Thank you in advance.

#### Section One:

1. According to you,

a- Culture refers to people's everyday life, beliefs, customs, behaviours, and values

b- Culture refers to a country's literature, art, architecture

c- Both

d- Others (please specify).....

.....

2. Learning a foreign language is more effective when it focuses on:

a- The linguistic knowledge

b- Cultural knowledge

d- Both linguistic and cultural knowledge

c- Others (please specify).....

3. Cultural knowledge affects the actual use of language?

a- Yes

b- No

Please say how

.....

.....

.....

**Section Two:**

4. How aware are you of the following elements of your own culture?

	Fully aware	Somewhat aware	Not aware
- Beliefs and values			
-Behaviours and actions			
-Different social groups			
-Social/Cultural norms			
-Traditions			
-Stereotypes			

5. How aware are you of the following elements of the target culture?

	Fully aware	Somewhat aware	Not aware
- Beliefs and values.			
- Behaviours and actions.			
-Different social groups.			
-Social/Cultural norms.			
-Traditions.			
-Stereotypes.			

6. How do you consider your ability to interpret documents or events from the target culture?

a- Very good

b- Good

c- Average

d- Poor

e- Very poor

7. How often do you relate documents or events from the target culture to documents or events from your own culture?

a- Always

b- Sometimes

c- Rarely

d- Never

8. Have you ever interacted with a native speaker from the target culture (either face-to-face interaction or virtually through social media)?

a- Yes

b- No

9. If yes, did you take into consideration your knowledge about what is appropriate and acceptable to them and what is not?

a- Yes

b- No

10. Do you compare your own culture to the target culture and try to find similarities and differences between the two?

a- Yes

b- No

11. Which of the following statements better describe you? (You can choose more than one answer)

a- I'm open to other cultures

b- I'm curious about other cultures

c- I respect people who have different cultural backgrounds

d- I'm ready to suspend disbelief about other cultures

e- I'm ready to suspend belief about my own cultures

**Section Three:**

12. How do you rate your intercultural skills?

a- Very poor

b- Poor

c- Average

d- Good

e- Excellent

13. Intercultural competence is achieved only through education

- Yes

- No

If no, what other ways to achieve it? .....

.....

.....

.....

14. How often do your teachers relate to the target culture when explaining the lessons?

-Always

-Sometimes

- Rarely

- Never

15. Do you think culture is an essential focus in EFL classes?

- Yes

- No

Please explain .....

.....

.....

16. In learning English, do your teachers relate to?

a- The English culture

b- The Algerian culture

c- Both

17. What are the modules that have enriched your knowledge about the target culture?

.....

.....

18. What do you suggest to improve students 'communication skills?

.....

.....



## APPENDIX II

### Interview for Students:

The term intercultural competence is defined as “the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures” Wiseman (2002). It refers to the ability to understand cultures and use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully.

1. What do we mean by understanding another culture?
2. Why is this understanding important?
3. What can you say about the relationship between language and culture?
4. Intercultural competence also includes understanding and being aware of one’s *own* culture. How well do you understand your own culture? And are you aware of its different elements (beliefs, values ...)?
5. How could understanding your own culture affect your understanding of another culture?
6. When interacting with speakers from the target culture, do you consider the differences between your culture and their culture? How?
7. Byram’s model of defining intercultural competence includes 5 *savoirs*: *savoir*, *savoir comprendre*, *savoir apprendre/faire*, *savoir s’engager*, and *savoir etre*.

“Savoir refers to knowledge of social groups and their cultural practices and products.”

How would do explain this?

“Savoir apprendre/faire refers to the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture/cultural practices and to operate knowledge, attitudes, skills in real-time communication and interaction.” What can you say about it?

8. Why is intercultural competence important in foreign language learning?
9. How could students develop their intercultural competence?

## Résumé

L'objectif de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage des langues étrangères est aujourd'hui défini en fonction de la notion de compétence interculturelle. Les étudiants apprennent la langue en association avec sa culture et sont censés développer des compétences interculturelles afin d'utiliser efficacement et avec succès la langue. Cette étude, basée sur le modèle de Byram de définition et de description de la compétence interculturelle, cherche à évaluer la compréhension des étudiants de Master 1 EFL de cette notion. Il a été émis l'hypothèse que les étudiants de Master 1 auraient pu avoir une compréhension de la compétence interculturelle et qu'ils pourraient être conscients de ses différents aspects. Pour tester la validité des hypothèses formulées, un questionnaire a été administré à 70 étudiants en Master 1 EFL de l'université Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia et un entretien a été réalisé avec 10 autres étudiants. Après l'analyse des données obtenues, les résultats ont révélé que la compréhension des étudiants de la compétence interculturelle est relativement bonne et qu'ils sont quelque peu conscients de ses aspects. De plus, ils sont conscients de l'importance de la compétence interculturelle dans l'apprentissage des langues étrangères. Sur la base de ces résultats, un certain nombre de recommandations pédagogiques sont données aux étudiants et aux enseignants en plus de certaines limites de l'étude.

*Mots-clés* : compétence interculturelle, étudiants EFL, compréhension.

## ملخص

إن الهدف من تعليم وتعلم اللغات الأجنبية في وقتنا الحالي يتمحور حول مفهوم الكفاءة بين الثقافات. يتعلم الطلبة اللغة الأجنبية مع ربطها بالثقافة المرافقة لها وبالتالي فمن المتوقع منهم أن يطوروا الكفاءة بين الثقافات من أجل استعمال اللغة بشكل فعال وناجح. تهدف هذه الدراسة المبنية على نموذج بايرام الخاص بتعريف ووصف الكفاءة بين الثقافات، إلى تقييم فهم طلبة تعليمية اللغات الأجنبية سنة أولى ماستر لهذا المفهوم. تتحقق هذه الدراسة مما إذا كان طلبة السنة أولى ماستر قد طوروا فهمهم لهذا المفهوم وما إذا كانوا على وعي بجوانبه المختلفة. تم توزيع استبيان على سبعين طالب من طلبة تعليمية اللغات الأجنبية سنة أولى ماستر في جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى، كما تم إجراء مقابلة مع عشر طلبة آخرين من أجل التحقق من صحة الفرضيات المطروحة. بعد تحليل المعطيات المتحصل عليها أظهرت النتائج أن فهم الطلبة لمفهوم الكفاءة بين الثقافات جيد نسبياً وأنهم على وعي بجوانبه المختلفة إلى حد ما بالإضافة إلى أنهم مدركون لمدى أهميته في مجال تعلم اللغات الأجنبية. استناداً إلى هذه النتائج تم تقديم عدد من التوصيات البيداغوجية لكل من الطلبة والاساتذة كما تم ذكر المعوقات التي كانت سبباً في تعطيل سير هذه الدراسة.

*الكلمات المفتاحية : الكفاءة بين الثقافات، طلبة اللغة الأجنبية، فهم .*