

Intercultural Communicative Competence Teaching: Moroccan High School EFL Teacher's Perceptions and Practices

Jamal Barebzi *¹

¹* Research laboratory: Applied Linguistics & the Teaching of Languages Moulay Ismail University, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences Meknes, Morocco.

*Email Id: jamalbarebzi@gmail.com

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Abstract

The present study investigates Moroccan high school EFL teachers' beliefs about and practices ICC teaching. The study, further, seeks to explore the relationship between their beliefs and practices of ICC teaching. In order to collect data, this study used a Likert scale questionnaire developed by Zhou (2011). The sample was of 104 conveniently selected Moroccan high school EFL teachers (58.7% male and 41.3% female). The findings revealed that teachers had a positive attitude towards cultural teaching and expressed their willingness to teach English, Moroccan, and other non-English cultures although descriptive statistics suggested that cultural teaching was not a regular component in their classes. The findings of the Pearson correlation suggested that there was a moderate and significant relationship between teachers' perceptions and practices regarding ICC teaching. That is to say, teachers who perceive culture as an important component in EFL classes are more likely to integrate ICC teaching in their EFL classes. Eventually, the findings of this endeavor have triggered various implications and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Culture, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Teacher's Perceptions, Cultural teaching, Skills.

Introduction

Thanks to globalization, the emergence of new communication technologies, and the migration of people across nations, people from varied cultures and linguistic backgrounds are brought together. This has led to a borderless world in which, to be successful, individuals need to develop skills to, competently, communicate in intercultural contexts. A new concept, hence, has been brought to the literature which is "intercultural communicative competence" (henceforth ICC). According to Byram (1997), ICC refers to the ability to establish and maintain relations with members of other cultures in a foreign language. Deardorff (2006) defines ICC as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 246). Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) suggest that being interculturally competent requires enthusiasm for other cultures, sufficient sensitivity to realize cultural differences, and a willingness to adapt behavior as a sign of deference to people with different cultures.

Previous studies have demonstrated that language teachers largely focus on linguistic competence rather than the ICC. However, acquiring only linguistic competence cannot guarantee success in communication in an intercultural setting. It is, therefore, necessary and important to integrate ICC in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses. Teaching ICC does not only imply providing learners with knowledge about different cultures but also with several practices that entail knowledge, skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness.

In recent years, the issue of developing ESL/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 to be aware of their own culture and the presence of otherness to appreciate and respect them.

As far as the Moroccan context is concerned, the English language guidelines have focused on teaching culture in terms of comparing and contrasting learners' language and culture with other languages and cultures. However, according to Lazrak (2016), classroom teaching still falls behind theoretical expectations. In this regard, linguistic teaching still dominates most high school EFL classrooms in Morocco, and cultural teaching has not promoted students' acquisition of ICC. In this respect, the Moroccan EFL university students, as Koumachi (2015) states, "Do not have enough intercultural being/savoir etre (attitudes) of EFL culture that enables them to stabilize their self-identities in cross-cultural situations."

The purpose of this study is to gain an insight into Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding ICC teaching. The study investigates whether there is any significant relationship between teachers' perceptions about and practices of ICC teaching.

1.1. Significance of the study

It has been claimed by Sercu et al (2004) that teachers' perceptions of ICC and their willingness to interculturalize foreign language education are essential for promoting students' ICC. Hence, it is anticipated that this study will contribute to the EFL teacher education community by providing Moroccan EFL teacher educators with some valuable information about teachers' existing beliefs and perceptions, cultural teaching practices, and their willingness to integrate ICC teaching. Hopefully, the findings of the study would benefit English language educators, curriculum designers, policymakers, and teachers to reflect on their existing curriculums and syllabuses and adhere to the contemporary objectives of foreign language teaching.

2. Literature review

2.1. Intercultural communicative competence

Many researchers have defined ICC 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 and definition. It has been labeled in various terms such as intercultural competence (intercultural communicative competence) (Byram, 1997; Crozet, Liddicoat & Lo Bianco, 1999; Fantini, 2006), cross-cultural awareness (Knutson, 2006), intercultural awareness (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2005), intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993). Among them, intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence have been frequently used in a foreign language.

Although intercultural competence has been defined in various ways, Fantini (2000) concludes that three key components seem to be often included and generally identified: "1) the ability to develop and maintain relationships, 2) the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion, and 3) the ability to attain compliance and obtain cooperation with others" (p. 27).

Fantini (2009) states that ICC is the presence of native communicative competence (CC1) and the development of that of one's interlocutor (CC2) as well as the ability to compare and contrast both (p.459) (see Figure 1). In other words, ICC can be defined as the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself, Whereas "effective" usually reflects one's view of one's performance in the LC2 (i.e., an "etic" or outsider's view of the host culture); "appropriate" relates to how one's performance is perceived by one's hosts (i.e., an "emic" or insider's view) (p. 459).

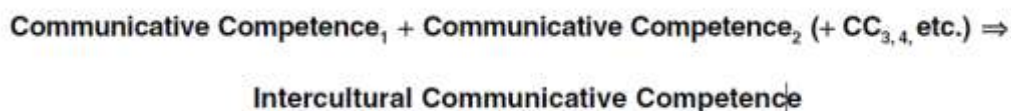


Figure 1. Intercultural Communicative Competence (Fantini, 2009, P.458)

This study adopts Byram's (1997) ICC model, which is a whole range of different kinds of *saviors*. Byram (1997) explicitly states that his model is designed to help teachers of foreign languages understand the concept of ICC (p.31). The model presents a comprehensive summary of the concepts and the skills needed when teaching language. To develop intercultural competence, Byram (1997) proposes five "saviors" or "abilities". These saviors are strongly intertwined with communicative competence. Each of these "saviors" is illuminated through certain teaching objectives:

Attitudes (savoir etre): towards "people who are perceived as different in respect of the cultural meaning, beliefs, and behaviors they exhibit" (p.50). it involves attitudes of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about one's own (pp.34,35).

Knowledge (savoirs): about "social groups and their products, practices, and process of interaction in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country" (Byram, 1997, p.51)

Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre): Ability to "interpret a document or event from another culture, and to explain it from one's cultural perspective" (Byram, 1997, p.52)

Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire): Ability to "acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to use knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real-time communication and interaction" (Byram, 1997, p.52).

Critical cultural awareness/political education: An ability to "evaluate critically the perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures" (Byram, 1997, p.53)

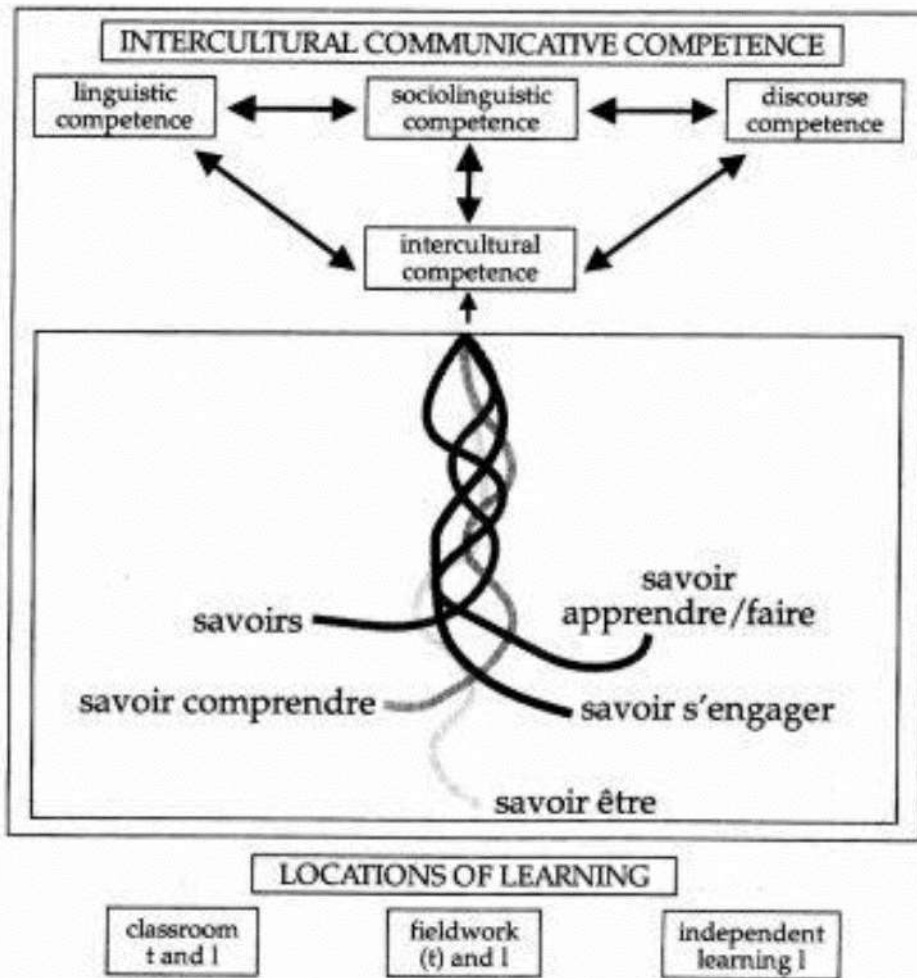


Figure 2. Byram's Model of ICC (Byram, 1997, p. 73)

2.2. Research studies on foreign language teachers' beliefs about and practice of ICC

Demircioğlu and Çakır (2015) attempted to find out the opinions and attitudes of International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD) English language teachers from Turkey, the USA, the UK, New Zealand, and Spain on ICC teaching. A total of 60 EFL teachers (44 female, 16 male) completed an open-ended questionnaire of seven questions: 16 teachers from Turkey, 15 teachers from the USA, 11 teachers from the UK, 10 teachers from New Zealand, and 8 teachers from Spain. The results showed that only 15% of the respondents had received ICC training in their teacher education course. Their experiences with people of other countries had a positive impact on their teaching. Regarding the importance they give to teaching ICC, the participants were of two groups. Most of the teachers thought that ICC is more important than teaching grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills, while others believed it is equally important. The reason they provided was "to avoid misunderstandings" (p.22). the most preferred ways to enhance students ICC were bringing authentic materials, inviting people from other countries, and participating in international projects or competitions.

Concerning the aspects of culture, the participants considered "family life, community life and society" followed by "customs and tradition" and "values" as the most significant aspects in foreign language teaching. By and large, despite the variation in the opinions of teachers from different cultures, the Findings revealed that the teachers were aware of the importance of culture teaching and stated that it must be emphasized in FLT.

Making use of a mixed methods research design shaped within a narrative framework, Zhou (2011) explored the Chinese EFL university teachers' ICC teaching in terms of their willingness and preparation to practice ICC. Zhou (2001) also sought to whether their prior beliefs about and cultural teaching are directed towards students' acquisition of ICC. Quantitative data were collected from 201 Chinese university teachers using a questionnaire developed by the researcher. Moreover, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews with eight teachers. The findings of the study revealed that although the majority of teachers recognize the importance of cultural teaching, cultural and ICC teaching have not yet become a common component or a regular



focus in their EFL classes. Teachers, mostly, adopt the traditional teacher-centered approach to cultural teaching. Moreover, teachers' level of ICC and their beliefs about cultural teaching were found to influence their teaching practices.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Questions and Hypothesis

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

1. What are Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions about ICC teaching?
2. What are Moroccan high school EFL teachers' ICC teaching practices?
3. Is there any relationship between Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and classroom practices regarding ICC teaching?

Considering research question 3, the following hypothesis is proposed:

1. There is a relationship between Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding intercultural communicative competence (ICC) teaching.

3.2. Design and procedure

Adopting a quantitative survey design, this study attempts to investigate Moroccan high school EFL teachers' beliefs about and practices of ICC teaching and the relationship between their beliefs and practices. For data collection, the study employed a questionnaire developed by Zhou (2011) and adapted it to meet the objectives of the study. The researcher designed an online version of the questionnaire and shared it with respondents aiming to include a considerable number of high school EFL teachers from different parts of Morocco. Adopting an online questionnaire, the researcher also intended to increase both the response rate and the generalizability of the findings of the study.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics, and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, edition 20) was made use of to perform data analysis to find answers to the research questions. Teachers' beliefs about and self-reported practices of cultural teaching were described using descriptive statistics. Further, a correlational statistics analysis was performed to examine the relationship between teacher's beliefs about and practices of teaching culture.

3.3. Sampling

The participants were selected through convenience sampling. In convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, participants are chosen simply because they are willing and available to participate in the study for the sake of increasing response rate (Creswell, 2008). Due to the large population of Moroccan high school EFL teachers, it was not possible to include each individual. Employing convenience sampling with teachers who are accessible to the researcher is a practical choice (Creswell, 2008). 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).

3.4. The research instrument

In the present study, data were collected through a survey questionnaire (appendix 2), an ICC questionnaire to gain insight into teachers' perceptions about and practice of ICC, developed by Zhou (2011). The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section (questions 1-8) addressed the participants' demographic information. The second section (questions 9-11) explored teachers' beliefs about ICC teaching in terms of (1) teachers' beliefs about the objectives of EFL teaching, (2) teachers' cultural teaching objectives, and (3) Teachers' attitudes towards some aspects of cultural teaching. The last section delved into teachers' cultural teaching practices, namely the activities employed and the cultural topics covered by the participating teachers.

3.5. Data collection procedures

The data collection procedure took about one month. In the first phase of data collection, which took about two weeks, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot test can help researchers "determine how well their research instruments work" (Bryman, 2012, p.92). A paper and pencil survey questionnaire was distributed to a convenience sample of 16 Moroccan high school EFL teachers. In the second phase, data were generated through an electronic version of the questionnaire using Google Forms, a web-based application that allows collecting information from users via a personalized survey. The questionnaire was shared with respondents by sending the following link: <https://forms.gle/4cWYpeYDpav3YGZ7A>.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Findings of research question 1: Moroccan high school EFL teachers' beliefs about ICC teaching

Attempting to understand Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions about ICC, they were assessed concerning their beliefs about the objectives of EFL teaching, cultural teaching, and attitudes towards cultural teaching.

4.1.1. EFL teaching objectives

Table 1: Teachers' beliefs about the objectives of EFL education

Objectives of EFL teaching	Not important at all	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Mean
	%	%	%	%	%	
Linguistic dimension						
Foster students' interest in English language learning.	2.9	0	8.7	38.5	50.0	4.33
Help students to acquire listening and speaking skills.	1.9	1.0	6.7	40.4	50.0	4.36
Help students to acquire reading and writing skills.	0	0	5.8	45.2	49.0	4.43
Foster students' self-learning ability for English language learning	1.0	3.8	2.9	44.2	48.1	4.35
Cultural dimension						
Promote students' understanding of English cultures.	1.0	1.0	17.3	53.8	26.9	4.05
Help students to develop an ability to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds.	1.0	2.9	8.7	48.1	39.4	4.22
Promote students' interest in English cultures.	1.0	7.7	22.1	42.3	26.9	3.87
Promote students' understanding of Moroccan culture.	1.9	5.8	13.5	45.2	33.7	4.03
Other objectives						
Help students to pass the Moroccan Baccalaureate exam.	0	1.9	16.3	35.6	46.2	4.26

Four most important objectives perceived by the participating teachers reflected the linguistic dimension of EFL teaching. For instance, "Help students to acquire reading and writing skills" had the highest mean score (M= 4.43) followed by "Help students to acquire listening and speaking skills" (M=4.36). The next two important linguistic objectives were "Foster students' self-learning ability for English language learning" and "Foster students' interest in English language learning" (M= 4.35, and M= 4.33, respectively). Therefore, all the participating teachers perceived cultural teaching to be important in EFL education. Nevertheless, they considered cultural objectives less important than linguistic ones. This is congruent with findings in previous studies (Sercu, 2005, 2006; Zhou, 2011, Tian, 2013).

It is worth mentioning that the most important EFL objective for teachers was to help students acquire reading and writing skills while the least important objectives were to "promote students' interest in English cultures" and "promote students' understanding of Moroccan culture". Therefore, teachers considered the linguistic dimension as the key objective and major component in EFL education. Moreover, "Help students to develop an ability to communicate with people from other cultures" ranked first in cultural objectives. That is to say, Teachers who prefer the linguistic dimension of EFL education want their students to develop a level of proficiency in the foreign language so that they can use it for practical purposes. What supported this view was that when teachers were asked about the source of misunderstandings in communication between Moroccan and people from other countries, 45% of them agreed that poor language skills were the major cause of misunderstandings, not the cultural aspect.

4.1.2. Cultural teaching objectives

Table 2: Teachers' beliefs about cultural teaching objectives

Cultural teaching objectives	Mean	SD	Importance level
Knowledge			
Provide information about daily life (e.g. social/political conditions) in English-speaking countries.	3.48	.85	Moderately important
Attitudes			
Develop a curious/tolerant/respectful/open attitude towards other cultures and cultural differences.	4.23	.68	Important
Foster students' respect for world cultural diversity.	4.28	.84	Important
Skills			
Promote the ability to acquire new cultural knowledge from documents/events from English cultures.	3.9	.85	Important
Promote the ability to conduct effective communication with English-speaking people.	4.07	.82	Important
Promote the ability to understand and critically interpret documents/events from English-speaking culture.	3.85	.82	Important
Awareness			
Promote understanding of the different processes of individual and social interactions in English and Moroccan culture.	3.76	0.717	Important
Promote awareness and understanding of different values, beliefs, and ideologies of both Moroccan and English-speaking people.	4.07	0.779	Important

The analysis demonstrated that most teachers perceived all eight cultural teaching objectives, which reflected all aspects of Byram's ICC model, as important. It was obvious from their responses that teachers support the development of attitudes of openness and tolerance, awareness as well as skills of interaction more than promoting students' knowledge. The knowledge dimension, providing information about daily life in English-speaking countries, was considered the least important for participating teachers. This may be interpreted as an indication that teachers have insufficient knowledge about the target culture. Unlike this finding, participants of Sercu (2005) and Zhou (2011) perceived promoting cultural knowledge as the most important objective.

4.1.3. Teachers' attitudes towards Cultural Teaching

Table 3: Teachers' attitudes toward cultural teaching

Cultural teaching objectives	Mean	SD	Agreement level
Based on your experience, the English language and its culture can be taught in an integrated way.	4.01	0.81	Agree
Poor language skill is the major cause of misunderstandings in communication between Moroccan and people from other countries.	3.66	1.00	Agree
English teaching should touch upon both English and Moroccan culture to help students to mediate between the two cultures.	3.94	.91	Agree
English teachers should generally present a positive image of English culture and society.	3.35	1.05	Uncertain
I would like to teach about English cultures in my class.	3.88	.88	Agree
Besides English cultures, English teachers should also touch upon the cultures of other countries.	3.98	.91	Agree

The analysis indicated that the majority of teachers agreed that the English language and its culture can be taught in an integrated way. This finding was congruent with Zhou's (2011) finding which indicated that teachers were positive about

integrative teaching of English language and its culture in EFL teaching. This could be interpreted as an indication that Moroccan high school EFL teachers have willingness to incorporate the cultural component in their classes. However, the majority of participating teachers were uncertain about presenting a positive image of English culture. This implies that they were neutral about the kind of image they should give to learners about English culture. Unlike Moroccan teachers, Chinese teachers in Zhou’s (2011) study agreed that EFL teachers should present a positive image of English culture and society.

4.2. Findings of research question 2: Moroccan high school EFL teachers’ cultural teaching practices

4.2.1. What to teach

4.2.1.1. Topics related to English cultures

Table 4: Frequency of topics related to English cultures

Topic	Mean	SD	Frequency
The Arts	3.04	0.934	Sometimes
Conventions of communication	3.31	0.801	Sometimes
Customs	3.32	0.816	Sometimes
Living conditions	3.29	0.797	Sometimes
Different ethnic groups	2.79	0.982	Sometimes
Different social groups	2.87	0.935	Sometimes
Educational systems	3.14	0.908	Sometimes
Financial conditions	2.56	1.06	Sometimes
History	2.59	1.12	Sometimes
Literature	2.67	0.98	Sometimes
Movies	3.48	0.985	Sometimes
Non-verbal behaviors	2.85	1.086	Sometimes
People’s Values and beliefs	3.46	0.902	Sometimes
Political system (s)	2.28	1.038	Rarely
Religious beliefs	2.62	1.082	Sometimes
Cultural taboos	2.54	1.014	Sometimes
Technological development	3.74	0.924	Frequently

The Analysis suggested that most of the topics related to English culture (15 out of 17 topics) were sometimes touched upon by teachers. This confirms the teachers’ rating “promote students’ interest in English cultures” as the least important EFL objective. This finding was congruent with the finding in Zhou’s (2011) study in which half of the teachers did not frequently touch upon 9 out of 17 topics. Whereas, Sercu et al.’s (2004) teachers frequently addressed more than half of the topics.

The only frequently addressed topic by participating teachers was technological development followed by people’s values and beliefs, movies, living conditions, customs, and conventions of communication, topics that were sometimes addressed. However, the least frequently addressed topic was political systems. Considering the role that textbooks play in language classrooms, teachers, perhaps, mostly touched upon these specific topics because they are commonly presented in textbooks.

4.2.1.2. Topics related to Moroccan culture

Table 5: frequency of topics related to Moroccan culture

Topic	Mean	SD	Frequency
Conventions of communication	3.11	0.954	Sometimes
Customs	3.48	0.812	Sometimes
Different ethnic groups	3.12	1.086	Sometimes
Different Social groups	3.17	0.97	Sometimes
People’s values and beliefs	3.5	0.935	Frequently
Political system	2.7	1.051	Sometimes
Cultural taboos	2.9	1.102	Sometimes

The analysis indicated that only one topic was addressed frequently by participating teachers, namely, people’s values and beliefs, and all the other topics were sometimes touched upon in participating teachers’ classes. This was similar to Zhou’s (2011) finding. What participating teachers failed to perceive was that the primary goal of language and cultural learning is “not to understand a foreign culture, but to understand our own” (Hall, 1973, p.53). Students need to be aware of their culturally constructed self, that is, to develop their social and cultural self-awareness (Byram, 1997; Knutson, 2006).

4.2.1.3. *Intercultural communicative competence teaching*

Table 6: Frequency of applying ICC teaching

cultural teaching practices	Mean	SD	Frequency
Knowledge			
I ask students to discuss the way in which Moroccan people and Moroccan culture are perceived by English-speaking people.	2,51	0,965	Sometimes
I ask students to explore different perspectives Moroccan and English-speaking people may have on a particular event/ phenomenon.	2,96	1,097	Sometimes
Besides the cultures of English-speaking countries, I also touch upon the cultures of other countries.	3,00	1,061	Sometimes
Attitudes			
I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about English cultures.	3,09	1,124	Sometimes
I encourage students to question their own values, beliefs, and perspectives which are perceived differently by people from other cultures.	3,15	1,059	Sometimes
Skills of discovery and interaction			
I ask students to explore connotations and implications implied in documents/events from English cultures.	2,36	0,985	Rarely
I ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures.	2,81	1,062	Sometimes
Skills of interpreting and relating			
I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communications between Moroccan and English-speaking people and explain the causes.	2,91	1,071	Sometimes
I ask students to discuss the origins of stereotypes that Moroccan people have for English cultures.	2,79	1,094	Sometimes
Awareness			
I ask students to discuss how their own values and beliefs influence the way they perceive other cultures.	3,09	1,044	Sometimes
I ask students to explore values, beliefs, and ideological perspectives implied in events/documents from English cultures.	2,62	1,117	Sometimes

As far as ICC teaching is concerned, the findings suggested that it was not regularly incorporated in participating teachers' classes though they perceived cultural teaching objectives as important. None of the ICC teaching activities was frequently applied by the participating teachers. Similarly, only three teaching activities were applied frequently by half of Zhou's (2011) teachers.

The most applied activities by Moroccan teachers focus on attitude and awareness of the ICC dimension. This confirms teachers rating attitude and awareness objectives as the most important objectives for cultural teaching (beliefs about cultural teaching objectives section). Whereas, the knowledge dimension was the least important Moroccan teachers. This indicates that teachers want their students to learn how to accommodate when they are in intercultural settings. On the contrary, the three most applied activities by teachers in Sercu et al. (2004) and Zhou (2011) were related to the knowledge dimension of ICC.

4.2.2. *How to teach*

4.2.2.1. *Instructional activities regarding cultural teaching*

Table 7: Descriptive analysis of instructional activities regarding cultural teaching

Instructional activities	Mean	SD	Frequency
I ask students to address a particular cultural topic.	2.85	0.911	Sometimes
I tell students what they should know about a topic.	3.1	0.876	Sometimes
I divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss a topic.	3.33	1.028	Sometimes
I ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from English-speaking countries communicate.	3.39	1.092	Sometimes
In written assignments, I ask students to discuss a particular cultural perspective or event.	3.1	1.01	Sometimes
I use technology to illustrate a cultural topic (e.g., videos, CD-ROMs, PowerPoint, and the Internet, etc.).	3.38	1.142	Sometimes

I have students debate a controversial cultural issue.	2.91	1.089	Sometimes
I ask students to compare Moroccan and English culture regarding a particular topic.	3.25	1.04	Sometimes

The findings suggested that all the activities were sometimes practiced unlike the findings of Zhou (2011) which indicated that four of the eight activities were frequently applied by more than half of the participating teachers. This again could be an indication that cultural teaching is not an important component of Moroccan teachers' EFL classes. Additionally, the findings suggested that the applied instructional activities tended to be more learner-centered than teacher-centered. Culture learning is mainly carried out by learners; Roleplay, pair work, and group work were the most applied activities by teachers. Comparing and contrasting Moroccan and English cultures was the least applied. Whereas comparing and contrasting was the most applied activity in other studies (e.g. Sercu et al., 2004; Sercu, 2005). Moreover, by not comparing and contrasting the native and foreign cultures, Moroccan high school EFL teachers failed to perceive that an important goal of ICC teaching is to help students develop "insider views of the second/foreign culture" and "outsider views of the home culture" (Knutson, 2006, p. 600).

4.3. Findings research question 3: The relationship between Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding ICC teaching

Table 8: Pearson Correlations: relationships between teachers Beliefs and teachers' Practices.

Teachers' practices regarding ICC teaching		
Teachers' perceptions towards ICC teaching	Pearson Correlation	.29**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,003
	N	104

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation between the two sections revealed that there is a moderate positive and a highly significant relationship between teachers' beliefs about ICC teaching and their actual practices of ICC teaching ($r = .30, p < 0.05$). That is to say, teachers who perceive culture as an important component in EFL classes are more likely to integrate ICC teaching in their EFL classes. Therefore, it can be concluded that this correlation contributes to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis which guestimates that there is a relationship between Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding ICC teaching, and the rejection of the null hypothesis, which indicates the absence of a relationship between Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding ICC teaching. Nevertheless, the results should be interpreted cautiously due to the moderate relationship values.

Implications of the study

The findings of the study yield several implications for teacher training education, curriculum and syllabus designers, material developers, and test developers. In this regard, Teacher training programs should incorporate a course to familiarize teachers with ICC through providing courses focusing on culture teaching methods and techniques and give them opportunities to practice culture teaching. Moreover, in-service teacher training and professional development programs should help teachers promote their knowledge, attitudes, skills, awareness, and, thus, cultural teaching. Additionally, Curriculum and syllabus designers should consider ICC objectives into consideration during the process of developing curricula and syllabuses. They could make culture a regular element of language teaching and learning. In Morocco, although the teaching guidelines mention cultural teaching, most of the time teachers are left to their own to decide when, what, how, and to what degree cultural teaching is practiced in EFL classes, which makes it a challenge for them to integrate ICC teaching. Moreover, Textbooks should also mirror the importance of ICC teaching. In addition to language lessons and activities, material developers and textbook designers should incorporate topics and instructional activities reflecting ICC dimensions, namely, Knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness. Finally, Considering the role of tests in teaching and learning, it has become a must for test developers to consider the cultural aspect in test designing. This will ensure the integration of ICC teaching in EFL classes.

Limitations of the study

Like other studies in social sciences, this study suffered from several limitations. One of the limitations is related to the representation of the participants in the population. The sample consisted of 104 participants, which can affect the generalizability of the findings. Increasing the number of participants can result in more precise results. Another limitation is that participants were selected conveniently which is considered as a non-probability sampling, making the researcher unconfident about the generalizability of the results. Finally, the data were collected through a single administration design



using a questionnaire. It is clear that including interviews would result in a deep insight into teachers' beliefs about and practices of ICC teaching.

Suggestions for further studies

The findings of the present study enhance our understanding of Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions about and practice ICC teaching. However, further research would provide more insight into this issue. Therefore, the following suggestions are made:

- 1) Factors such as ethnic background, gender, experience, educational qualifications, and study major, and ICC level may affect teachers' beliefs about and practice ICC. Further studies are suggested to shed light on such variables.
- 2) Further research can make use of interviews to explore teachers' beliefs about and practices of ICC teaching. Additionally, teachers ICC teaching practices can be explored through, observations, which may generate more reliable and detailed data.
- 3) The same study can be replicated to study university teachers.
- 4) This study focused side of teaching and learning language, namely, EFL teachers, but other studies could explore the other side's, i.e., learners ICC level and their attitudes about ICC learning.
- 5) Further studies can evaluate Moroccan textbooks to examine their cultural content, and to make sure they contain the four dimensions of Byram's (2011) ICC model.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to investigate Moroccan high school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding intercultural communicative competence teaching. It further sought to explore the relationship between their perceptions about and practices of ICC teaching. The study was carried out through a quantitative design using a questionnaire. An online version of the questionnaire was administered to 104 Moroccan high school EFL teachers from different parts of Morocco. The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of the study indicated that: (1) Although teachers considered all the EFL objectives as important, they favored the linguistic over the cultural dimension of EFL objectives. However, teachers explicitly expressed their willingness to teach English, Moroccan, and other non-English cultures in their EFL classes. (2) Cultural teaching was not a regular element in participating teachers' EFL classroom practices. This was reflected in the low frequency of addressing topics related to English, Moroccan, and other countries' cultures and the low frequency of applying ICC teaching and instructional activities. (3) The null hypothesis regarding the relationship between teachers' perceptions about and practices of ICC was rejected. However, the results should be interpreted cautiously due to the moderate positive relationship values. The results also revealed that there were some disparities between teachers' beliefs about and practices of ICC. Despite holding positive attitudes towards culture teaching, teachers' practice of culture teaching was not a frequent component of their EFL classes.

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Appendix : The Intercultural communicative competence questionnaire

Section 1: background [put an X to indicate your choice]

- Q1. Your gender : () Female () Male
- Q2. Your age : () 20-25 () 26-30 () 31-35 () 36-40 () 41-45 () 46 and over
- Q3. Your highest degree : () Bachelor () Master () PhD
- Q4. Your major of study:
- Q5. Years of teaching English: () Below 3 () 4-7 () 8-11 () 12-15 () 16-19 () 20 and over
- Q6. What levels do you teach? () Common Core () first year bac () second year bac
- Q7. The city in which you are teaching:
- Q8. Have you ever been to other countries? () Yes () No [if no go to Q9]

If Yes, please fill out the table below

Name of the Country	Purpose (study, visit, work, ...)	Length of time

Section 2: Teachers' perceptions and teaching practices

Q9. To what degree do you believe the following objectives are important for EFL teaching? [put an X to indicate your choice]

	Not important at all	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
1. Foster students' interest in English language learning.					
2. Help students to acquire listening and speaking skills.					
3. Help students to acquire reading and writing skills.					
4. Help students to pass the Moroccan Baccalaureate exam.					
5. Promote students' understanding of English cultures.					
6. Help students to develop an ability to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds.					



7. Foster students' self-learning ability for English language learning.					
8. Promote students' interest in English cultures.					
9. Promote students' understanding of Moroccan culture.					

Q10. To what degree do you believe the following objectives are important for cultural teaching in EFL education. [put an X to indicate your choice]

	Not important at all	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
1. Provide information about daily life (e.g. social/political conditions) in English speaking countries.					
2. Promote understanding of different process of individual and social interactions in English and Moroccan culture.					
3. Develop a curious/tolerant/respectful/open attitude towards other cultures and cultural difference.					
4. Promote the ability to acquire new cultural knowledge from documents/events from English cultures.					
5. Promote the ability to conduct effective communication with English speaking people.					
6. Promote the ability to understand and critically interpret documents/events from English speaking culture.					
7. Promote awareness and understanding of different values, beliefs, and ideologies of both Moroccan and English-speaking people.					
8. Foster students' respect for world cultural diversity.					

Q11. Circle a response that best represent your opinion. [put an X to indicate your choice]

	Strongly disagree	disagree	uncertain	agree	Strongly agree
1. Based on your experience, English language and its culture can be taught in an integrated way.					
2. Poor language skill is the major cause of misunderstandings in communication between Moroccan and people from other countries.					
3. English teaching should touch upon both English and Moroccan culture in order to help students to mediate between the two cultures.					
4. English teachers should generally present a positive image of English culture and society.					
5. I would like to teach about English cultures in my class.					
6. Besides English cultures, English teachers should also touch upon cultures of other countries.					

Q12. In your teaching, how often do you touch upon the following topics as they apply to English speaking countries? [put an X to indicate your choice]

Topics	Never	Rarely	sometimes	Frequently	always
The Arts					
Conventions of communication					
Customs					



Living conditions					
Different ethnic groups					
Different social groups					
Educational systems					
Financial conditions					
History					
Literature					
Movies					
Non-verbal behaviors					
People's values and beliefs					
Political system(s)					
Religious beliefs					
Cultural taboos					
Technological development					

Q13. In your teaching, how often do you touch upon the following topics as they apply to Moroccan culture? [put an X to indicate your choice]

Topics	Never	Rarely	sometimes	Frequently	always
Conventions of communication					
Customs					
Different ethnic groups					
Different social groups					
People's values and beliefs					
Political system					
Religious beliefs					

Q14. How often do you apply the following instructional activities when you address the topics in Q13 about English cultures? [put an X to indicate your choice]

	Never	Rarely	sometimes	Frequently	always
1. I ask students to address a particular cultural topic.					
2. I tell students what they should know about a topic.					
3. I divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss a topic.					
4. I ask students to participate in role-play situations in which people from English speaking countries communicate.					
5. In written assignments, I ask students to discuss a particular cultural perspective or event.					
6. I use technology to illustrate a cultural topic (e.g., videos, CD-ROMs, PowerPoint, and the Internet, etc.).					
7. I have students debate a controversial cultural issue.					
8. I ask students to compare Moroccan and English culture regarding a particular topic.					
9. Anything else you do that is not listed above. Please specify :					

Q15. How often do you apply the following cultural teaching practices in your teaching? [put an X to indicate your choice]

	Never	Rarely	sometimes	Frequently	always
1. I ask students to discuss the way in which Moroccan people and Moroccan culture is perceived by English speaking					



people.					
2. I ask students to explore connotations and implications implied in documents/events from English cultures.					
3. I ask students to share what they find fascinating or strange about English cultures.					
4. I ask students to explore different perspectives Moroccan and English-speaking people may have on a particular event/phenomenon.					
5. I ask students to explore areas of misunderstandings in communications between Moroccan and English-speaking people and explain the causes.					
6. I ask students to discuss how their own values and beliefs influence the way they perceive other cultures.					
7. I ask students to use their cultural knowledge and skills to explain documents/events from English cultures.					
8. I ask students to explore values, beliefs, and ideological perspectives implied in events/documents from English cultures.					
9. I ask students to discuss the origins of stereotypes that Moroccan people have for English cultures.					
10. Besides cultures of English-speaking countries, I also touch upon cultures of other countries.					
11. I encourage students to question their own values, beliefs, and perspectives which are perceived differently by people from other cultures.					