

Philosophical Insights into Intercultural Communicative Competence: Cultural Value Transmission from Curriculum Design to Classroom Practice in English Education

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Abstract: competence (ICC) development in English language learners using a mixed methods approach. Data collection involved surveys for both teachers and students, along with semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into their experiences with the curriculum. The analysis revealed a gap between teacher preparedness and student experience regarding specific curriculum elements. While teachers reported feeling moderately prepared on aspects like using communicative tasks and integrating experiential learning, student perceptions of the curriculum's effectiveness in these areas were slightly lower. This suggests a need for further training or curriculum adjustments to ensure students fully benefit from these strategies. Role-plays emerged as the most engaging activity, with both high teacher emphasis and student participation. Discussions also fostered active participation, while debates and presentations saw moderate levels of student engagement. Activities with higher teacher training emphasis, such as role-plays and discussions, resulted in higher student engagement. Debates and presentations, which received somewhat less teacher training focus, saw lower student engagement. This suggests that providing teachers with adequate training on specific curriculum elements can significantly enhance student participation and potentially their learning outcomes.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence, English Teaching, Communicative Tasks, Role Plays and Curriculum

1. INTRODUCTION

The intricate relationship between language and culture has been a cornerstone of language acquisition theory (Kramsch, 2014). As Jiang stated, "language and culture make a living organism; language is flesh, and culture is blood (Jiang, 2000). Without culture, language would be dead; without language, culture would have no shape." This interconnectedness underscores the importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in English Language Teaching (ELT). While communicative competence, encompassing speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, remains a primary goal in ELT (Harper, 2020), it often overlooks the crucial

role of ICC. Byram and Wagner and Harper highlight this in their proposed goals for English teaching (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Harper, 2020), emphasizing the importance of fostering interaction, cultural awareness, and positive attitudes towards diverse societies. ICC, however, often remains a "hidden curriculum" in ELT, with its significance undervalued. The concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has been a topic of much discussion among scholars in recent decades, with no single universally agreed-upon definition emerging (Byram & Masuhara, 2013). Byram offers a comprehensive framework for understanding ICC in the context of ELT (Byram, 1995), which incorporates five key elements: *savoir-être* (attitudes), *savoir* (knowledge), *savoir-comprendre* (skills to interpret and relate), *savoir-s'engager* (critical cultural awareness), and *savoir-faire* (ability to interact and discover). EFL contexts present unique challenges for fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) due to several limitations. Firstly, unlike learners immersed in a target language environment, EFL students often lack access to authentic cultural experiences and limited interaction with native speakers (Lee et al., 2023). This isolation can hinder the development of ICC. Secondly, the pedagogical approach employed by instructors can significantly impact ICC development. Research by Cheng highlights how ineffective teaching methods can impede progress (Cheng, 2012). Traditional language-focused approaches, emphasizing grammar and accuracy over cultural understanding, remain prevalent in many EFL classrooms. This dominance can be attributed, at least in part, to a lack of readily available instructional models that equip teachers with the tools to effectively integrate cultural activities into their curriculum. One crucial aspect of ICC is cultural knowledge, which Byram defines as encompassing "knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one's own country (Byram, 1997), and similar knowledge of the interlocutor's country on the one hand; knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels, on the other hand." This definition takes on particular significance in the context of English language teaching due to the global, lingua franca nature of English. Learners of English are not limited to interlocutors from any single nation, but rather have the potential to interact with individuals from diverse cultures around the world. Therefore, when considering cultural knowledge in ELT, it's important to acknowledge several key points. Firstly, this knowledge should encompass the cultural and linguistic differences that exist between people from different countries, as well as those within social groups of the same nation. Secondly, the global reach

of English means that cultural knowledge extends beyond any specific countries like Britain or America.

Finally, while some learners may find it beneficial to focus on the cultures of those they interact with most frequently, cultural knowledge within the context of ICC should ideally encompass a broader understanding of diverse cultures to prepare for interactions in a globalized world. Building upon Byram concept of "savoirs," Sercu offers a simplified definition of ICC that focuses on three core components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Byram, 1995; Sercu, 2005). Knowledge, in this framework, encompasses a broad range of understanding, including knowledge of specific cultures, general cultural awareness, self-awareness, and knowledge of the intricate relationship between language and culture. Skills, on the other hand, refer to the learner's ability to interpret and relate cultural information, discover new knowledge, interact effectively, and develop strategies for independent learning. Finally, attitudes encompass the development of a critical perspective towards both the target culture and one's own, fostering a sense of cultural relativism and valuing the perspectives of others. While Sercu's definition aligns with many aspects of Byram's framework, it places a particular emphasis on the role of the learner's home or local culture in the development of ICC. The phenomenon of globalization, marked by advancements in communication technologies and the blurring of national borders, has transformed human society into a globally interconnected network. This interconnectedness necessitates the development of intercultural communication skills, posing a significant challenge to traditional second and foreign language teaching objectives. Many scholars now argue that achieving solely communicative competence is no longer sufficient. Instead, they advocate for the integration of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) into language education (Chen, 2010).

ICC development focuses on equipping learners with both linguistic and intercultural skills to navigate communication effectively with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Recognizing the importance of ICC, numerous countries, including Britain, Europe, and the United States, have begun incorporating its development into their foreign language education policies. Despite ongoing efforts to encourage foreign language (FL) teachers to integrate ICC into their classrooms, research suggests a gap between policy and practice (Zhou, 2011). Studies in Iran, for instance, reveal that while the importance of cultural teaching is acknowledged by EFL instructors, linguistic instruction continues to

dominate classrooms, limiting the effectiveness of cultural preparation for intercultural communication (Jalali et al., 2014). Saricoban and Oz posit that promoting students' ICC hinges on teachers themselves possessing a high level of ICC (Akpinar & Ünalı, 2014). A teacher's own ICC acts as a benchmark for their ICC instruction, influencing their ability to plan, facilitate, and participate in cultural activities effectively. The greater a teacher's familiarity with the target language culture, the more likely they are to actively foster ICC development in their students. Akpınar and Ünalı go a step further (Akpınar & Ünalı, 2014), viewing teacher ICC as a form of "professionalism." They argue that educators have a responsibility to cultivate their own ICC to meet the demands of an increasingly intercultural world and equip future generations with the skills to navigate interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Beyond teacher expertise, Bhawuk and Brislin emphasize the importance of individual cultural awareness and sensitivity for effective intercultural interaction (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). They suggest that people must be interested in their own cultures, demonstrate sensitivity towards cultural differences, and show respect for others. Intercultural sensitivity, as described by Hammer et al. is considered a prerequisite for ICC (Hammer et al., 2003).

In essence, developing intercultural competence requires first fostering a foundation of intercultural sensitivity. Foreign language teaching has witnessed the evolution of three main approaches to cultivating cultural competence in learners: the knowledge-based approach, the contrastive approach, and the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) approach. For many decades, the dominant approach viewed language and culture as distinct domains. This perspective, prioritizing language proficiency over cultural knowledge, stemmed from a focus on developing reading skills for target language literature (Thanasoulas, 2001). Emerging from cross-cultural psychology and anthropology, the contrastive approach aims to raise learners' awareness of similarities and differences between their own culture and the target language culture. By focusing on these comparisons, the approach seeks to bridge the cultural gap and enhance learners' cultural competence. As Thanasoulas observes as early as the 1960s that cultural learning shouldn't solely serve the purpose of reading target language literature (Thanasoulas, 2001); rather, it should equip learners with the ability to communicate effectively in that language. Rejecting the view of culture as a collection of facts (favoured by the knowledge-based approach).

1.1 Rationale and Main Objective

Despite growing recognition of the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in foreign language education, research remains inconclusive regarding the most effective methods for integrating ICC development into curriculum design and translating it into successful classroom practices. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the relationship between curriculum design that emphasizes cultural value transfer and the development of ICC in English language learners. Through this investigation, we hope to shed light on how curriculum design choices can influence the transfer of cultural values and ultimately contribute to the development of ICC in EFL classrooms.

2. METHODS

2.1 Study Design

Our study adopted a mixed methods approach investigating the influence of curriculum design on English language learners' development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). To achieve this, we collected data through surveys administered to both teachers and students. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into their experiences with the curriculum, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between curriculum and ICC development.

2.2 Data Collection

Our study utilized surveys for both teachers and students to gather data on the curriculum's impact. Teacher surveys explored their perceptions of the curriculum's effectiveness in promoting cultural awareness and ICC development through various elements, including the use of communicative tasks, experiential learning opportunities, and their own teacher training. Student surveys, in turn, assessed their current level of ICC and their perceptions of how the learning environment, particularly the curriculum's emphasis on cultural value transfer, contributed to their ICC development. We conducted semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students. These interviews consisted of open-ended questions designed to delve deeper into their experiences with the curriculum. For teachers, the focus was on their use of communicative tasks, experiential learning opportunities, and their own teacher training in promoting ICC development. Student interviews explored their engagement with

classroom activities like discussions, debates, role-plays, and presentations, and how these activities contributed to their understanding of cultural values and their development of ICC skills.

2.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, focusing on themes related to curriculum use and its impact on ICC development. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data from the surveys, providing insights into teachers' and students' perceptions of the curriculum's effectiveness. All visualizations of the quantitative data were created using GraphPad Prism version 10.2.0.

3. RESULTS

In Table 1, Teacher Training in ICC focused on equipping educators with the knowledge and skills to integrate intercultural communication into the curriculum. Secondly, we examined the Integration of Experiential Learning, aiming to provide students with opportunities to learn through real-world or simulated intercultural experiences. Finally, we analyzed Culturally Responsive Curriculum Design, emphasizing the development of materials sensitive to diverse perspectives and promoting cultural understanding.

Table 1: Teacher Preparation and Curriculum Design

Theme	Explanation	Examples
Teacher Training in ICC	Equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to integrate intercultural communication into their curriculum.	Workshops on designing communicative tasks, incorporating cultural content, and fostering intercultural understanding.
Integration of Experiential Learning	Providing students with opportunities to learn through real-world or simulated intercultural experiences.	Exchange programs, online collaboration projects with students from other cultures, case studies of intercultural interactions.
Culturally Responsive Curriculum Design	Developing curriculum materials that are sensitive to diverse cultural perspectives and promote cultural understanding.	Including texts, videos, and activities that represent different cultures and encourage critical reflection on cultural values.

Table 2: Classroom Activities and ICC Development

Theme	Explanation	Examples
Use of Communicative Tasks	Engaging students in activities that require them to use language functionally in intercultural contexts.	Role-plays simulating intercultural negotiations, debates on cultural practices, collaborative projects requiring communication with students from other cultures.
Interactive Classroom Activities	Creating a learning environment that encourages active participation, collaboration, and exchange of ideas among students from diverse backgrounds.	Discussions on cultural differences, presentations on cultural traditions, group projects requiring negotiation and consensus building.
Promoting Reflective Learning	Encouraging students to critically analyze their own cultural assumptions and develop empathy for other cultures.	Journaling about intercultural encounters, analyzing media representations of different cultures, self-assessment of intercultural communication skills.

In Table 2, three key themes emerged for developing intercultural communication skills: Use of Communicative Tasks, Interactive Classroom Activities, and Promoting Reflective Learning. The first theme involved activities where students use language functionally in intercultural contexts. Interactive Classroom Activities fostered an environment encouraging participation, collaboration, and exchange of ideas among diverse students. Finally, Promoting Reflective Learning encouraged students to analyse their own cultural assumptions and develop empathy for other cultures.

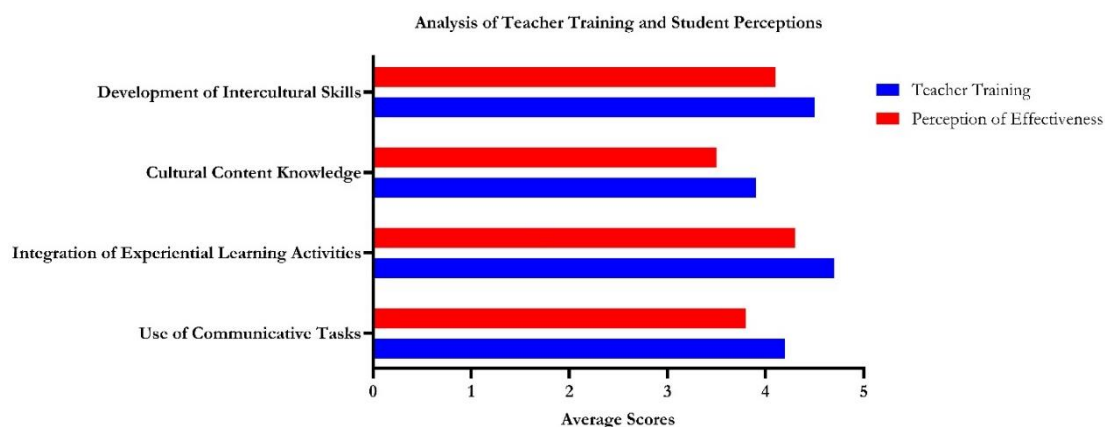


Figure 1: Analysis of Teacher Training and Student Perceptions

In Figure 1, teachers reported feeling moderately prepared on a scale of 1-5 for aspects like using communicative tasks (4.2) and integrating experiential learning (4.7), student perceptions of the curriculum's effectiveness in these areas were slightly lower (3.8 and 4.3 respectively).

This suggests a need for further training or curriculum adjustments to bridge the gap and ensure students are fully benefiting from these aspects of the program.

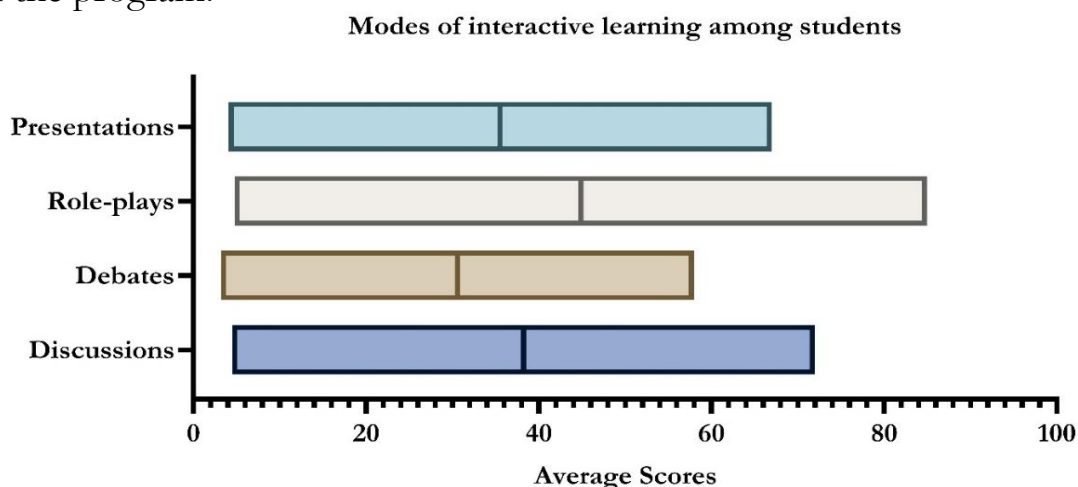


Figure 2: Analysis of different modes of interactive learning among students

In Figure 2, role-plays emerged as the most engaging activity, with both high teacher emphasis (4.8) and student participation (85%). Discussions also fostered active participation (72%), although teacher emphasis was lower (4.5). Debates saw moderate emphasis (3.2) reflected in student engagement levels (58%). Presentations exhibited a similar pattern, with a high emphasis on their use in the curriculum (4.1) but a slightly lower level of student engagement (67%).

Table 3: Assessment and Evaluation in ICC Development

Theme	Explanation	Examples
Developing Assessment Tools	Creating instruments to measure students' progress in developing intercultural communication skills.	Performance-based assessments like role-playing simulations, reflective essays on intercultural experiences, surveys on intercultural attitudes.
Integrating Self-Assessment	Providing opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning and identify areas for improvement in ICC.	Journaling prompts on cultural awareness, rubrics for self-evaluation of intercultural communication skills, peer feedback on intercultural communication effectiveness.
Promoting Continuous Learning	Encouraging students to maintain a lifelong commitment to intercultural learning and understanding.	Encouraging participation in international exchange programs, online communities focused on intercultural dialogue, ongoing engagement with diverse cultural resources.

In Table 3, Developing Assessment Tools focused on creating methods

to measure student progress in intercultural communication skills. Integrating Self-Assessment provided opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning and identify areas for improvement. Finally, Promoting Continuous Learning aimed to encourage students to maintain a lifelong commitment to intercultural learning and understanding, fostering a lasting impact beyond the classroom.

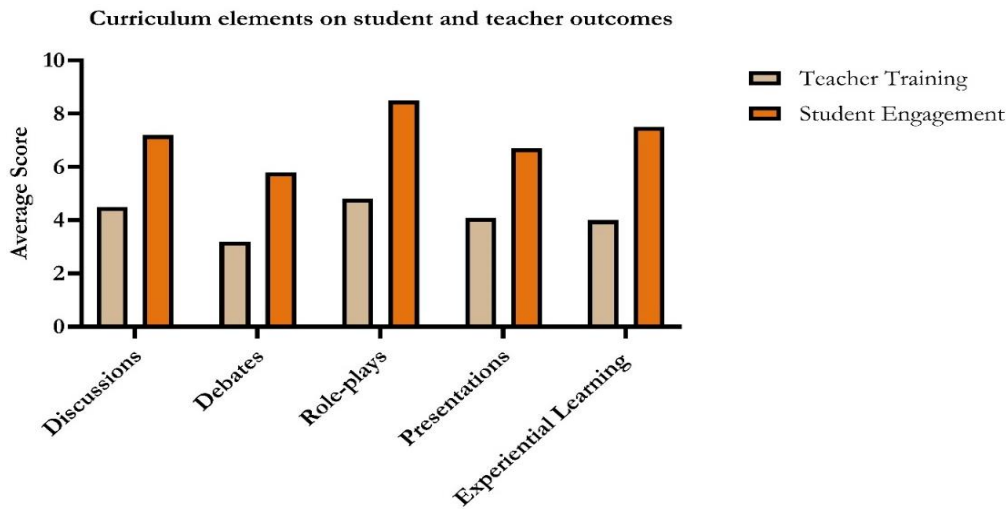


Figure 3: Analysis of Curriculum elements on student and teacher outcomes

In Figure 3, Activities with higher teacher training emphasis, such as role-plays (4.8) and discussions (4.5), resulted in higher student engagement (8.5 and 7.2 respectively). Debates (3.2) and presentations (4.1), which received somewhat less teacher training focus, saw lower student engagement (5.8 and 6.7). This trend held true even for experiential learning overall (4.0 teacher training, 7.5 student engagement)

Table 4: Curriculum Design for Cultural Value Transfer

Theme	Explanation	Examples
Integration of Authentic Materials	Utilizing real-world texts, media, and artifacts that reflect the target culture and its values.	Including news articles, films, or music from the target culture, showcasing traditional art forms or cultural practices.
Focus on Intercultural Communication Skills	Developing curriculum that emphasizes skills necessary for effective communication across cultures.	Activities promoting active listening, understanding nonverbal communication, negotiating meaning, and adapting communication styles.
Promoting Critical Thinking and Reflection	Providing opportunities for students to analyze cultural values, compare and contrast cultural perspectives, and develop their own intercultural stance.	Discussions on cultural stereotypes, debates on ethical dilemmas in different cultural contexts, projects comparing cultural values across societies.

In table 4, Integration of Authentic Materials involved utilizing real-world texts, media, and artifacts to reflect the target culture and its values. The curriculum also emphasized Focus on Intercultural Communication Skills, equipping students with the tools for effective communication across cultures. Finally, Promoting Critical Thinking and Reflection provided opportunities for students to analyze cultural values, compare perspectives, and develop their own informed stance on intercultural interactions.

Student Engagement Levels in Classroom Activities

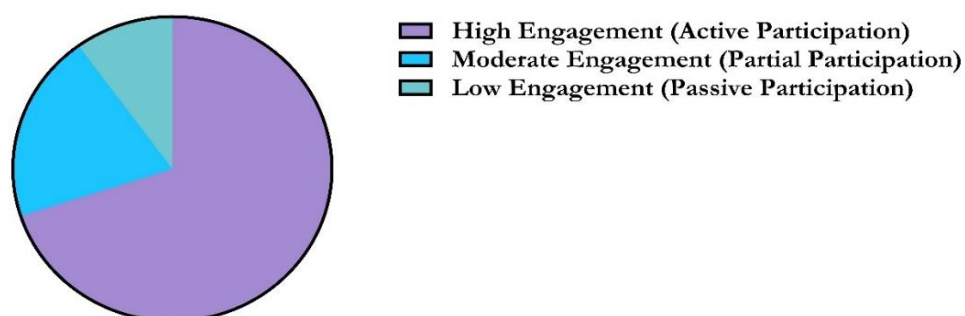


Figure 4: Distribution of Student Engagement Levels in Classroom Activities

In Figure 4, the majority of students (35) demonstrated high engagement, actively participating in lessons. A moderate number of students (10) exhibited partial participation, while a smaller group (5) displayed low engagement, remaining passive participants. This suggests there might be room for further strategies to encourage active participation from all students.

Curriculum Focus on Different Cultural Value

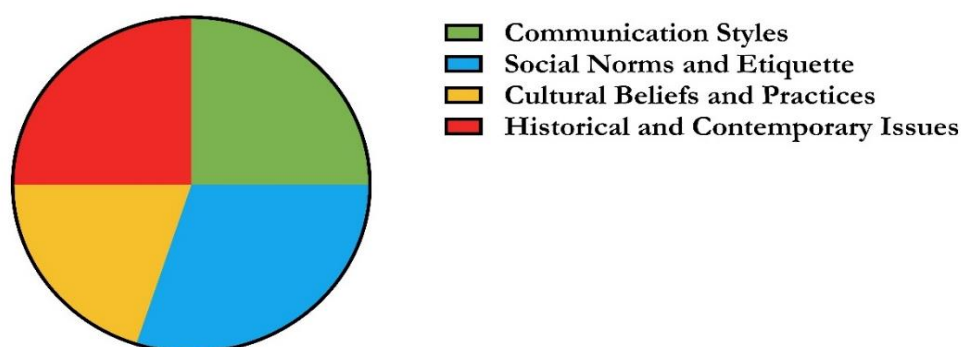


Figure 5: Curriculum Focus on Different Cultural Value Areas

In Figure 5, Social norms and etiquette received the highest focus (30%), followed closely by communication styles and historical and contemporary issues (25% each). Cultural beliefs and practices had a slightly lower focus

(20%). This distribution suggests a well-rounded approach to cultural value transfer, equipping students with knowledge of communication styles, social norms, and both historical and contemporary aspects of the target culture.

Table 5: Classroom Activities for Cultural Value Transfer

Theme	Explanation	Examples
Simulations and Role-Plays	Creating scenarios that require students to navigate cultural differences and apply their understanding of cultural values.	Role-playing cultural encounters like ordering food in a restaurant or attending a social event, simulating intercultural negotiations or business meetings.
Collaborative Learning Activities	Encouraging students to work together on projects that involve researching, comparing, and presenting cultural information.	Group projects on cultural traditions, collaborative presentations on cultural holidays or celebrations, creating multimedia presentations on cultural values from a comparative perspective.
Culturally Themed Discussions and Debates	Facilitating discussions and debates that encourage critical analysis of cultural values, stereotypes, and perspectives.	Discussions on the role of gender roles in different cultures, debates on the impact of globalization on cultural values, analyzing the portrayal of cultural values in literature or films.

In Table 5, Simulations and Role-Plays created scenarios where students navigate cultural differences and apply their understanding of cultural values. Collaborative Learning Activities encouraged students to work together, researching, comparing, and presenting cultural information. Finally, Culturally Themed Discussions and Debates facilitated critical analysis of cultural values, stereotypes, and perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of intercultural communication.

4. DISCUSSION

Our analysis revealed a gap between teacher preparedness and student experience regarding specific curriculum elements. While teachers reported feeling moderately prepared on aspects like using communicative tasks and integrating experiential learning, student perceptions of the curriculum's effectiveness in these areas were slightly lower. This suggests a need for further training or curriculum adjustments to ensure students fully benefit from these strategies. Furthermore, the study observed variations in

student engagement across different interactive learning modes. Role-plays emerged as the most engaging activity, with both high teacher emphasis and student participation. Discussions also fostered active participation, while debates and presentations saw moderate levels of student engagement. These findings suggest that role-plays might be a particularly effective strategy for boosting student engagement and potentially cultural understanding. The development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has gained significant traction in recent years, with numerous scholars proposing approaches to cultivate this skill set (Gilmore, 2019). Neuliep offers a diverse range of activities for intercultural training programs, including lectures with discussions, self-assessment tools, case studies, simulation role-plays, and videos (Neuliep, 2017). While these resources are often presented as standalone programs separate from ELT, their underlying approaches can be effectively integrated into English language teaching practices. As Corbett highlights, "the classroom activities adopted in an intercultural approach do not very often stray from those activities familiar from much communicative teaching and learning (Corbett, 2022). This includes techniques like role-plays, simulations, project work, debates, and questionnaires, often complemented by reading, listening, and viewing tasks. This inherent compatibility between ICC development and existing ELT activities underscores the feasibility of integrating ICC training into the core curriculum. However, the effectiveness of ICC training hinges on the strategic use of these activities. Unlike pure language acquisition, ICC development requires a focus on skills and attitude formation, which cannot be achieved solely through traditional lectures. Therefore, the successful integration of ICC necessitates embedding these activities within the existing framework of speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities in ELT. Existing activities within the ELT framework, such as discussions, debates, role-plays, and presentations, can be repurposed to cultivate ICC with thoughtful design (Corbett, 2022). Similar to communicative tasks, these activities can be adapted for various learning settings, ranging from individual work to group collaborations. Presentations and facilitated discussions can be particularly effective for introducing and reviewing cultural knowledge. Discussions allow the instructor to present and explore similarities and differences between cultures, making them a readily implementable format in college classrooms. Role-plays, on the other hand, excel at developing skills and attitudes while potentially reinforcing cultural knowledge acquisition. These exercises typically involve trainees in simulated intercultural communication scenarios, allowing them to practice their

newly acquired understanding. The significance of intercultural competence (ICC) in foreign language teaching has been a topic of growing emphasis for over two decades (Perry & Southwell, 2011). While the undeniable link between language and culture is well-established, research on the direct relationship between foreign language instruction and ICC development remains inconclusive. Nevertheless, educators and researchers have explored three main approaches to fostering ICC: experiential learning, tasks designed to develop ICC within the foreign language curriculum, and the integration of new technologies. Experiential learning, often considered more effective than traditional instruction in cultivating ICC, has been examined in the context of student exchange programs and the experiences of immigrant children encountering a new culture. The rise of the internet, with its potential to connect learners and teachers from diverse backgrounds, has positioned it as a substitute or additional form of experiential learning. Penz for example, highlights how the internet and other media can be harnessed to raise students' cultural awareness within a foreign language learning context (Penz, 2001). Another approach involves embedding ICC development within the foreign language curriculum through communicative tasks (Meyer, 1991). These tasks aim to teach culture through language and vice versa. However, research suggests that ICC is not an "automatic result" of foreign language teaching alone. Studies also show no clear correlation between language proficiency, age, and ICC, potentially indicating, as Meyer suggests, that ICC is more closely linked to self-identity than linguistic abilities or awareness of cultural barriers (Meyer, 1991). If this line of reasoning holds true, future ICC research should focus on individual learner characteristics. Furthermore, foreign language instruction should prioritize the development of intercultural language programs that take into account the psychological factors influencing attitudes towards cultural diversity. The current study's findings regarding the dimensions of ICC diverge somewhat from those of Zhou and Saricoban and Oz (Saricoban & Oz, 2014; Zhou, 2011). Zhou reported that participants demonstrated the highest level of intercultural competence in attitudes and the lowest in knowledge (Zhou, 2011). Conversely, Saricoban and Oz found that their pre-service teachers scored significantly higher in knowledge compared to skills and attitudes (Saricoban & Oz, 2014). It's important to note that their instrument measured only three components of ICC: knowledge, skill, and attitude. Byram and Saricoban and Oz both highlight the importance of cultural knowledge for successful intercultural interaction (Byram, 1997; Saricoban & Oz, 2014). During interactions between individuals from

different cultures, participants rely on their understanding of both their own culture and the other's. However, the success of the interaction hinges largely on their attitudes towards the other culture. Openness to cultural differences, tolerance of ambiguity, and awareness of both one's own culture and the sociolinguistic aspects of the target culture all play crucial roles. These factors further influence an individual's ability to interpret information, discover new knowledge, and effectively interact within an intercultural context. The concept of ICC emphasizes the interconnectedness of its various components, suggesting that all aspects hold equal weight in successful intercultural interactions. Saricoban and Oz argue that for teachers to effectively promote ICC development in their students, they themselves must possess a high level of ICC (Saricoban & Oz, 2014). A teacher's own ICC acts as a benchmark for their ICC instruction, influencing their ability to plan, facilitate, and participate in cultural activities, such as interactive discussions. As Sercu and Bandura point out, the greater a teacher's familiarity with the target language culture, the more likely they are to actively foster ICC development in their students (Sercu & Bandura, 2005). Therefore, teacher training programs play a vital role in equipping educators with the necessary cultural knowledge and skills. By incorporating an intercultural component into their curriculum, these programs can address the development of teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and intercultural awareness. Furthermore, they can provide practical guidance on how to cultivate ICC in their learners (Zhou, 2011). Textbook writers can also contribute to this process by including rich cultural information within teacher's manuals, further augmenting educators' cultural knowledge. The analysis of curriculum elements revealed a positive correlation between teacher training and student engagement. Activities with higher teacher training emphasis, such as role-plays and discussions, resulted in higher student engagement. Debates and presentations, which received somewhat less teacher training focus, saw lower student engagement. This suggests that providing teachers with adequate training on specific curriculum elements can significantly enhance student participation and potentially their learning outcomes. The classroom environment fostered a generally positive level of student engagement. The majority of students demonstrated high engagement, actively participating in lessons. However, a small group of students displayed low engagement, remaining passive participants. This suggests there might be room for further strategies to encourage active participation from all students. Finally, the curriculum content placed a balanced emphasis on different cultural value areas. Social norms and etiquette

received the highest focus, followed closely by communication styles and historical and contemporary issues. Cultural beliefs and practices had a slightly lower focus. This distribution suggests a well-rounded approach to cultural value transfer, equipping students with knowledge of communication styles, social norms, and both historical and contemporary aspects of the target culture. Our research suggests that incorporating cultural input into EFL classrooms can not only enhance adolescent learners' overall motivation for learning English, but also foster deeper engagement with the learning process in middle school public-school settings. This positive impact on L2 motivation can likely be attributed to the experiential nature of cultural learning. By encountering cultural elements, students gain opportunities to observe how language functions in real-world contexts. They witness how grammar, vocabulary, and syntax work together to facilitate communication in authentic situations. Furthermore, cultural input allows students to utilize English for practical purposes. They practice using English as a tool to interpret and comprehend new knowledge presented in the target language. This shift in perspective is reflected in the consistent rise observed across all four components of adolescent EFL learners' motivation in our quantitative analysis. In simpler terms, students in the experimental group recognize that language learning is not merely about passively receiving decontextualized linguistic knowledge, as is often the case in traditional EFL classrooms. Instead, through cross-cultural interaction with foreign teachers and tangible materials, they experience language and cultural knowledge presented meaningfully within a connected discourse. This shift from decontextualized learning to a more integrated approach fosters a more engaging and motivating learning experience for adolescent EFL learners. One potential benefit of incorporating cultural input into the curriculum is the boost it can provide to learners' motivation. When students gain a sense of how the target language functions in real-world situations, particularly within intercultural communication, their motivation to learn English increases (Brown, 2012). This is likely because they recognize that English proficiency unlocks the door to further exploration of how the language operates in intercultural contexts. However, a potential drawback to this approach lies in the suitability of an all-English environment for all adolescent EFL learners. While quantitative data suggests that students exposed to culturally infused classrooms tend to exhibit higher motivation compared to those without, qualitative analysis reveals that students with lower proficiency levels may not reap the same benefits. From a second language acquisition perspective, course content

that significantly surpasses learners' proficiency level is unlikely to trigger the "notice and meaningful processing" mechanism crucial for language acquisition (Schmidt, 2012). In such an environment, students with limited English and intercultural experience may feel a sense of detachment from classroom activities. The sheer volume of English used throughout the course may hinder their ability to engage in intercultural discourse and acquire associated knowledge. Collaborative pedagogy aligns with the sociocultural view of second language acquisition, which posits that learning flourishes when students collaborate with peers or instructors (Lantolf, 2011). From a cognitive perspective, the positive impact of collaborative learning on L2 proficiency can be explained by the emphasis on experiential cultural learning. Researchers using this approach consistently direct students' attention to how linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, and syntax) functions in real-world communication settings, often through the use of authentic intercultural materials. Furthermore, collaboration encourages students to utilize English as a tool for processing new information presented in the target language. This dual focus ensures that while students engage in intercultural communicative tasks and materials, they also receive the "negotiated interaction and meaningful input" necessary for language development (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Students have the opportunity to produce the target language in response to input, and receive feedback on their efforts, fostering a more complete learning experience.

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the relationship between curriculum design and intercultural communication competence (ICC) development. While the curriculum addressed diverse cultural value areas, a gap existed between teacher preparedness and student experience regarding specific elements. Activities with higher teacher training emphasis fostered stronger student engagement. Role-plays emerged as particularly effective for promoting participation. These findings suggest the need for targeted teacher training and the potential of specific activities to enhance ICC development

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