

Moroccan Engineering Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence And Their Attitudes Towards Intercultural Competence Learning: Ensam, Rabat As A Case Study

Jamal Barebzi¹, Toufik El Ajraoui², Mohammed Yachoulti³

^{*1 & 3} Research Group: Applied Linguistics & the Teaching of Languages Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco

^{*2} Research Lab: Linguistics, Language Development & Idiom, Mohammed V University, Graduate School of Arts & Crafts (ENSAM) Rabat, Morocco

Abstract

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has played a significant role in an increasingly globalised world in which individuals from different cultural groups with different values, practices and perspectives are likely to interact with each other. While scholars have recommended assessing intercultural communicative competence to develop this field of research, in Morocco, there is a scarcity of publications regarding the assessment of this competence among engineering students. The purpose of this study is to investigate Moroccan engineering students' ICC and provide insights into its pedagogical implications. The study further seeks to explore students' attitudes towards ICC learning, and it examines the relationship between their attitudes and their existing level of ICC. The study adopts a survey questionnaire developed by Zhou (2011) to explore the level of ICC in terms of intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills. An online version of the survey was sent to 68 engineering students from the Graduate School of Arts and Crafts (ENSAM), Rabat. The findings of the study revealed that Moroccan engineering students possess the average needed ICC to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. Moreover, ENSAM students' attitudes towards ICC learning in EFL classes turned to be positive and have a moderately positive relationship with their level of ICC. Eventually, the findings have pointed a need for teaching materials that support the acquisition of ICC.

Keywords: ENSAM students' attitudes, communication, intercultural communicative competence, knowledge, skills.

Date of Submission: 06-08-2023

Date of Acceptance: 16-08-2023

I. Introduction

Globalisation together with the emergence of new communication technologies and the great mobility of people across nations, have exceedingly expanded the horizon of engaging with otherness, which makes people from varied cultures and linguistic backgrounds come together. This interconnectedness has resulted in a borderless world wherein, to be successful, individuals need to develop skills to, competently, communicate in intercultural contexts. Therefore, intercultural communication was perceived to be under challenges and prospects (Bennett, 2009; Scarino, 2010). According to Fritz, Möllenberg & Chen (2002), "the trend towards globalisation and internationalisation has increased the importance of being competent in communicating with people of different cultural backgrounds" (p. 165). Additionally, previous studies have indicated that knowledge of the language alone cannot guarantee success in communication in intercultural settings.

In recent years, the issue of developing EFL learners' ICC has been considered a primary objective in the field of English language education in an attempt to draw learners' attention to cultural differences, which helps them become aware of their own culture and the presence of otherness to appreciate and respect them. Similarly, recent language research places an emphasis on the development of tools to assess this dimension towards promoting the integration of intercultural communicative competence in training courses and teaching material (Sercu, 2004).

In the case at hand of teaching English to ENSAM students, concepts such as international academic events and contests, international academic mobility, worldwide negotiations, and global job markets to name just a few are implicitly associated to the professional profiles of graduates, and they reveal the need to include ICC contents in their foreign language courses syllabi. However, many studies have revealed that engineering graduate

programs focus on technical preparation with limited emphasis to the development of skills necessary to be successful in a global environment (Austin, 2002; Fischer and Zigmond, 1998). Yet, intercultural competence, the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts, is important for engineering graduate students, especially in relation to addressing engineering challenges that cross national borders (Downey et al., 2006; Hunter et al., 2006). In order to face global engineering challenges, there are calls to develop an awareness of cultural differences in product design, manufacture, and use, as well as an understanding that people from different countries define and solve problems in different ways (Downey et al., 2006).

According to ENSAM, the future engineering student's profile is mainly characterised by "openness to other cultures, efficient communication, and productive teamwork". As far as intercultural competence teaching is concerned, the ENSAM engineering training gives students the opportunity to adapt to an evolving professional environment, communicate fluently and collaborate in teamwork, and consider the professional environment's human and social problems.

This study suggests that an effective teaching of intercultural communication in engineering schools can only be achieved through gaining insight into engineering students' competence levels and learning needs. Specifically, the study strives to assess Moroccan Engineering students' intercultural communicative competence. It further seeks to explore the relationship between their level of intercultural competence and their attitudes towards intercultural competence teaching.

The present paper is organized along the following lines. The first section is devoted to the theoretical framework the present study adopts. The second section reviews a number of previous studies conducted to investigate engineering students' intercultural competence. The third section then details the methodological procedures undertaken in the present study. The fourth section presents an analysis and discussion of the findings. Finally, the last section is devoted to conclusion and implications for different stakeholders in the field of intercultural education.

II. Theoretical Perspective

Intercultural communicative competence has been defined by researchers in different ways (e.g., Bennett, 1993; Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000; Deardorff, 2004; Sercu, 2004; Sercu et al. 2005), but no consensus has been achieved about its terminology, components and assessment. In addition, several models have been designed to illustrate to key elements of the concept. Deardorff (2006) declares that it is difficult to identify the constructs of intercultural communicative competence due to the complex nature of the concept. This difficulty is perhaps because of the fact that the concept is dynamic and continues to evolve. It is worth mentioning that in attempting to achieve a consolidated definition of ICC, Deardorff (2006), using a Delphi-process, invited a number of intercultural scholars and administrators who work in various higher education institutions (e.g., Janet Bennett, Michael Byram, Guo-ming Chen, Mitchell Hammer, Brian Spitzberg, Richard Wiseman, and others.), to discuss ICC-related issues. Accordingly, Byram's (1997) definition is deemed the most applicable receiving an average rating of 3.5 out of 4.0. Byram's definition, as stated by Deardorff (2006), was summarized 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" (Byram, 1997, p. 34, cited in Deardorff, 2006). In this respect, many researchers (e.g., Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002) argue that ICC differs from knowledge and facts about another country and culture, and it is the competence that enables learners "to interact with people of different cultural backgrounds, multiple identities and a specific individuality" (p.33). Byram (1997) believes that people with ICC could "act as mediators between people of different cultural origins" (p.71). That is, they can understand the target language and the behaviours of its people of both source and target culture. People with ICC are ready and willing to seek out opportunities to interact with people from other cultural backgrounds, explore their cultures, and make the necessary change to prepare for intercultural encounters.

According to his model, intercultural competence has four dimensions: knowledge, attitude, skill and critical cultural awareness. These dimensions are presented as follows (see Figure 1):

- Attitudes: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own; and
- Knowledge: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country or region, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction;
- Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it, and relate it to documents or events from one's own;
- Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction;
- Critical cultural awareness: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

This study is informed by Byram's (1997) framework of intercultural communicative competence assessment. The choice of this model was based on the ground that it is designed specifically for foreign language education contexts and it remains the most prominent and widely cited model. In this respect, Corbett (2003, p.210) states that "For those teachers who demand a more focused curriculum, Byram's *savoirs* offer a careful, consistent and, above all, practical guide to the construction of an intercultural curriculum."

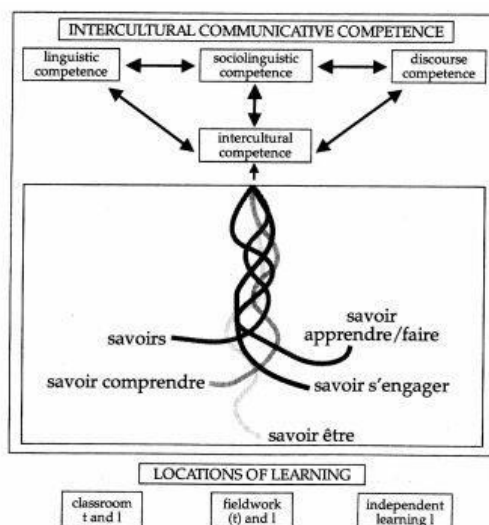


Figure 1. Byram's Model of ICC (Byram, 1997, p. 73)

III. Literature Review

A number of studies have been conducted to assess engineering students' intercultural competence. Most of these studies investigated the development of students' intercultural competence through a variety of resources, including teaching programs and living abroad programs. In this regard, Tran and Seepho (2016) conducted a study to explore EFL learners' attitudes towards intercultural communicative language teaching (ICLT) and their ICC development in the Vietnamese context. It was revealed that that EFL learners' attitudes towards intercultural competence learning were positively changed, and their ICC developed accordingly. In this regard, the findings of the study showed that students' intercultural competence developed with regard to the four pillars of ICC, namely attitudes, knowledge, skills and intercultural awareness with slight difference in the degree of each component. In this respect, students got the highest scores in the knowledge dimension (M= 7.91), followed by intercultural skills (M= 7.77), intercultural attitudes (M= 7.66), and intercultural awareness (M= 7.45). In a similar vein, Han Yu (2012) examined U.S engineering students' intercultural competence through a mixed methods study. The results illustrated that students exhibited vague and passive awareness of intercultural communication. In addition, the participants were found to possess average to high intercultural competence, and partial acceptance of intercultural communication education. However, the vague and passive awareness le students to shape an ethnocentric view of intercultural communication since they seemed to believe that communication problems are not concerned with cultural differences but language differences.

On the other hand, a considerable body of studies investigated engineering students' attitudes towards the importance and integration of intercultural competence in language classes and courses. In this respect, Jabeen and Shah (2011), In their case study, examined the attitudes of Pakistani students of Government College University in Faisalabad, towards target culture learning. The results showed that students held negative attitudes towards target culture learning and preferred to learn the target language in contexts related to their own culture. According to the researchers, if policy makers persist on teaching target culture, learners' negative attitude towards target culture learning may also influence their attitudes towards learning the language itself.

At the English Language and Literature Department of Dumlupinar University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, 10 male and 12 female Turkish university students participated in a study conducted by Kahraman (2008). His research aimed to uncover learners' perspectives on learning about cultures and contrast them with the prevalent beliefs about culture teaching in English Language Teaching (ELT). The findings of the study revealed that the participants were unsure of their level of intercultural competence and that they lacked sufficient knowledge of the cultural practices of the target language speakers. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants perceived culture learning as an integral component of language learning, and they were eager to learn more about the culture of the target language.

Along similar lines, Candel-Mora (2015) conducted a study aiming to identify the perceptions and attitudes of Spanish ESP students towards intercultural competence using inductive content analysis based on a

corpus of self-assessment essays. A group of 100 industrial engineering ESP students participated in the study. By and large, the findings of the study showed that students view intercultural competence as an important component of the English language classes. More importantly the findings stressed that students were aware that knowledge of the language alone does not guarantee successful communication in intercultural environments.

IV. Methodology

Research questions and hypothesis

The purpose of the present study is to measure Moroccan engineering students' intercultural communicative competence and gain insights into their attitudes towards intercultural competence learning. It also strives to highlight the relationship between students' attitudes towards intercultural competence learning and their existing level of intercultural communicative competence.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What level of intercultural communicative competence do ENSAM engineering students exhibit?
2. What are ENSAM engineering students' attitudes towards intercultural communicative competence learning?
3. Is there any statistically significant relationship between ENSAM engineering students' attitudes towards intercultural communicative competence learning and their existing level of intercultural competence?

Considering research question 3, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. There is a relationship between ENSAM engineering students' attitudes towards intercultural communicative competence learning and their existing level of intercultural competence.

Design

Adopting a survey research design, this study strives to gain insights into ENSAM engineering students' intercultural competence and their attitudes towards intercultural competence teaching. It further seeks to and explore the relationship between their attitudes towards intercultural competence learning and their intercultural competence level. Quantitative research is "centred around the study of variables that capture these common features (common features of group of people) and which are quantified by counting, scaling, or by assigning values to categorical data" (Khotari, 2004, p.33).

Setting and participants

The participants in this study were a group of 68 engineering students from the National Graduate School of Arts and Crafts (L'École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts et Métiers) (ENSAM), Rabat. Based on the results of the demographic section of the questionnaire, 61.8% of the participating students were males and 38.2% were females. As far as students' international experience is concerned, only 26.5% of students have been abroad. They have visited different countries such as Spain, France, Portugal and the United States for various reasons including tourism and academic purposes. This implies that these students have already experienced direct intercultural interaction.

Table 1. Students' demographic information

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	42	61.8
	Female	26	38.2
	Total	68	100.0
Experience abroad	Yes	18	26.5
	No	50	73.5
	Total	68	100.0

Sampling

The sample of the study was chosen in light of a convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique wherein participants are chosen simply because they are willing and available to participate in the study for the sake of increasing response rate (Creswell, 2008). Similarly, Dörnyei (2004) declares that convenience sampling is the most common sample type in second language research. In addition, he stressed that "Members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer" (p.98). As a result of having a convenience sample, I may not be able to say with confidence that the sample is representative of the population, but the sample can provide useful data for answering the research questions (Creswell, 2008).

Data collection instrument

In the present study, data were collected through a survey questionnaire developed by Zhou (2011) to gain insight into students' intercultural competence (appendix1). The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section addressed the participants' demographic information. The second section explored students' intercultural competence in terms of intercultural knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness. It consists of 20 5-point scale questions. Among them, five, four, seven, and four items were used respectively to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness dimensions of intercultural competence. The participants were asked to indicate their opinions towards each statement from 1 (Very low) to 5 (Very high). The third section investigates students' attitudes towards intercultural competence teaching. On a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), the respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements regarding the importance of promoting intercultural competence in the English language classroom.

Data analysis procedure

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, edition 20) was utilized to perform data analysis for the purpose of finding answers to the research questions. Students' level of intercultural communicative competence as well as their attitudes towards intercultural competence learning were described using descriptive statistics. Further, a correlational analysis was performed to examine the relationship between engineering students' attitudes towards intercultural competence learning and their existing level of intercultural communicative competence.

V. Results and discussion

ENSAM engineering students' intercultural competence

ENSAM engineering students' intercultural knowledge

This section aims to provide a descriptive account of participants' intercultural knowledge. As it is illustrated in table 2, generally, the results appear to be satisfactory. Therefore, students possess the necessary average level of intercultural knowledge.

As shown in the table above, a significant proportion of participants (54%) declared that they are familiar with the cultural norms and expectations of English culture (e.g., food, eating manner, clothing, greetings, public behaviours, etc.) (M= 3.46).

Table 2. ENSAM engineering students' intercultural knowledge

	Very low %	Low %	Average %	High %	Very high %	Mean
Knowledge						
I am familiar with the cultural norms and expectations of English culture (e.g., food, eating manner, clothing, greetings, public behaviours, etc.)	0	8.8	54.4	19.1	17.6	3.46
I can describe some important historical/ social/ political events that have shaped English cultures.	8.8	44.1	30.9	16.2	0	2.54
I can contrast communicative behaviours of Moroccan and English-speaking people in social setting (e.g., family, school, office, etc.).	0	13.2	50.0	23.5	13.2	3.37
I can describe the history of relationships between Morocco and English-speaking countries.	14.7	33.8	32.4	14.7	4.4	2.60
I can describe how some events in Morocco are perceived by people from English speaking countries.	17.6	39.7	19.1	23.5	0	2.49

Similarly, it was observed that (50 %) of students can contrast communicative behaviours of Moroccan and English-speaking people in social setting (e.g., family, school, office, etc.) (M=3.37), which will inevitably enable them to avoid misunderstanding in intercultural settings and will allow them to understand the social construction and the cultural background of individuals in both Moroccan and English-speaking cultures.

However, it can be discerned that participants have less knowledge regarding some aspects of intercultural knowledge, namely knowledge about important historical/social/political events that have shaped English cultures and the knowledge of the history of relationships between Morocco and English-speaking countries (M= 2.54, 2.60, respectively). Similarly, students' ability to describe how some events in Morocco are perceived by people from English speaking countries is low (M= 2.49). As a result, cultural teaching in EFL classes should promote this ability by providing more knowledge related to this aspect.

ENSAM engineering students' intercultural attitudes

This section delves into ENSAM engineering students' intercultural attitudes. In this regard, table 3 illustrates that the majority of respondents possess positive attitudes of curiosity and openness as the majority of

the respondents showed their interest in knowing unfamiliar aspects of English culture (e.g., history, traditions, and people's values, etc.) (M= 3.75).

A significant finding was observed with regard to students' interest in knowing the different ways that English-speaking people see a particular event in Morocco (M= 3.96). Participants also showed their willingness to understand differences between Moroccan and English-speaking people in their behaviours, values, and beliefs (M= 3.88), which demonstrated the participants' willingness to discover other perspectives and/or interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one's own and in other cultures and cultural practices.

Despite students' willingness to discover other perspectives, their ability to 'describe how some events in Morocco are perceived by people from English speaking countries' was low (M= 2.49) as illustrated by table 2 (section 4.1.2), which implies a shortage of knowledge regarding this aspect in the English course content.

This high willingness to discover others' perspectives reflects the intercultural speaker profile who, according to Byram (1997) "does not assume that familiar cultural practices or products common to themselves and the other are understood in the same way, and is aware that they need to discover the other person's understanding of these [one's own cultural phenomena]" (p.58). Nevertheless, it is noticed that only 13.2% of the participants are willing to question their values and beliefs which are perceived differently by people from other cultures (M= 2.79). Therefore, classroom activities and materials are to foster students' ability to question their taken-for-granted values and seek others' perspectives for a successful intercultural communication.

Table 3. ENSAM Engineering students' intercultural attitudes.

	Very low %	Low %	Average %	High %	Very High %	Mean
Attitudes						
I am interested in knowing unfamiliar aspects of English culture (e.g., history, traditions, and people's values, etc.).	4.4	19.1	14.7	20.6	41.2	3.75
I am willing to understand differences between Moroccan and English-speaking people in their behaviours, values, and beliefs.	4.4	4.4	22.1	36.8	32.4	3.88
I am interested in knowing the different ways that English speaking people see a particular event in Morocco.	4.4	10.3	20.6	14.7	50.0	3.96
I am willing to question my values and beliefs which are perceived differently by people from other cultures.	19.1	33.8	8.8	25.0	13.2	2.79

ENSAM engineering students' skills of interpreting and relating

Table 4 shows results relating to ENSAM engineering students' skills of interpreting and relating. The findings demonstrate that participants possess the necessary skills to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural settings. In this regard, a considerable proportion of respondents (57.4%) was observed to have a high ability to identify how some misunderstandings happening in interactions between Moroccan and English-speaking people (M= 3.56), which implies that the participants can draw upon their intercultural knowledge to identify causes of misunderstanding and dysfunction in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present. Similarly, the findings show high levels of mediation skills among the respondents (M= 3.66). In other words, ENSAM students can recognize when some Moroccan people communicate inappropriately to English speaking people. Therefore, students can use their explanations of sources of misunderstanding and dysfunction to help interlocutors overcome conflicting perspectives. Moreover, ENSAM students an average ability to understand an English document in its own cultural context and identify implicit ethnocentric¹ perspectives (M= 3.54).

Table 4. ENSAM engineering students' skills of interpreting and relating

	Very low %	Low %	Average %	High %	Very high %	Mean
Skills of interpreting and relating						
I am able to identify how some misunderstandings happen in interactions between Moroccan and English-speaking people	4.4	10.3	19.1	57.4	8.8	3.56
I can recognize when some Moroccan people communicate inappropriately to English speaking people.	4.4	14.7	23.5	25.0	32.4	3.66
I am able to understand an English document in its own cultural context.	4.4	19.1	17.6	35.3	23.5	3.54

Skills of discovery and interaction

Table 5 results relate to ENSAM engineering students' skills of discovery and interaction. The results appear to be positive. A significant finding was observed with respect to the last item, which shows that the

¹ Making judgments about the other culture from the perspectives of one's own culture as a matter of superiority.

respondents demonstrated the highest level of skills regarding the ability to suspend disbelief and judgement regarding others' meanings, beliefs and behaviours (M= 3.79), which entails that ENSAM students do not immediately judge people from other countries because their behaviours might just be the result of cultural differences. More importantly, the results show that the participants look at themselves through the eyes of the other interlocutors who belong to different cultural backgrounds (M= 3.43). This denotes that they are conscious of the fact that interaction in multicultural contexts necessitates a significant combination of attitudes, knowledge and skills to avoid any likely misunderstanding or dysfunctions which would eventually lead to cultural conflicts. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of the respondents are not ready to adjust their behaviour, body language, and gesture according to what is considered appropriate by them when interacting with English speaking people (M= 3.04). This implies their unwillingness to step out from their comfort zone to approach the different other.

Table 5. ENSAM engineering students' skills of discovery and interaction

	Very low %	Low %	Average %	High %	Very high %	Mean
Skills of discovery and interaction						
While interacting with English speaking people, I adjust my behaviour, body language, and gesture according to what is considered appropriate by them.	8.8	27.9	22.1	32.4	8.8	3.04
I am able to find out unfamiliar cultural information I come across in oral or written communication situations.	4.4	20.6	26.5	44.1	4.4	3.24
Before I talk or write to English speaking people, I think about how they, with different cultural backgrounds, will feel about or react to what I am going to say or write.	8.8	5.9	36.8	30.9	17.6	3.43
I think I should not immediately judge people from other countries, because their behaviours might just be the result of cultural differences.	8.8	10.3	20.6	13.2	47.1	3.79

ENSAM engineering students' critical cultural awareness

This section sheds light upon ENSAM engineering students' critical cultural awareness. The findings in table 6 demonstrate that the respondents have the ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. It is observed that ENSAM students are aware of the diversity in English cultures (e.g., differences in race, class, gender, and profession, etc.) (M= 3.69), and they show awareness of English-speaking people's reactions (M= 3.68) while interacting with them. Similarly, the participants appear to demonstrate awareness of how their values and ethics are reflected in specific situations in their interaction with people from other countries (M= 3.37). Moreover, the participants seem to see themselves as "culturally conditioned" individuals with personal habits and preferences, which implies self-awareness among the respondents.

Table 6. ENSAM engineering students' critical cultural awareness

	Very low %	Low %	Average %	High %	Very high %	Mean
Critical cultural awareness						
I demonstrate awareness of seeing myself as a "culturally conditioned" person with personal habits and preferences.	0	23.5	41.2	23.5	11.8	3.24
I am aware of the diversity in English cultures (e.g., differences in race, class, gender, and profession, etc.)	4.4	19.1	17.6	22.1	36.8	3.68
I demonstrate awareness of English-speaking people's reactions to me which reflect their cultural values.	4.4	5.9	52.9	32.4	4.4	3.26
I demonstrate awareness of how my values and ethics are reflected in specific situations in my interaction with people from other countries.	0	17.6	32.4	45.6	4.4	3.37

ENSAM engineering students' level of intercultural competence

In the previous subsections, the level of the students regarding the elements of each dimension of intercultural competence was investigated, namely knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical cultural awareness. This subsection provides the overall level of ENSAM students' intercultural competence. In this regard, the mean score of each dimension was calculated. Then the mean of the students' scores for the whole questionnaire was calculated. To simplify the reporting, Saricoban and Oz's (2014) framework was used to reduce the 5-point scale into 3-point, i.e., "low" (M= 1.0-2.4), "average" (M= 2.5-3.4), and "high" (M= 3.5-5.0).

Table 7. The mean scores of four dimensions of ICC of ENSAM engineering students

Dimensions	Mean	Level
Knowledge	2.89	Average
Attitudes	3.59	High
Skills of interpreting and relating	3.58	High
Skills of discovery and interaction	3.37	Average
Critical cultural awareness	3.38	Average
Total	3.33	Average

As illustrated in table 7, attitudes and skills of interpreting and relating had the highest mean scores (M= 3.59; M= 3.58 respectively), which denotes that ENSAM student had a high level regarding these dimensions. However, the students have an average level with respect to critical cultural awareness (M= 3.38), skills of discovery and interaction and their (M= 3.37). Surprisingly, the knowledge dimension had the lowest mean score, which denotes that students' level of intercultural knowledge was almost low. In contrast with this finding Tran and Seepho's (2006) showed that the students got the highest scores in the knowledge dimension (M= 7.91), followed by intercultural skills (M= 7.77), intercultural attitudes (M= 7.66), and intercultural awareness (M= 7.45).

ENSAM students' attitudes towards intercultural communicative competence learning

In order to understand ENSAM students' perceptions towards intercultural communicative competence learning, ten statements were listed and the students were required to rate the importance of learning such competence on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Generally, the findings in figure 3 show that the respondents were positive about the importance of integrating intercultural competence in EFL classes. In this regard, all the participants agree with all the statements in the questionnaire.

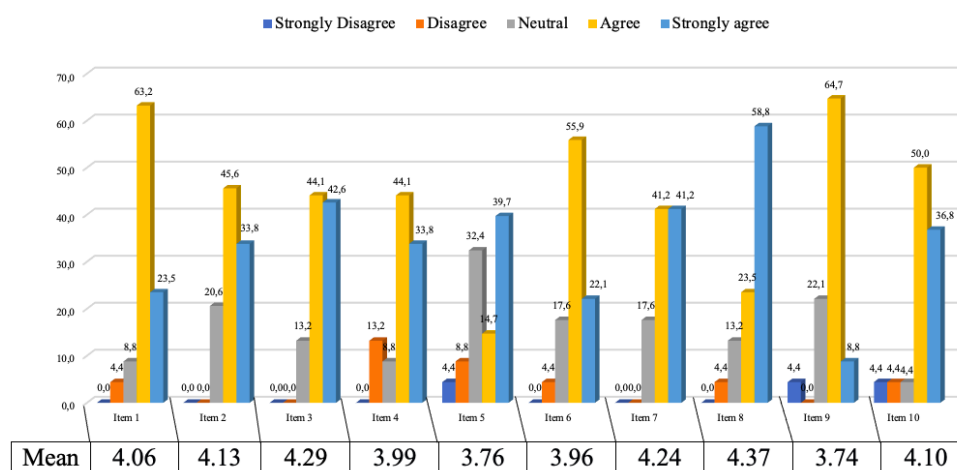


Figure 2. ENSAM students' attitudes towards intercultural communicative competence learning

It appears that all the respondents agree with all the statements in the questionnaire, which expresses positive attitudes regarding the incorporation of intercultural aspects in English language classrooms. As for the importance of intercultural competence in EFL classrooms, the high majority exhibited agreement with item 8 which got the highest mean (M=4.37). This denotes that ENSAM engineering students believe that in English language classes, learners should be taught how to communicate with people from different countries effectively and appropriately. In addition, the data illustrates that the respondents are aware of the fact that in order to be effective and appropriate in intercultural encounters. The results obtained from this study were quite similar to those obtained by Candel-Mora (2015) who found that "most participants are aware of common cultural differences and stereotyping, and that knowledge of the language alone is not guarantee of success in an international environment" (p. 30).

The relationship between engineering ENSAM students' attitudes towards intercultural competence learning and their existing level of intercultural competence.

The Pearson correlation between engineering students' Attitudes towards intercultural competence learning and their existing level of intercultural competence was found to be highly positive and statistically significant (r = .639, p<.001). That is to say, the students who perceive culture as an important component in EFL classes are more likely to have high levels of intercultural competence. Therefore, it can be concluded that this

correlation contributes to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis which guestimates that there is a relationship between ENSAM engineering students' Attitudes towards intercultural competence learning and their existing level of intercultural competence, and the rejection of the null hypothesis, which indicates the absence of a relationship between Moroccan engineering students' Attitudes towards intercultural competence learning and their existing level of intercultural competence

Table 8. Pearson Correlation: The relationship between ENSAM engineering students' attitudes towards intercultural competence learning and their existing level of intercultural competence

	ENSAM Students' attitudes towards intercultural competence learning	
ENSAM students' intercultural competence level	Pearson Correlation	.639**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
	N	68
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).		

VI. Conclusion and Implications

In light of the findings obtained, it is concluded that ENSAM engineering students exhibit positive and favorable attitudes towards cultural diversity. However, the mean scores of willingness to discover more about otherness were higher than those of willingness to question one's own values and beliefs which are perceived differently by people of other cultures. Moreover, although ENSAM engineering students possess desirable intercultural attitudes, their level regarding intercultural knowledge is almost low with slight differences in the degree of each type. For instance, the means of knowledge of the cultural norms of English cultures (e.g., food, eating manner, clothing, greetings, public behaviours, etc.) are higher than the means of knowledge of the historical relationships between Morocco and English-speaking countries as well as the historical, social, political events that have shaped English cultures. This could be an indication that cultural teaching in the EFL classroom does not support the promotion of intercultural knowledge. Hence, intercultural knowledge should be promoted in engineering ESP courses through designing materials for ICC training which aim at enhancing Moroccan engineering students' intercultural profile. In addition, ENSAM engineering students' have the basic skills needed in intercultural encounters. In this regard, their skills of interpreting and relating are better than their skills of discovery and interaction. This indicates that culture teaching in ESP courses does not help ENSAM engineering students acquire new knowledge of the English cultures and practices. Also, it does not give them the chance to operate their knowledge, attitude and skills in communication and interaction. Therefore, intercultural tasks should be implemented in ESP courses designed for engineering students, such as group discussions, scenarios/case studies and simulations/role-play activities. The results have also revealed that ENSAM students possess an average level of critical cultural awareness, which indicates that they can use a combination of knowledge, attitudes and skills to successfully interact in intercultural encounters and mediate between cultures.

Moreover, the results obtained from this study revealed that students possess positive attitudes regarding intercultural competence learning. This implies that these engineering students view intercultural competence as an important component of EFL classes, and that they are aware that knowledge of the language alone is not sufficient when getting involved in intercultural contexts. Therefore, EFL classes should develop both students' linguistic and intercultural competences.

Given the importance of teacher education in promoting students' intercultural competence, intercultural trainers should intervene in order to offer a high-quality intercultural education. In this regard, a call for the extension of teachers' knowledge from the knowledge of subject and teaching techniques to include intercultural education has been initiated in teacher-education field worldwide (e.g., Byram, 1997; Dearrdorff, 2004; Kramsch, 1993; Lázár et al., 2007; Fantini, 2006).

References:

- [1]. Baker, J. (2002). Trilingualism. In L. Delpit & J. K. Dowdy (Eds.). *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts On Language And Culture In The Classroom*, Pp. 49-61. New York: The New Press.
- [2]. Bennett M. J. (2004). *Becoming Interculturally Competent*. In J. Wurzel (Ed.), *Toward Multicultural Education* (2nd Ed., Pp. 62-77). Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.
- [3]. Bennett, M. J. (2009). Defining, Measuring, And Facilitating Intercultural Learning: A Conceptual Introduction To The Intercultural Education Double Supplement. *Intercultural Education*, 20(1), 1-13. Doi: 10.1080/14675980903370763
- [4]. Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles Of Language Learning And Teaching* (5th Ed). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.
- [5]. Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching And Assessing Intercultural Competence*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- [6]. Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing The Intercultural Dimension In Language Teaching*. Council Of Europe, Strasbourg.
- [7]. *Social And Behavioral Sciences*, 178(1), 26-31. Doi: 10.1016/J.Sbspro.2015.03.141
- [8]. Chen, G.M., & Starosta, W.J. (1999). A Review Of The Concept Of Intercultural Awareness. *Human Communication*, 2, 27-54.
- [9]. Committee For Economic Development Research And Policy Committee. (2006). *Education For Global Leadership: The Importance Of International Studies And Foreign Language Education For U.S. Economic And National Security*. Washington, DC: Committee

- For Economic Development.
- [10]. Corbett, J. (2003). *An Intercultural Approach To English Language Teaching*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- [11]. Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, And Evaluating Quantitative And Qualitative Research* (3rd Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- [12]. Deardorff, D. K. (2004). *The Identification And Assessment Of Intercultural Competence As A Students' Outcome Of Internationalization At Institutions Of Higher Education In The 274 United States* (Doctoral Dissertation). North Carolina State University, USA. Retrieved From <https://bit.ly/2LVEJ8W>
- [13]. Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification And Assessment Of Intercultural Competence As A Student Outcome Of Internationalization. *Journal Of Studies In Intercultural Education*, Vol. 10 (3), 241-266.
- [14]. ENSAM Arts & Métiers. ENSAMMEKNES. (N.D.). Retrieved March 7, 2023, From <https://t.ly/Zomb>
- [15]. Fantini, A. E. (1997). Language: Its Cultural And Intercultural Dimensions. In A. Fantini (Ed.). *New Ways Of Teaching Culture* (Pp. 3-15). Alexandria, VA: TESOL Publications.
- [16]. Fantini, A. E. (2000). A Central Concern: Developing Intercultural Competence. *SIT Occasional Papers Series*, 1.
- [17]. Fantini, A. E. (2006). Exploring And Assessing Intercultural Competence. Retrieved From <https://t.ly/Plt5>
- [18]. Fantini, A. E. (2007). Exploring And Assessing Intercultural Competence. Washington: Brookings Drive. Retrieved From <https://t.ly/Azwb>
- [19]. Fantini, E. A (2009). Assessing Intercultural Competence: Issues And Tools. In Deardorff, K. D. (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook Of Intercultural Competence* (Pp. 456-476). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- [20]. Fritz, W. Möllenberg, A. And Chen, G. (2002). Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity In Different Cultural Contexts. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 11 (2) Pp. 165-176. Available At: <https://t.ly/Vowfg>