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<u>**THEME:**</u>

An Exploration of Algerian PhD Graduate Returnees' Integration of Intercultural Competence (IC) Into Their Teaching Practices

Submitted by   **Supervised by**

Hana Chouadra   Dr.Nour El Houda Bouacha

HoudaDiaf

IsmaheneBenmoussa

Board of Examiners:

Dr. Imane Taiba

Dr. Fatima Zohra Mechri

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توقيع المعني (ة)

Dedication 1

I express my deep gratitude to Allah for granting me the strength and patience to complete this work.

This work is dedicated to the most precious people in my life: my dear father and my beloved mother, for their support, encouragement, and boundless love.

To my husband, my soulmate and partner in life, your patience, understanding, and belief in me have been an endless source of strength throughout this journey.

To my precious daughters, Assil and Elena, the lights of my life, may this achievement inspire you to fearlessly pursue your dreams.

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been my driving force. I am forever grateful for your love, encouragement, and patience

throughout this journey.

To my parents, who have been my pillars of strength and my source of inspiration, I

dedicate this work to you.

To my friends, thank you for standing by me through the challenges.

To my co-researchers, your collaboration and dedication have made this journey

memorable.

And to my classmates, your camaraderie and support have enriched this experience.

Houda

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,

At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person.

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Abstract

This study explores the incorporation of intercultural competence (IC) in English Language Teaching (ELT) practices by Algerian PhD graduate returnees. Specifically, it seeks to gain insight into how these graduate returnees perceive IC and how it influences their teaching practices. Given the significance of IC in promoting effective communication in a globalised world, this research holds particular relevance in the context of Algeria's educational system, which has recently undergone reforms aimed at enhancing English language learning. A mixed-methods research approach was employed, involving the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires administered to 11 respondents and interviews conducted with six participants. The data was analysed using thematic and statistical analysis in order to identify thegraduate returnees' perceptions towards IC, the strategies they employ to incorporate it in their teaching, the challenges they face and their recommendations. The findings reveal that whilegraduate returnees acknowledge the importance of IC, its implementation varies significantly based on individual experiences and institutional support. The study highlights several crucial points: the necessity for ongoing professional development focused on IC, the significance of establishing a supportive institutional environment, and the need to develop curriculum materials that reflect diverse cultural perspectives. Despite encountering challenges such as limited resources and resistance from students and colleagues, the graduate returnees strive to create an inclusive and culturally responsive classroom. This research contributes to the understanding of intercultural competence in ELT in Algeria and provides recommendations for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to enhance English language education through the integration of IC. Further studies are recommended to explore the long-term impact of these practices on students' language proficiency and cultural awareness**.**

Key terms:Intercultural competence, Algerian PhD graduate returnees, Cultural awareness.

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List of Acronyms

- **EFL**: English as a Foreign Language

- **ELT** : English LanguageTeaching

- **ESL**: English as a Second Language

- **HE**: Higher Education

- **IC** : InterculturalCompetence

- **ICC** : Intercultural Communicative Competence

- **CC** : Communicative Competence

- **L**:LinguisticCompetence

- **IS**: Intercultural Speaker

- **L2** : Second Language

- **CPD** : Continuous Professional Development

- **BERA** : British EducationalResearch Association

- **UK** : United Kingdom

- **PhD** : DoctorofPhilosophy

General Introduction

Background of the Study

The field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has undergone significant evolution over recent decades due to globalisation, technological advancement, growing emphasis on communicative competence and intercultural understanding. These changes reflect the need to prepare students for a globalised world where English serves as a lingua franca, a common language used among people with different native languages for communication (House, 2003). Initially focused on linguistic competence, as advocated by Noam Chomsky, the field has broadened to include communicative competence (CC). Scholars have argued that CC should be further expanded to encompass intercultural competence (IC) (Byram, 1997; Crozet et al., 1999). This shift reflects a growing recognition of the intricate relationship between language and culture, and the need for teaching approaches that integrate both elements. Researchers such as Hauser, Chomsky, and Fitch (2002) view language as both a cognitive faculty and a cultural communication system, while Kramsch (2009) highlights its crucial role in social interaction and cultural expression. This expanded perspective underscores the importance of understanding diverse sociocultural contexts for effective communication in an increasingly globalised world. Consequently, ELT education must foster the development of both language and intercultural skills, enabling learners to communicate successfully with people from different cultures (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2009).

As Byram (1997) explains, IC requires not only language proficiency but also the abilities to understand, interpret, explore, and mediate intercultural interactions. It is a multifaceted construct essential for navigating cultural diversity (Lustig & Koester, 2013). In contexts like Algeria, where there is a growing emphasis on English language education,

the need for effective language instruction and intercultural competence becomes increasingly paramount. English in Algeria is taught as a second foreign language, following French, and is integrated into the national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2023). Algeria's educational landscape, characterised by rich cultural diversity and historical ties to both Arab and Western cultures, presents both opportunities and challenges for the integration of IC. The role of Algerian PhD graduate returnees, who bring back new perspectives from abroad, becomes crucial in incorporating IC into ELT practices in Algeria. Their unique experiences and exposure to diverse educational practices abroad equip them with the tools to enhance ELT through the integration of intercultural competence, thereby fostering a more holistic approach to language teaching that prepares students for global communication.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognised importance of intercultural competence in ELT, there is a notable gap in its application within the Algerian education system. Algerian PhD graduate returnees, who are well-versed in international educational practices, have the potential to bridge this gap. However, their integration of IC into local ELT practices remains under-researched. Existing studies primarily focus on Western perspectives, which may not fully capture the dynamics within Algerian universities. PhD graduate returnees from abroad are expected to bring advanced knowledge and cultural awareness, but how they integrate these into the local academic environment is not well understood (Guerrich, 2020). Although study abroad programs are known to promote intercultural competence (Kehl& Morris, 2007), theapplication of these competencies by Algerian PhDgraduate returnees remains unexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how Algerian PhD graduate returnees from UK universities apply their intercultural skills in local ELT contexts.

Understanding their strategies and challenges will provide valuable insights for supporting their integration and enhancing intercultural competence in Algerian higher education.

Rationale and purpose of the Study

The rationale behind this study lies in addressing the gap in the application of intercultural competence within the Algerian ELT context. While the importance of IC in ELT is widely recognized, its practical integration remains limited in Algeria. As such, the purpose of this enquiry is to explore the incorporation of IC by Algerian PhDgraduate returnees in their ELT practices. It seeks to provide insights into the integration of IC in Algerian higher education and to highlight potential improvements and innovations in ELT methodologies.

Research Questions and Objectives

Given that this study aims to investigate how Algerian PhDgraduate returnees incorporate IC into their teaching practices, the research is guided by the following questions:

- How do Algerian PhD graduatereturnees perceive the importance of intercultural competence in ELT?

- What strategies do they employ to integrate intercultural competence into their teaching practices?

- What challenges do they face in implementing these strategies within the Algerian educational context?

Based on the research questions, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore the perceptions of Algerian PhDgraduate returnees regarding the importance of intercultural competence (IC) in English Language Teaching (ELT).

- To identify the strategies employed by Algerian PhDgraduate returnees to integrate intercultural competence into their teaching practices.

- To examine the challenges faced by Algerian PhD graduatereturnees in implementing intercultural competence strategies within the Algerian educational context.

Research Methodology

Guided by the constructivist (interpretivist) paradigm, this study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data from semi-structured online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Using purposive sampling, 11 respondents completed the questionnaires, providing statistical data, while six participants were interviewed to gain deeper understanding of their experiences. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data were analysed thematically in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of how IC is integrated into ELT by Algerian PhD graduatereturnees.

 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the broader discourse on intercultural competence within ELT practices, particularly in the Algerian context. As globalisation continues to influence educational paradigms, understanding and enhancing IC in language teaching becomes imperative. This research not only fills a gap in the existing literature on ELT in Algeria but also provides practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to foster more effective and culturally responsive teaching

strategies. By investigating how Algerian PhD graduatereturnees integrate IC into their teaching, this study might offer valuable insights for several stakeholders. For educators, the findings can provide concrete strategies and best practices for incorporating IC into their curricula, thereby enhancing their teaching effectiveness and their students' learning experiences. Teacher training programs can also benefit by using this research to design professional development workshops that equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to foster IC in their classrooms. Policy-makerscan gain a deeper understanding of the importance of IC in ELT and the specific challenges faced in the Algerian educational context. This can inform the development of educational policies and frameworks that support the integration of IC at various levels of the education system. For instance, curriculum developers can use these insights to create materials and programs that promote cultural awareness and sensitivity among students. Students, the primary beneficiaries of improved teaching practices, might ultimately gain a more holistic education that prepares them for a globalised world. Enhanced IC in language teaching can help students develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and the ability to navigate diverse cultural landscapes, making them more effective communicators and global citizens.

Furthermore, this study can contribute to the academic community by expanding the body of knowledge on intercultural competence in non-Western contexts, offering a nuanced understanding of how global educational practices can be adapted and implemented locally. Researchers can build on this study to further explore IC integration in different regions and educational settings, promoting a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to language education worldwide.

Study Organisation

This dissertation is structured to comprehensively address the integration of intercultural competence (IC) in English Language Teaching (ELT) within the Algerian context. It begins with a General Introduction, outlining the background of the study, statement of the problem, study rationale and purpose, research questions and objectives, along with the significance and structure of the dissertation. The Literature Review chapter provides a theoretical foundation by exploring existing research on IC in ELT, covering theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and practical applications. The methodology chapter of this study on IC in ELT in Algeria employs a mixed-method approach to explore the nuanced experiences and perspectives of Algerian PhD graduatereturnees. The participants include a diverse group of teachers from various educational institutions, selected to provide insights on IC's integration. Data were collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, then analysed   procedures involving preparing participants, distributing questionnaires, conducting interviews, followed by a thematic analysis of the data. Ethical considerations were rigorously addressed, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, thereby maintaining respect and sensitivity towards all participants. This approach ensures that the research is transparent, replicable, and ethically sound, providing a solid foundation for the study's findings and discussion. The findings and results'chapter presents the results of the study and provides an in-depth analysis. The findings section presents data collected from various sources, organised thematically in accordance to the research questions. The discussion section interprets these findings, connecting them to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review. Finally, The General Conclusion summarises key findings, addresses limitations, provides recommendations for future research and IC implementation in ELT, and emphasises the importance of IC in fostering culturally competent global citizens.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Introduction

Given that this study aims to explore how Algerian PhD graduatereturnees incorporate IC into English language teaching (ELT) practices, the present chapter provides a review of the literature on the topic under scrutiny, starting with an examination of the evolving trends in linguistics. It then progresses from linguistic competence to communicative competence and ultimately addresses the pivotal concept of intercultural competence and its various models, highlighting the shift from cultural to intercultural awareness within the ELT context. Furthermore, the review synthesises global studies, capturing the experiences and perceptions of ELT teachers regarding the teaching of intercultural competence and examines the cross-cultural adjustment and readjustment experiences of international students. Lastly, it identifies notable gaps in the existing Algerian literature on this subject and outlines how this study intends to address these gaps, thus making a significant contribution to the broader discourse on intercultural competence within ELT practices in Algerian Higher Education.

From Linguistic Competence to Intercultural Communicative Competence

The field of ELT has undergone significant changes throughout its history, in response to shifts in the educational landscape and the evolving needs of learners in an increasingly globalised world (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Initially, there was a predominant emphasis on linguistic competence (LC). However, contemporary approaches have embraced a more comprehensive perspective, incorporating both communicative and intercultural competences (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 2008). This progression reflects an increasing awareness of the multifaceted nature of language learning and the demands of effective global communication, as will be discussed in the following sections.

Linguistic Competence

In 1957, Noam Chomsky proposed his theory of Generative Grammar and introduced the term 'linguistic competence', which has generated significant debate among linguists (Taha &Reishaan, 2008). Chomsky defined LC as a set of rules that can be systematically applied to generate an infinite number of sentences, each possessing a clear structural description (Tienson, 1983). Later, he developed the concept positing that "an ideal speaker-listener" possesses complete mastery of the language spoken in their community (Chomsky, 1965, p.3). For Chomsky, every speaker of a language has internalised a Generative Grammar that reflects their knowledge of that specific language. Thus, the theorist differentiated between competence and performance, whereby competence refers to native speakers' knowledge of the linguistic system, and performance refers to actual language use which necessitates the consideration of various factors, one of which is the native speakers' competence (Chomsky, 1965, 2006; Canale& Swain, 1980). As such, the primary focus of linguistic theory should lie in explaining the cognitive processes underlying language use, with a specific emphasis on competence over performance (Barman, 2014).

Regarding the field of ELT, historically, the primary objective was the development of learners' linguistic competence by placing great emphasis on their mastery of structural components of the English language, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This approach, which was particularly dominant in the mid-20th century, involved teaching methods such as the Grammar-Translation method and the Audiolingual method which primarily focused on the mechanics of the language rather than its use in real-life situations. The main goal was to achieve accuracy and the ability to analyse and produce grammatically correct sentences, often without much regard for the actual usage of language in communication (Richards & Rodgers,2014).

Nevertheless, and although Chomsky's linguistic competence has indeed been influential, it's not without its critics. Hymes (1972) criticises Chomsky's distinction of competence and performance as too narrow to describe the characterization of language behaviours by emphasising the exclusion of socio-cultural factors. According to Hymes, this theory fails to account for the broader context of language use. On that account, Hymes proposes a framework that distinguishes between two types of competence: linguistic competence, which focuses on the production and comprehension of grammatically correct sentences, and communicative competence, which emphasises the production and comprehension of sentences that are appropriate and acceptable within specific socio-cultural contexts (see the following section) (Hymes,1972). Moreover; and unlike Chomsky's focus on abstract grammatical structures, Halliday (1978) emphasises the social functions of language and how linguistic choices are shaped by social contexts and communicative purposes. Thus, it is important to note that linguistic competence alone cannot be viewed as the exclusive objective of language learning, as effective communication extends beyond the mere construction of grammatically correct sentences (Thornbury, 2006).

Communicative Competence

As a reaction to Chomsky's linguistic competence, Dell Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of Communicative Competence (CC) and highlighted the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language proficiency in addition to grammar and syntax. According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence is the ability to effectively and responsibly use language across diverse social and cultural situations. He argued that communicative competence includes not only the acquisition of grammatical rules, but also the understanding of language usage within specific contexts, taking into account social

expectations, cultural norms, and other contextual factors that influence communication. Indeed, it can be said that this concept emphasises the importance of considering both the communicative goals of speakers and listeners, as well as the broader environment in which language is used (Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1983; Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 2006). Consequently, social interactions can have an impact on both the way language is used (performance) and the underlying knowledge of language (competence). Expanding on this perspective, Hymes (1972) noted:

> A normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others (p. 277).

It appears that the above quote aligns with Chomsky's concept of language rule acquisition, yet expands it to cover the notion of appropriateness. According to Young (2008), appropriateness is determined by the relationship between a particular linguistic performance and the context in which it is perceived by participants in communicative practice. This means that certain language use may or may not be considered appropriate depending on the specific context. To put it another way, CC covers not only grammatical competence, but also the appropriate use of newly learned grammatical forms in communication contexts.

Hymes' emphasis on the social and functional aspect of language has had a significant impact in the field of Applied Linguistics, leading to the development of a particular perspective on language (Hymes, 1972). Indeed, and in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a recognition that a purely structural approach in ELT had limitations. As a result, shifts

towards focusing on communicative competence occurred, as advocated by Canale and Swain (1980). This led to the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, as discussed by Richards and Rodgers (2001). The main objective of this approach is to prioritize learners' ability to effectively and appropriately communicate in real-life situations. Unlike traditional approaches, CLT encompasses not only grammatical and linguistic competences, but also sociolinguistic and strategic competences. This approach places a great emphasis on interaction, the practical use of language for genuine communicative purposes, and the ability to negotiate meaning (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

Other linguists have conducted further research to enhance the understanding of CC. For instance, Canale and Swain (1980) stated that CC refers to a combination of understanding fundamental grammatical rules, comprehension of language usage in various social contexts to achieve communication goals, and awareness of how sentences and communication purposes can be integrated following the guidelines of discourse. Canale and Swain (1980, 1983) identified 4 components of communicative competence namely:

Grammatical Competence pertains to the mastery of vocabulary, rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar, semantics, and phonology. It aligns with Chomsky's linguistic competence, which concerns the understanding of the language system and the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences, such as utilising subjects and verb tenses effectively (Canal & Swain, 1980).

Sociolinguistic Competence encompasses familiarity with the social-cultural norms and rules that govern language use within a specific social context and which are crucial for generating appropriate speech in various situations and comprehending utterances' meanings (Canal & Swain, 1980).

Strategic Competence is "the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may

be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or insufficient competence" (Canale and Swain, 1980, p. 30). Competent speakers must employ effective verbal and nonverbal strategies to prevent and resolve communication problems, such as avoidance strategies, reduction strategies, and achievement strategies (Canale and Swain, 1980).

Discourse Competence refers to the ability to arrange, organise, and combine sentences to produce coherent spoken or written discourses and meaningful texts that exhibit cohesion and coherence (Canale, 1983).

Unlike Canale and Swain's classification, Van Ek (1986) separated socio-cultural competence from sociolinguistic competence, adding the social element to the construct of CC. Van Ek (1986) asserted that foreign language teaching goes beyond training learners in communication skills; it also aims to foster the personal and social development of individuals. In order to achieve this objective, Van Ek (1986) proposed a framework for comprehensive foreign language teaching objectives, which encompasses six components of communicative competence:

Linguistic Competence similar to Chomsky (1965)'s description, refers to the learner's ability to produce and understand meaningful utterances in accordance with the grammatical rules of the target language (Van Ek, 1986).

Sociolinguistic Competence focuses on the learner's ability to choose appropriate language forms based on various factors such as the communication setting, relationship between communication partners, and communicative intention (Labov, 1972). It involves understanding the relation between linguistic forms and their contextual and situational meaning.

Discourse Competence pertains to the language user's proficiency in employing

appropriate strategies for constructing and understanding texts.(Brown & Yule, 1983).

Strategic Competence similar to Canale and Swain's description, refers to the ability to deploy communication strategies to overcome breakdowns or challenges in communication, enhancing the effectiveness of interaction (Canale& Swain, 1980).

Socio-Cultural Competence involves understanding the socio-cultural context in which language is used, including cultural norms, values, and practices that influence communication (Van Ek, 1986).

Social Competence encompasses interpersonal skills such as motivation, confidence, empathy, and adaptability, which play a vital role in effective communication and contribute to successful interactions and relationship building (Goleman, 2006).

By focusing on the social dimension, Van Ek's (1986) model has emphasised not only the linguistic skills but also the understanding of cultural contexts in which language is used. This differentiation has been widely accepted by scholars advocating for a comprehensive approach to language education such as Byram (1997) and Kramsch (2006). For instance, Kramsch's work on symbolic competence is in line with Van Ek's emphasis on the social and cultural aspects of language learning. She argues that communicative competence should encompass not only linguistic skills but also the ability to interpret and produce meaning within specific cultural contexts (Kramsch, 2006).

It can be said that Van Ek (1986)'s distinction between socio-cultural competence and sociolinguistic competence has made a significant contribution to the framework of communicative competence in a more academic manner. However, the model, like any theoretical framework, has encountered criticism from certain scholars. A few critiques pertain to an excessive focus on social elements to the expense of linguistic competence. Critics argue that while comprehending socio-cultural contexts holds significance, language

learners also necessitate a solid linguistic foundation to effectively communicate (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Council of Europe, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Intercultural Communicative Competence

The term intercultural and cross-cultural communication broadly refer to interactions among individuals of different nationalities, social backgrounds, genders, ages, or occupations (Kramsch, 1998). However, while intercultural communication takes place when individuals from diverse ethnic, social, or gender backgrounds interact within the same linguistic framework (E.g., among Chinese-Americans and African-Americans), cross-cultural communication occurs when two cultures or languages come together across national borders, which can lead to culture shock (Kramsch, 1998). Nevertheless, scholars often use the terms intercultural, cross-cultural competence interchangeably.

Michael Byram is a prominent scholar who has made significant contributions to the field of intercultural competence. His work builds upon Dell Hymes' and Van Ek's model of communicative competence and extends it to address the challenges and opportunities of communication in multicultural and globalised contexts (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). Byram (1997) defined IC as the "individual's ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries" (p. 7). Similarly, Fantini (2005) defined ICC as "the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p. 1). Additionally, the Council of Europe (2014) defined the concept of ICC as:

> a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills applied
>
> through action which enables an individual, either alone or in
>
> collaboration with others, to (1) comprehend and respect individuals who
>
> are perceived to have different cultural affiliations; (2) respond

appropriately, effectively, and respectfully when interacting and
communicating with such individuals; (3) establish positive and
constructive relationships with such individuals; (4) understand oneself
and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with
cultural differences (pp. 16-17).

This implies that ICC encompasses not only knowledge of a foreign language and
culture, but also the willingness to suspend disbelief and judgement about the other's culture
(C2) and the ability to critically reflect on one's own culture (C1) in order to question its
values and assumptions (Chun, 2011). It can be said that ICC refers to the ability (or
abilities) to effectively and appropriately communicate, interact, and engage with individuals
from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Byram's Model of ICC. Byram's (1997) concept of ICC complements Van Ek's
(1986) focus on socio-cultural competence. Byram emphasises the importance of developing
learners' understanding of diverse cultural perspectives and their ability to interact
effectively with individuals from different backgrounds. According to his model, five
competences (or *savoirs*) are necessary to develop intercultural competence. These are
presented and explained accordingly in figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1

Factors in IC (Byram, 1997, p. 34)

	Skills interpret and relate (*savoir comprendre*)	
Knowledge of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (*savoirs*)	Education political education critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*)	Attitudes relativising self valuing other (*savoir être*)
	Skills discover and/ or interact (*savoir apprendre/ faire*)	

Intercultural attitudes (*savoir être*) are defined as "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (Byram et al.,2002, p. 12). That is to say, being willing to question one's own values, beliefs, and behaviours, and acknowledging that they are not the only valid ones. It also involves understanding how these (values, beliefs and behaviours) might be perceived from an outsider's perspective with different values, beliefs, and behaviours. This ability is referred to by Byram as "decentring" which defined it as the ability to shift perspectives away from one's own culture and worldview and to understand and appreciate different cultural perspectives and behaviours. It involves being able to see things from multiple cultural viewpoints and not just through the lens of one's own culture (2002).

Knowledge(*savoirs*) pertains to understanding "social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction"(Byram et al.,2002, p. 12). In other words, it involves having knowledge of social processes and examples of those processes. This includes knowledge of how others might perceive you and some understanding of others.

Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) refer to the "ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own" (Byram et al.,2002, p. 13). By comparing ideas, events, and documents from different cultures, intercultural speakers/mediators can understand potential misunderstandings that may arise due to different social identities.

The skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir faire*) refer to the "ability to learn about a culture and its practices, as well as the ability to apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real-time communication and interaction " (Byram et al.,2002, p. 13). It is important for intercultural speakers/mediators to know how to find new knowledge and integrate it with their existing knowledge, as they cannot anticipate all their knowledge needs. They also need to know how to ask people from other cultures about their beliefs, values, and behaviours.

Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) is defined as "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" (Byram et al.,2002, p. 13). Learners need to be aware that their own beliefs, values, and behaviours can influence their views of other people's values. Therefore, they need to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products in both their own and other cultures.

It can be said that IC consists of three main areas: affective (attitudes), cognitive (knowledge), and meta-cognitive (skills) (Byram et al.,2002). Byram (1997) adds IC to the components of communicative competence (CC) in his model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in language teaching. Figure1.2 provides a summary of Byram's (1997) model of ICC.

Figure 1.2

Byram's (1997) model of ICC (cited in Lange, 2011, p. 16)
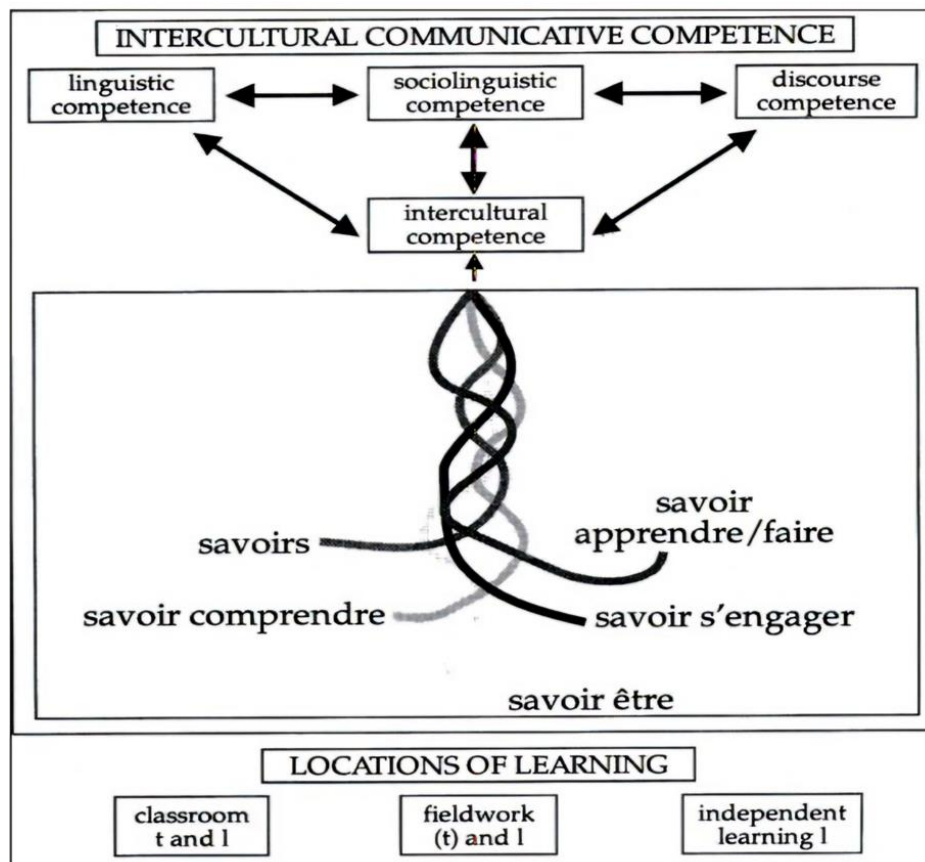
Byram's ICC model shows that he views ICC in terms of the interplay between linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. This demonstrates that he does not discard the objectives and guidelines of the communicative approach; instead, he expands upon it and incorporates the intercultural dimension. Byram's (1997) model of ICC provides a detailed description of the interconnected competences that should be considered when teaching language from an intercultural perspective. The model also describes the *savoirs* that language educators should target to foster learners' ICC and presents three different stages where the teacher's interference is gradually reduced in order to promote independent learning.

Byram (2008) further elaborated on the transformative potential of intercultural education. He asserted that language is not just a tool for communication, but also a medium through which individuals express their identities, beliefs, and cultural perspectives. He maintained that exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives can foster empathy, tolerance, and critical reflection among learners, ultimately leading to enhanced mutual understanding and cooperation in multicultural societies. As such, he advocated for a holistic approach to intercultural education, one that goes beyond superficial cultural awareness to promote authentic intercultural dialogue and engagement (Byram,2008), as shall see in section of from cultural to intercultural awareness below.

However, critiques from various scholars have raised concerns about Byram's (1997) ICC model, questioning its applicability and conceptualization. For instance, Tedick (2009) pointed out that the model pays limited attention to language proficiency, underscoring the importance of sociocultural and pragmatic aspects of communication. Furthermore, Holliday (2011), Dervin (2014) and Karakitsou (2016) criticised the model's assumption of universality, arguing that it oversimplifies culture and neglects power dynamics and emphasising the need for nuanced and contextually sensitive approaches to intercultural competence. Similarly, Croucher (2017) contributes to this critique by highlighting the narrow focus on cognitive aspects and advocating for a more comprehensive approach that incorporates affective and behavioural dimensions.

In summary, and as advocated through the lens of seminal theories and frameworks, it is evident that the ELT field nowadays acknowledges the multifaceted nature of language learning. It has evolved towards the adaptation a holistic approach that combine language proficiency with sociocultural understanding and intercultural sensitivity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 2008) in order to not only nurture learners' linguistic competence but also empower them to confidently and empathetically navigate

intricate intercultural interactions. The following section will discuss culture in ELT contexts.

Culture in ELT Contexts

According to Byram (2002), culture refers to the shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs, values, and ways of understanding that characterise a particular group or society. It encompasses both visible aspects such as customs and traditions, as well as less tangible aspects such as worldview and communication styles. Byram (2002) states that culture is learned and transmitted through socialisation processes, shaping individuals' perceptions, interactions, and identities within their cultural context. Indeed, it is widely recognized today that when teaching a foreign language, it is essential to consider the cultural context in which the language is used, as language and culture are closely intertwined (Jones & Brown, 2019).

From Cultural to Intercultural Awareness

Byram's (1997, 2002, 2008) perspective on culture highlights the interconnectedness of language and culture in shaping individuals' worldview and interactions with others. He views language as inseparable from culture and emphasises the importance of developing intercultural competence alongside language proficiency (Byram, 1997, 2002, 2008). Zhou and Pilcher (2019) confirm that Byram's view on language and culture is highly relevant in intercultural studies and serves as a foundational concept in understanding the complexities of cultural interactions and cross-cultural communication.

In recent years, there has been a significant amount of research focused on the crucial role that the socio-cultural context plays in negotiating meaning in different levels of communication (García, 2018; Smith, 2020). Byram (1997) introduced the concept of

'critical cultural awareness' as part of the construct of ICC and as a means of preparing language learners for intercultural communication. He defines it as "an ability to critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries based on explicit criteria" (p. 53). However, some scholars argued that 'cultural awareness' alone is not sufficient or relevant to the needs of intercultural and cross-cultural communication and proposed the concept of 'intercultural awareness'. For instance, Baker (2011) defines cultural awareness as "a conscious understanding of the role culture plays in language learning and communication (in both first and foreign languages)" (p. 65). He explains that the shift from cultural awareness to intercultural awareness necessitates, (1) the establishment of a systematic framework for explicitly teaching language and culture, (2) helping learners become aware of their own culture and other cultures, and (3) enhancing understanding of language and culture for successful intercultural communication (Baker, 2011).

It is important to note that the concept of intercultural awareness necessitates the idea of the 'Intercultural Speaker' (IS) as a mediator between different cultures, rendering the native speaker model obsolete due to issues of identity and conformity to norms (Byram, 1997). The concept of the "Intercultural Speaker" (IS) proposes a shift away from the conventional notion of a "native speaker" in the contexts of language learning and intercultural communication. This notion posits that individuals who possess proficiency in navigating and mediating between different cultures, rather than solely being native speakers of a language, plays a vital role in facilitating effective intercultural communication (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). The term IS was introduced by Byram, who emphasises the significance of cultivating individuals who not only have linguistic proficiency but also possess intercultural competence, enabling them to effectively engage with diverse cultural contexts (Byram, 1997).

Byram's proposal challenges the traditional assumption that native speakers inherently possess the cultural knowledge and skills necessary for successful intercultural communication. Instead, he advocates for the development of individuals who are attuned to cultural differences, adept at navigating between multiple cultural frameworks, and capable of mediating communication across cultural boundaries (Byram, 1997, 2002, 2008).This concept aligns with broader discussions in the field of language education and intercultural communication regarding the need to transcend a monocultural perspective and acknowledge the complexity of cultural identities and interactions in today's globalised world. It underscores the importance of fostering intercultural competence as an integral component of language learning and communication in diverse contexts (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002).

It can be said that though the integration of cultural elements into English Language Teaching is crucial in equipping learners for intercultural communication, merely being cognisant of diverse cultures is insufficient. Learners' Intercultural awareness must be fostered through critical evaluation and active involvement for meaningful engagement in diverse cultural contexts (Baker,2011). This not only enhances learners' capacity to communicate proficiently in varied settings but also questions the conventional native speaker framework (Kramsch, 2009). Such a case underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to the teaching of language and culture as will be discussed below.

Call for IC Teaching

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, and given the prevalent role of the English language as a global lingua franca, it becomes apparent that focusing solely on communication within a single cultural context has its limitations (Kramsch, 2013).

Consequently, there has been a shift towards teaching intercultural competence in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This newer dimension recognises that language learning is not only about linguistic fluency, but also about understanding and engaging with diverse cultures, values, and ways of thinking (Byram,1997, 2002, 2008). IC involves the ability to appreciate cultural differences, empathy and adaptability, and navigate cross-cultural interactions without prejudice. In order to achieve successful intercultural communication, the value of intercultural understanding and awareness needs to be reflected and emphasised in foreign language education. This makes the teaching intercultural competence in second and foreign language classrooms highly valued for this purpose (Smith & Brown, 2019).

Many researchers suggest that foreign language teaching pedagogy should expand beyond the traditional communicative approach to include the acquisition of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Crozet, Liddicoat & Lo Bianco, 1999; Fantini, 2007; Xu & Stevens, 2005). Undeniably, teaching intercultural competence can not only meet the need for successful FL/ L2 acquisition, but also facilitates and supports the socialisation of multicultural societies and the globalising world (García, 2018). Teaching approaches that foster this competence encourage exposure to and active involvement in various cultural contexts, utilising English as a medium for broader intercultural dialogue (Fantini, 2009). Corbett (2003) argues that it differs from previous approaches to cultural teaching by not only focusing on the tangible or visible dimension of culture, but also by recognizing the power of the invisible and subjective dimension that underlies it, such as values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish people from one country to another.

Many countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, and several European countries, have diverse cultural populations that require intercultural understanding and communication. In order to promote mutual respect and understanding in multicultural societies, these countries have mandated that L2 educators and curriculum planners

incorporate tolerance and understanding within language teaching (Larzen-Ostermark, 2008). Indeed, extensive literature on language educational policies and curricula in North America, Australia, and Europe since the late 1980s supports this argument (Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999; Liddicoat, 2004; Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Knutson, 2006; Sercu, 2006). For instance, in the USA, the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1996) has proposed the five Cs as national standards for foreign language teaching: *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons,* and *Communities*. They encourage foreign language teachers to adapt their teaching practices, based on the communicative approach, to help language learners acquire and develop their IC skills (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996). Similarly, in Europe, the Council of Europe (2001) emphasises IC teaching and provides guidance on its development following Byram's (1997) model. Garrido and Alvarez (2006) argue that foreign language educators should understand, adopt, and adapt such teaching to suit their specific contexts.

Nevertheless, and despite these calls to implement IC teaching in language education curricula in many countries, some scholars argue that culture teaching in general and IC promotion in particular are still in their early stages (Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Sercu, 2006). In China, for instance, though IC teaching is highly regarded, classroom practices often do not meet theoretical expectations (Xiao, 2007). Zhang (2003) conducted a study with 204 university EFL students and found a significant gap between their linguistic and intercultural competence. These students expressed dissatisfaction with cultural learning due to the lack of support from textbooks, teachers, and teaching methodologies. Further investigation with 33 EFL teachers revealed that culture teaching was not given much importance in their language classrooms.

Moreover, research findings in Europe indicate that the current practices of most language teachers in teaching culture are unsatisfactory and do not meet the desired

outcomes (Sercu et al., 2005; Sercu, 2006; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008). In her investigation of teachers' cultural teaching practices, Sercu (2006) concluded that most foreign language teachers across Europe can be classified into two main categories. The first category involves teachers who primarily and almost exclusively focus on teaching about culture. The second category involves those who concentrate on teaching about culture, but also promote knowledge about other countries and their cultures. According to Sercu (2006), culture teaching in Europe through the teacher-centred methodology used in Europe primarily aims to provide learners with cultural knowledge, rather than developing their critical cultural awareness, skills, and attitudes necessary for successful intercultural communication.

Similar to Sercu's (2006) study, Larzen-Ostermark (2008) conducted a study in Finland and concluded that IC teaching had not yet reached the desired level. The researchers identified three categories of teachers' pedagogies."(1) pedagogy of information, (2) pedagogy of preparation, and (3) pedagogy of encounter" (p. 539). The first category involved teachers who focused on transmitting cultural knowledge to their students, believing that "students need to be informed" (p. 539). The second category included teachers who engaged students in cultural learning, using their own intercultural experiences and facilitating intercultural dialogues (Larzen-Ostermark, 2008). Larzen-Ostermark (2008) believed that this approach aimed to prepare learners for successful intercultural communication. The third category comprised a small number of novice teachers who implemented a true IC teaching perspective. These teachers had personal experience overseas and aimed to provide authentic and stimulated encounters for their students (Larzen-Ostermark, 2008). Undeniably, studying abroad can present valuable opportunities for individuals to actively engage with and exchange ideas in an unfamiliar cultural context as we shall see in the following section. In effect, the current study seeks to explore how Algerian PhD graduatereturnees integrate IC in their teaching practices.

The Impact of Studying Abroad on Developing IC

Many researchers argue that the implementation of IC teaching is seen as beneficial and necessary. Intercultural learning aims to enable learners to overcome cultural barriers, be open to others, tolerate differences, and accept their cultures (Fennes &Hapgood, 1997). Study abroad opportunities (Norris & Gillespie, 2009) are widely recognised as important venues for students to develop intercultural competence (Williams, 2005), as they provide real-life exposure to the cultural and social environment of the target culture (Sodnomdarjaa, 2006). This intercultural experience has the potential to challenge one's assumptions and thinking by observing and interacting with the new cultural environment, individuals' thoughts and actions are influenced by the new cultural and social norms and values (Early & Peterson, 2004).

Consequently, and by being exposed to different cultures, sojourners can reflect on their experiences and relationships within the group (Kolb, 1984). Bennett (1993) and Paige (1993) argue that active social engagement and intercultural communication facilitate cultural learning, allowing expatriated students to transcend their ethnocentric worldview and recognise the existence of various cultural systems, even integrating other perspectives into their own. Indeed, participating in a study abroad programme provides students with a platform to actively interact, observe, and socialise, resulting in the construction of intercultural knowledge. However, many researchers claim that sojourners may encounter challenges when adapting to a new culture or readapting to their own culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Change, 1997; Kim, 2001; Fenwick & Haslett, 1996; Townsend & Lee, 2004; Zhou &Todman, 2008). These processes of adaptation to the new culture and readaptation to one's own culture will be discussed in the following section.

Cross-Cultural Adjustment and Readjustment Processes

Cross-cultural adjustment and readjustment are key processes that individuals experience when they engage in cross-cultural activities, such as studying or working abroad. These processes involve adapting to the lifestyle, norms, and expectations of a foreign culture, and then reintegrating into one's original cultural context when they return home (Church, 1982; Kim, 2005; Martin & Harrell, 2004; Palthe, 2004). Scholars and researchers in fields like psychology, anthropology, and intercultural communication have extensively studied and discussed these phenomena (Anderson, 1994). They explore factors that influence adjustment and readjustment, such as cultural differences, psychological reactions, and social support systems (Matsumoto, Hirayama, &LeRoux, 2006). Additionally, theoretical models, like the U-curve and W-curve hypothesis, have been proposed to describe the temporal patterns of adjustment and readjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Change, 1997; Kim, 2001; Fenwick & Haslett, 1996; Townsend & Lee, 2004; Zhou &Todman, 2008). Understanding these processes is crucial for individuals navigating cross-cultural transitions and for educators, employers, and policymakers who support them.

Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Cross-cultural adjustment refers to the process of individuals adapting to the lifestyle and professional demands of a foreign cultural setting that is significantly different from their home culture (Church, 1982; Kim, 2005; Martin & Harrell, 2004; Palthe, 2004). This process, also known as the transition experience, describes how people react when their environments undergo considerable change (Anderson, 1994). The outcome of cross-cultural adjustment can be either positive or negative. Positive emotional effects include well-being,

satisfaction, and happiness, while negative emotional effects include anxiety and depression

mostly resulting from culture shock (Matsumoto, Hirayama, &LeRoux, 2006).

The concept of culture shock was first introduced by Oberg (1960) who described

it as a psychological stress that occurs when individuals come into contact with an

unfamiliar culture. Adler (1975) further developed the concept of culture shock as a

psychological outcome, describing it as a crisis of personality or identity. He argued that

culture shock is primarily a series of emotional reactions. These reactions include the loss

of familiar cultural cues, encountering new cultural stimuli that are unfamiliar or have

little meaning, and the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. Additionally,

Adler (1975) noted that most sojourners are not aware of their original values, beliefs,

and attitudes until they move to a different culture. In other words, the transition between

cultures tends to highlight contrasting cultural values, which can then influence the

psychological and emotional responses of sojourners.

Therefore, the outcomes of cross-cultural adjustment may be influenced by

changes in an individual's knowledge, attitudes, and emotions in accordance with the new

cultural context (Black, 1990; Black &Gregersen, 1991; Black et al., 1992; Harvey,

1997). Several scholars (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Hottola, 2004; Lysgaard, 1955;

Oberg, 1960; Usunier, 1998) have suggested frameworks for cross-cultural adjustment

such as the U-Curve hypothesis that will be discussed in the following section.

The Pattern of U-Curve of Cross-Cultural Adjustment. As evidenced by

various studies (Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Change, 1997; Kim, 2001; Fenwick &

Haslett, 1996; Townsend & Lee, 2004; Zhou &Todman, 2008), sojourners (expatriate

students) may encounter socio-psychological challenges when adapting to a new culture.

However, these challenges may exhibit a predictable temporal pattern. According to

several scholars, the U-curve hypothesis represents one pattern of cross-cultural

adjustment over the period of the overseas experience (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Hottola, 2004; Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960; Usunier, 1998). Figure 1.3 below illustrates the four primary adjustment periods or phases suggested by Lysaard's (1955) U-curve model. The phases are as follows: (1) arrival, (2) crisis, (3) recovery, and (4) adjustment.

Figure 1.3

U Curve of Cultural Adjustment (Adapted from Black and Mendenhall, 1991, pp.225-247)
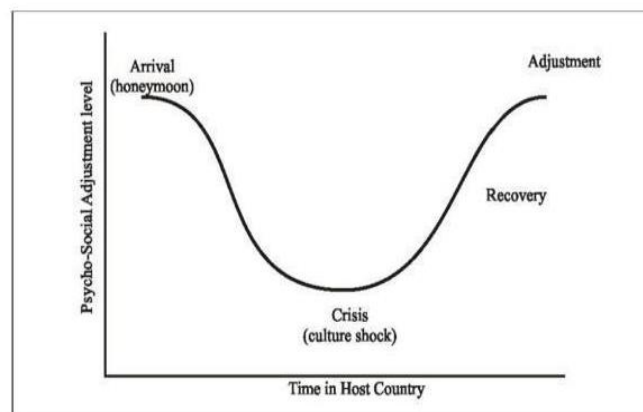
Arrival is the first phase of cross-cultural adjustment. It typically entails feelings of excitement and optimism for the process of change and adaptation. In contrast, the second phase, known as the *crisis*, is characterised by feelings of loss, loneliness, anxiety, homesickness, frustration, distress, insomnia, aggression, and a lack of self-confidence in adapting to the new culture, often resulting from culture shock and changes in their environment (Oberg, 1960; Winkelman, 1994; Lnseon et al., 2006). The third stage, recovery, is associated with the resolution of these crises, leading to more positive outcomes. At the end of the adjustment stage, individuals accept and adapt to the host country (Furnham &Bochner, 1982; Lysaard, 1955).

Numerous studies on cultural transitions (e.g., Barletta & Kobayashi, 2007; Lin, 2006; Ryan &Twibell, 2000; Sumer, Poyrazli& Grahame, 2008; Wilton & Constantine, 2003) further support associations between symptoms of strain and culture shock.

Furthermore, the degree to which home and host cultures differ determines the possibility of experiencing more severe cultural shock (Arthur, 2004; Furbish & Arthur, 2007). According to a number of cross-sectional empirical studies, poor adjustment is the primary cause of health issues, acculturative stress, psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms that face international students adjusting to a new culture (e.g., Allen et al., 1998; Kuo&Roysircar, 2006; Murphy-Shigematsu, 2002; Prichard & Wilson, 2003; Mehdizadeh& Scott, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2008; Sumer et al., 2008; Walton & Constantine, 2003).

Nevertheless, Church (1982) critically analyses the U-curve model and concludes that its support in the literature is weak. He argues that the model is inconclusive and overgeneralised, suggesting that depression is not a universal experience among sojourners. He also contends that not all sojourners begin their experience with feelings of excitement or optimism. This view is supported by Brown and Holloway (2008), who conducted an ethnographic study on international postgraduate students to explore their experiences during their transition to studying in the UK and to understand the challenges they faced during this process. They recognise that the initial phase of the U-curve usually entails excitement and a positive mindset. However, it is also understandable if the highest level of stress is experienced upon arrival, gradually decreasing as the sojourner acclimates to the culture. Indeed, in their study, Brown and Holloway (2008) found that the most frequently mentioned feelings among sojourners in the first few days after arriving in the UK were ones of fear, uncertainty, nervousness, and stress (Brown & Holloway, 2008).

Cross-Cultural Readjustment

The U-curve adjustment's stage does not always indicate that the process of cross-cultural transfer is complete for international students. Since their stay abroad is limited,

there is an additional adjustment process upon returning home (Adler, 1981; Black &Gregersen, 1999; Cushner& Karim, 2004; Martin &Hartin, 2004). A person who completes an abroad assignment and then returns home is generally referred to as a returnee or repatriate (Black, 1992, 1994; Black &Gregersen, 1999; Stroh et al., 2005). Such a Re-acculturation to one's native culture following a prolonged time of interaction with a different culture is known as re-entry adjustment (Adler, 1981; Arthur, 2004).

Many scholars argue that international returnees are likely to face a variety of challenges upon their return. These issues include topics like changing lifestyles, excessive independence and privacy, challenges in forming relationships, lack of access to amenities that are typical in the host country, annoyance caused by ritualised social interaction patterns, and frustration due to conflicting views and values (Arthur, 2004; Andreason&Kenneer, 2004, 2005; Gaw, 2000; Wilson, 1993). Other scholars claim that international returnees may experience challenges in their home countries implementing newly acquired professional knowledge (Bochner et al.,1980; Brabant et al., 1990; Corey, 1992; Furbish & Arthur, 2007; Kidder, 1992; Shilling, 1993; Wang, 1997). Indeed, sojourners might experience conflicting emotions when they return home. For example, they may feel joy or excitement at being with friends and relatives, yet they may also feel sad about leaving the host nation. Stated differently, the re-entry transition entails leaving behind routines, roles, and connections that were developed while residing in the host nation, as well as specific lifestyles that are unavailable at home (Arthur, 2003; Andreason&Kenneer, 2004, 2005). In this regard, Adler (1981) noted that after spending a considerable amount of time in a foreign culture, an individual's level of comfort and familiarity in their native culture can also be considered a measure of re-entry adjustment (Adler, 1981; Andreason&Kinneer, 2004, 2005; Hurn, 1999). Efforts are made to readjust to new patterns of interacting with family, friends, and co-workers (Adler & Gundersen, 2008; Hogan,

1996), as well as to reintegrate or fit back into the social roles and occupational networks of the original culture (Arthur, 1998; Furukawa, 1997). The present study aims to explore how the Algerian returnees implement their acquired knowledge such as intercultural competence.

The Pattern of W- Curve of Cross-Cultural Readjustment. As previously mentioned, readjustment refers to the process of reintegrating individuals back into their home country after a period spent living abroad. Sojourners may experience comparable phases of adjustment upon returning home as they did throughout their abroad journey (Black &Gregersen, 1999). Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) expanded on the U-curve hypothesis by advocating that the stages suggested in the U-curve can be typically applied while returning home. However, a form of reverse culture shock—a fear of going home— could exist instead of the crisis stage of the U-curve model, where culture shock might be a significant factor (Andreason, et al., 2005; Klopf, 1991; Storti, 2001). A W-curve of cross-cultural readjustment is produced by joining two U-curves to explain the sojourners' entire period of cross-cultural adjustment and re-entry adjustment upon returning home (Gullahorn&Gullahorn, 1963). The W-curve hypothesis is shown in figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4

W-curve of Cross-Cultural Re-adjustment (adapted from the Office of International

Programs Colorado State University, 2009, p.6)
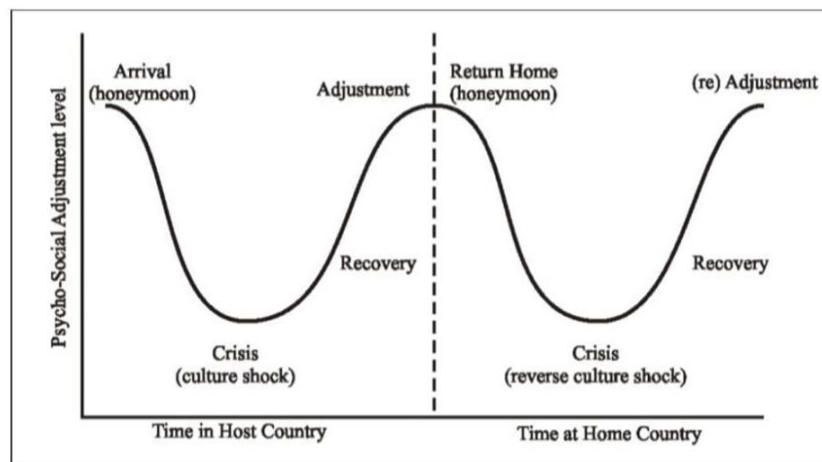
A honeymoon phase is also proposed during the re-entry phase of the W-curve

model which is marked by exhilaration just after returning to the home culture (Austin,

1986; Black &Gregersen, 1999). Arthur (2004) observes that the re-entry adjustment phase

really begins when the sojourners are still in their host countries and start to prepare for

going home. He also argues that sojourners may have a range of emotions in response to

their foreign experience coming to an end, from excitement about seeing friends and family

again to a strong desire to stay in the host nation.

Another phase of the process is anticipated after the honeymoon period ends

(Austin, 1986; Black &Gregersen, 1999; Storti, 2001). This phase, likely to occur in the

second or third month after returning, it can be characterised by an increase in psychological

distress associated with feelings of alienation and isolation from the host culture (Hogan,

1996). This decline in adjustment is typically followed, in accordance with the U-curve

hypothesis, by a stage of recovery during which returnees adapt to their home culture. Thus,

the final stage is marked by readjustment or re-acculturation (Stori et al., 2005). This process

involves navigating changes in the home environment, reconnecting with family and friends,

and readapting to familiar cultural norms and expectations. Readjustment can be influenced by various factors, including the length of time spent abroad, the reasons for returning, and the availability of social support networks (Koester, 1983; Martin, 1992). Successful readjustment often requires individuals to reflect on their cross-cultural experiences, reconcile any conflicts or challenges encountered abroad, and find ways to apply their newfound insights and skills to their lives back home (Smith & Johnson, 2020).

A qualitative study conducted by Patron (2006) sheds light on the readjustment process of a group of French repatriates. The study involved interviews with 34 foreign university students from France who studied in Australia. The interviews were conducted twice: once while the students were in Australia and once again after they returned home. The interviews took place five to ten months before and after their arrival home. Patron's findings revealed that the French repatriates experienced a honeymoon phase upon their return, during which they were delighted to reunite with their loved ones. This phase was usually short-lived, and after returning home, they experienced difficulties such emotional stress, isolation, and loneliness during a time known as re-entry shock. These individuals also talked about feeling as though they no longer belonged in French culture and that they wanted to go back to Australia. Patron (2006) went on to say that self-identity changes brought about by intercultural contact with the unique cultural norms and values of a host nation may impact readjustment to one's native country. Regardless of the difference in the cultural distance between the home and host cultures, the longitudinal research presented here consistently supported the idea of the reverse culture shock period upon returning home.

Similarly, Pritchard (2010) conducted a thorough investigation into the readjustment experiences of postgraduate students from Taiwan and Sri Lanka after studying in Western countries and returning to their home countries. Interestingly, Pritchard's findings

contradicted the commonly accepted assumptions made by Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), who proposed linear or curved models (U-curve and W-curve) of cultural adaptation. These models suggested a sequential progression through stages such as the honeymoon phase, culture shock, adjustment, and mastery. However, Pritchard's research revealed that the expected challenges in readapting to their home cultures were notably absent, challenging the universality of these traditional models. This discrepancy highlights a significant criticism of such models that oversimplify the adaptation process and neglect the diverse experiences of individuals (Black, 1992; Black, 1994).

It can be said that cultural adaptation is inherently complex and depends on various factors, including personality traits, cultural background, language proficiency, and previous intercultural experiences (Stroh et al., 2005). Furthermore, the non-linear nature of adaptation dynamics is often overlooked in these models. Individuals may move back and forth between stages, face setbacks, or even regress to earlier stages depending on internal and external factors (Black &Gregersen, 1999). This complexity and fluidity of the adaptation process challenge the idea of a fixed trajectory proposed by traditional models.

Cross-Cultural Readjustment in The Algerian Context

As previously mentioned in the general introduction, English in Algeria is taught as a second foreign language, following French, and is integrated into the national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2023). The teaching of English in the country at all levels of education aims to enrich learners' socio-cultural understanding, promote educational advancement, and advance effective communication and awareness in different contexts (Ministry of Education, 2023). As such, and recognising the importance of English proficiency in higher education, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and the UK government signed an agreement to send 500 Algerian Government-funded students from different English department across the country to UK universities to prepare for their

doctoral studies (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2014). This Algerian Doctoral Initiative aims to enhance the quality of higher education and supervision by fostering collaboration between the British Embassy and the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education (Guerriche,2020). Additionally, this initiative reflects the growing importance of promoting learners' intercultural competence in language education for global harmony (British council, n.d.).

Furthermore, Algerian higher education faces its own challenges and opportunities in relation to intercultural competence (Stambouli, 2023). Yet, existing studies on intercultural competence often focus on Western perspectives and may not fully capture the dynamics within Algerian universities. This gap is particularly evident in the case of PhDgraduate returnees, whose experiences abroad may differ significantly from those who pursued their doctoral studies in Algerian universities. Algerian PhD graduate returnees are expected to bring advanced academic knowledge and heightened awareness of diverse cultural norms and practices from their host countries. Understanding how these teachers navigate and integrate their intercultural experiences into the Algerian academic milieu may be crucial for cultivating a more inclusive and globally-oriented higher education system (Guerrich, 2020). While, numerous studies have examined the benefits of study abroad programs in promoting intercultural competence among students (Guerrich, 2020; Kehl& Morris, 2007), Algeria's increasing involvement in international academic collaborations and partnerships underscores the need for a deeper understanding of how Algerian PhD returnees from UK universities apply and adapt their intercultural skills within the domestic higher education landscape (Kehl& Morris, 2007). To our knowledge, no study has shed light on the experiences of Algerian PhD graduate returnees in implementing intercultural competence upon their return to Algeria.

Moreover, while it is believed that study abroad participation nurtures culturally competent individuals capable of functioning effectively in multicultural environments (Kehl& Morris, 2007), the extent to which this applies to Algerian PhD returnees remains unexplored. Given Algeria's diverse cultural landscape and the increasing emphasis on international collaboration in academia and industry, exploring the intercultural competencies of PhD returnees is vital for promoting cross-cultural understanding within Algerian society. Therefore, the present study aims to shed light on how these returnees apply their intercultural skills in a local context, as well as the strategies they employ to incorporate intercultural competence within their teaching practices in ELT classes. Addressing this gap in the literature would provide valuable insights for scholars and policymakers on how to support the integration and professional growth of Algerian PhD graduate returnees.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the different concepts and debates related to the intercultural competence in general and the sojourners cultural adjustment in particular. The literature reviewed on the topic under investigation emphasises the need to implement the teaching of intercultural competence in language classrooms. However, little is known about how teachers, who studied abroad, integrate the intercultural competence they acquired in their teaching practices and what strategies they use to enhance students' intercultural and cross-cultural awareness and understanding. As such, this study aims to contribute to the discourse on intercultural competence by exploring the integration of intercultural competence in English Language Teaching (ELT) practices among Algerian returnees in higher education with the aim to create a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment for Algerian students. The following chapter will discuss and justify the methodological choices employed to gather data for this study.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Introduction

Drawing on insights from the literature review which emphasise the significance of intercultural competence in ELT practices, this chapter justifies the research methodology employed to examine PhDgraduate returnees' perceptions and implementations of intercultural competence integration. It precises the research paradigm, indicates the research design and approach, explains the selected research methods, describes the data collection and analysis procedures, and addresses quality measures and ethical considerations. Such information can enable readers to evaluate the rigour and credibility of the study's findings.

Research Questions and Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to gain valuable insights into how intercultural competence is perceived and integrated in ELT practices among Algerian PhD graduate returnees. Such insights have the potential to provide critical information to support future initiatives aimed at fostering IC in educational settings. To accomplish this, three central research questions guide the present investigation:

- How do Algerian PhD graduate returnees perceive the importance of IC in ELT?
- What strategies do they employ to integrate IC into their teaching practices?
- What challenges do they face in implementing these strategies within the Algerian educational context?

Based on the research questions, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore the perceptions of Algerian PhDgraduate returnees regarding the importance of ICin ELT.

- To identify the strategies employed by Algerian PhD graduate returnees to integrate IC into their teaching practices.

- To examine the challenges faced by Algerian PhD graduate returnees in implementing IC strategies within the Algerian educational context.

The following section will discuss the research Paradigm and Approach.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm adopted for this research is constructivist (interpretivist), a philosophical approach that emphasises the importance of understanding social phenomena as constructs of individuals' interpretations and interactions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In the constructivist (interpretivist) paradigm, reality is perceived as subjective and socially constructed (Mertens, 2005). This implies that individuals shape their understanding of reality based on their experiences, interactions, and interpretations of the world around them. Additionally, knowledge is regarded as subjective and context-dependent, highlighting the significance of comprehending the meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences (Denzin, 2006). Within this paradigm, there is a focus on the influence of language, culture, and social context in shaping individuals' perceptions and understandings of reality. Researchers who adopt this paradigm often aim to grasp the distinctive perspectives of individuals and the meanings they assign to their experiences, rather than seeking universal truths or generalisable knowledge (Gergen, 2009).

In this study, the constructivist paradigm allies with the aim of exploring the integration of intercultural competence within ELT practices among Algerian returnees in HE. By adopting a constructivist lens, this study recognises that perceptions of intercultural competence are influenced by individuals' subjective interpretations, cultural backgrounds, and educational experiences. It acknowledges the need to uncover the underlying constructs

and meanings that participants attribute to intercultural competence within ELT practices. Embracing a constructivist perspective allows for a comprehensive exploration of the complex nature of intercultural competence integration in ELT. The implications of this philosophical stance are evident in the research design and methodologies employed.

Research Design

Given that the qualitative approach aims to understand and interpret social phenomena by examining participants' perspectives, experiences, and meanings (Creswell, 2014), it aligns with the interpretive philosophical standpoint adopted in this study. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the research topic, capturing the complexity and richness inherent in participants' viewpoints (Charmaz, 2006). Indeed, and given the nuanced and multifaceted nature of integrating intercultural competence within ELT practices, qualitative research can provide a platform for uncovering subjective interpretations and experiences influenced by individual perspectives, institutional contexts, and cultural factors.

Furthermore, employing a qualitative approach with an exploratory purpose allows us to delve into the perceptions and experiences of Algerian PhD graduate returnees regarding the integration of intercultural competence into their teaching practices. This approach is particularly valuable given the limited prior research on the topic and its inherent complexity, offering the flexibility needed to adapt the research design as new insights emerge (Cervo et al., 2006; Trochim, 2006). In addition, and by emphasising the significance of context and the social construction of knowledge, qualitative research can reveal the unique factors that shape participants' perspectives, providing valuable localised insights to inform educational practices and policies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Therefore, the qualitative research selected for this study serves as a robust framework for investigating the complexities of integrating intercultural competence within ELT practices among

Algerian returnees, ultimately contributing to the advancement of language education and fostering a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment for students in Algerian higher education institutions.

The term "research design" refers to a systematic plan or a set of "inquiry strategies" that offer researchers direction in structuring and executing their research endeavour (Cohen et al., 2018). Given the focus on exploring the integration of intercultural competence into teaching practices among Algerian PhDgraduate returnees, we have selected a case study design for this research. Yin (2009) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context"(p. 18). This design allows for an in-depth examination of the phenomenon in its specific context, facilitating a rich understanding of the complexities involved.

Nevertheless, to provide a more holistic picture about how IC is perceived and integrated in ELT practices among Algerian PhD graduate returnees and ensure validity and comprehensiveness, this study utilises a mixed-methods approach whereby qualitative and quantitative data are gathered and merged in order to enhance the validity and reliability of research findings (Williams, 2007). As such, data will be gathered using two research instruments namely semi-structured interviews and semi-structured questionnaires in order to fully capture participants' viewpoints, gain deeper insights, and enhance the credibility of the findings.

Research Instruments

To answer the research questions and achieve the aim of the study, two instruments were designed.

Semi- Structured Questionnaire

To explore the incorporation of IC in teaching practices, a questionnaire was selected to be used as a tool to for data collection. A questionnaire is defined as a structured set of questions designed to gather information from participants and collect primary data (Cohen, 2003). It is valuable for obtaining attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs from a large sample, allowing for the collection of quantitative data in a consistent and standardised manner (Cohen, 2003). According to Dörnyei (2007), questionnaires can contain closed-ended or open-ended questions, which yield different types of data (e.g., nominal, ordinal). Foddy (1993) explains that while closed-ended questions provide specific response options, ensuring precise answers; open-ended questions allow respondents to share their views without being influenced by the researcher's perspective (McNamara, 1999; Creswell, 2012). This flexibility enables the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. In this study, the questionnaire included both types of questions as will be explained below.

Design of the Semi-Structured Questionnaire. The online semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix 1) designed for this study aims to examine the incorporation of intercultural competence (IC) into teaching practices among Algerian PhD graduatereturnees. The questionnaire comprised both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. It commences with a brief introduction, encouraging voluntary participation in the research study, ensuring

confidentiality to participants, and providing contact information for any inquiries. The main body of the questionnaire encompasses a total of 18 questions categorised into eight sections. Each addressing different aspects of the integration of (IC) into the teaching practices of Algerian PhDgraduate returnees. Section one serves as an introduction to the study and collects basic participant information, including gender. Section two delves into

academic and professional backgrounds, exploring motivations for studying in the UK and teaching experience. Section three investigates the impact of study abroad experiences on teaching philosophy and perspectives regarding IC. The following section focuses on the incorporation of intercultural competence in teaching, encompassing familiarity with intercultural concepts, beliefs regarding its influence on language learning, and utilisation of related activities and strategies. Section five explores teaching resources, challenges encountered, and training experiences related to intercultural competence. Section six examines professional development and opinions on ICas a component of the curriculum. Section seven solicits advice and recommendations for other ELT teachers, while section eight seeks suggestions and feedback on integrating ICinto the ELT classroom. Instructions are provided as needed to guide participants in responding to specific questions, such as the request to check all applicable responses. Open-ended questions are also incorporated to allow participants to provide comprehensive insights and opinions.

The design of the questionnaire must emphasise clarity, simplicity, and ease of completion to promote participation and ensure accurate data collection for the research study (Dillman et al., 2014), However, questionnaires have limitations if not carefully planned and implemented. Gilham (2008) suggests that respondents may find it easier to express their views verbally than in writing, which could potentially result in a lower response rate. As such, researchers could employ additional methods to explore opinions to compensate for the questionnaire's weaknesses.

Semi-Structured Interview

According to Jones (2018), interviews are a significant tool in qualitative research for gaining insights into individuals' perspectives and experiences. In this study, interviews were chosen as the primary method for collecting data. Semi-structured interviews were

selected to explore how graduate returnees perceive and practice integrating IC into their teaching. Patton (2002) explains that semi-structured interviews offer a balance between flexibility and structure. This allows researchers to delve deep into participants' experiences while maintaining consistency across interviews. This methodological choice aligns with the study's aim of uncovering the nuanced aspects of cultural adaptation and intercultural communication. Additionally, as noted by Gill et al. (2008), establishing a strong rapport with participants is crucial for collecting authentic and in-depth information. The semi-structured format provides a framework for researchers to build rapport and encourage participants to openly share their experiences. Therefore, the decision to use semi-structured interviews in this study demonstrates a dedication to capturing the richness and complexity of the returnees' experiences in a rigorous and empathetic manner that recognises their unique journeys.

Design of the Semi- Structured Interview. The semi structured interview (see Appendix 2) protocol is designed to guide the conversation while probing participants to provide detailed information based on their unique experiences (Denscombe, 2014). For the study, the semi-structured interview protocol consists of 15 open-ended questions, organised into thematic sections to facilitate a comprehensive investigation. Theintroduction section aims to establish rapport with participants and gather background information about their teaching experiences and educational background in Algeria and the UK. The questions in section one aimed to explore participants' perceptions about IC and their personal experiences with intercultural communication during their time abroad. Section two included questions that dealt with the participants' involvement in professional development opportunities related to intercultural communication and teaching, both while studying in the UK and after returning to Algeria. The following section enquired about the participants' current practices in incorporating intercultural competence into their teaching, including

strategies and challenges for promoting cultural understanding among students. Section four aimed to explore participants' perceptions of the impact of integrating IC on students' language learning and cultural awareness, as well as how studying in the UK has influenced their perspectives on language teaching and intercultural communication. The last section sought participants' insights and recommendations for fellow Algerian ELT educators interested in integrating IC into their classrooms. It also allowed participants to share any additional thoughts on the topic. Before the actual data collection, a pilot study has been conducted in order to enhance the quality of the study.

Pilot Study

A preliminary study was undertaken prior to data collection in order to test and refine the instruments used for data collection. As Creswell (2014) suggests, conducting a preliminary study is essential for determining the amount of time required by participants to complete the questionnaire, as well as for making any necessary revisions to reduce completion time and enhance the clarity of the questions. This preliminary study involved selecting a participant who closely resembled the target group. The participant was then provided with the questionnaire and took part in interviews. The results were subsequently analysed to obtain feedback regarding the clarity and ease of completing the questionnaire or participating in the interviews. Based on the feedback from the supervisor and the pilot study's participants, some modifications were made to enhance the instruments and ensure their validity.

For the questionnaire, several modifications were undertaken. Firstly, redundant ordoubled questions were identified and eliminated to streamline the questionnaire. Forinstance, questions that overlapped in content, such as those addressing both IC and language teaching, were consolidated to maintain focus and avoidrepetition. Clear instructions were added to questions where participants could select multiple options,

ensuring they understood the response format. In instances where options weredeemed necessary for clarity, they were included, whereas questions that lacked clear response options were removed. Additionally, questions regarding training participation wererepositioned to precede inquiries about teaching strategies, aligning with a logical sequence ofinquiry. Similarly, questions addressing related topics were grouped together to improve thequestionnaire's flow and reduce participant fatigue. The instructions were embedded withinthe questionnaire, guiding participants on how to navigate the response process effectively.

Regarding the interview, several adjustments have been made. Firstly, background questions have been incorporated into the interview protocol to gather relevant information about the participants. These questions aimed to provide a better understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, the interview questions have been reorganised to improve the flow of the conversation and aligned with the research objectives. Specifically, questions related to the participants' teaching experiences and background have been positioned at the beginning to establish context and rapport. Subsequently, inquiries pertaining to IC and its integration into teaching practices have been strategically placed to delve deeper into the core theme of the study. To further enhance the interview process, some questions from the original interview have been omitted, and others have been reformulated to better suit the interactive nature of an interview. These modifications aimed to foster a more dynamic and engaging interview experience, ensuring that the collected data remains comprehensive and well-structured for subsequent analysis.

Sampling

The sampling strategy utilised in this study targets Algerian PhDgraduate returnees who currently hold teaching positions in different universities across Algeria. These

individuals possess a unique combination of experiences and expertise, as they have completed their doctoral studies abroad and are now making contributions to the academic landscape in their home country. This approach allows for the selection of participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research aim. The chosen purposive sampling strategy is considered appropriate for this study for several reasons. Primarily, it aligns with the qualitative nature of the research and facilitates the collection of detailed insights from participants who possess the desired attributes and experiences (Creswell &Poth, 2018). This method allows for a comprehensive exploration of the research topic, capturing diverse perspectives and experiences related to the integration of IC in educational settings. Next, the practicality and feasibility of purposive sampling within the study's scope and resources are evident. By targeting educators who have encountered intercultural competence initiatives, such as language exchange programs or multicultural classroom environments, the approach ensures the inclusion of participants with direct exposure and involvement. The deliberate selection of PhDgraduate returnees who have completed their PhD studies abroad and are currently teaching in Algerian universities as participants ensures that the study benefits from their extensive experiences and insights gained from both international academia and local teaching contexts.

To ensure a sufficient sample size and account for population diversity, participants from different Algerian universities were invited to participate in order to explore their insights into their experiences with integrating IC within ELT practices. However, it is important to acknowledge the inherent limitations of purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013). The findings should be interpreted cautiously and cannot be extrapolated to the entire population of educators in Algerian universities. Additionally, potential biases may arise due to the selective nature of purposive sampling, which will be addressed and discussed in subsequent sections of the research.

Data Collection

To recruit participants in the research on IC, an information sheet accompanied by a consent form (see Appendix 3) was dispatched to them via email. The information sheet elucidated the research purpose and outlined the role of participants, while the consent form functioned as a comprehensive document delineating the research objectives, furnishing detailed study information, and providing the researcher's contact details for further inquiries or expression of interest in participating in qualitative interviews. This approach ensured that participants were fully apprised of the research, its objectives, and the anticipated involvement. The consent form also afforded them the opportunity to voluntarily consent to participation while retaining the option to withdraw at any stage without repercussions. The use of both questionnaires and interviews allowed us to generate rich and detailed data, which enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the topic under investigation.

The Administration of the Questionnaire

The administration of the online questionnaire took place over a four-week period in April and May 2024. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms. We distributed it via email and posted it in Algerian ELT laureates in the UK (dp)' Facebook group. We received a total of 11 responses. The data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistical and thematic analysis to answer the research questions. Table2.1 below displays the returnees' questionnaire respondents' profiles.

Table 2.1

The Returnees' Questionnaire Respondents' Profiles.

Gender	Percentage		Current Position	Percentage		years of experience	Percentage
Male	18.2%		MAB	36.4%		Less than 1 year	27.3%
			MCB	45.5%		1-3 years	63.6%
Female	81.8%		MCA	18.2%		4-6 years	9.1%

The sampling frame consisted of 11PhD graduatereturnees who are currently teaching at different English departments across Algeria. These were asked to complete an online questionnaire. The table presents data on PhDgraduatereturnees detailing their gender distribution, current positions, and years of experience. Among the respondents, females constitute the majority at 81.8%, while males account for 18.2%. In terms of current positions, MCB (45.5%) predominates among females, followed by MCA (18.2%), whereas MAB (36.4%) represents the male demographic. Regarding teaching experience, the majority of respondents have 1-3 years of experience (63.6%), followed by those with less than 1 year (27.3%), and a smaller proportion with 4-6 years (9.1%). The sample size comprises 11 PhD graduate returnees who participated in an online questionnaire, reflecting a diverse representation within the academic landscape of English departments in Algeria.

Conduct of the Semi-Structured Interviews

We conducted semi-structured interviews that explored their perceptions and experiences of integrating the IC into their teaching. Ten teachers were contacted via email. Regrettably, we have not received responses from four teachers. Only six teachers agreed to participate. The educators granted us their consent to be recorded. The interviews were conducted online, using Google meet platform and lasted approximately 40 minutes to onehour and a half. The interviews were designed to allow for in-depth exploration of the

topic under investigation, and the semi-structured format provided the flexibility to follow up on interesting points raised by the participants. Table 2.2 below displays the returnees' interview participants' profiles.

Table 2.2

Returnees' Interview Participants' Profiles

Participants	Gender	Academic Background
Teacher 01	Male	PhD Applied Linguistic
Teacher 02	Female	PhD in English literature
Teacher 03	Female	PhD in Philosophy, Social and Cultural Anthropology
Teacher 04	Male	PhD in Education
Teacher 05	Female	PhD in British Politics
Teacher 06	Female	PhD in Education

Table 2.2 provides an overview of the academic backgrounds and genders of the six participants involved in the survey. Out of the six participants, two are male and four are female. The male participants hold PhDs in Applied Linguistics and Education, while the female participants have PhDs in English Literature, Philosophy, Social and Cultural Anthropology, Education, and British Politics. This diverse range of academic disciplines among the participants demonstrates the gender diversity and multidisciplinary nature of the returnees teaching at English departments in Algeria.

Data Analysis

In the process of analysis, the collected information is transformed into empirical data that is utilised in order to achieve the aim of the study. Given that the research findings

encompass both quantitative and qualitative data, two distinct techniques were employed: descriptive statistical analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. The following sections will elucidate these methodologies in detail.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of the Questionnaire's Closed-ended Items

To analyse the closed-ended questions in our questionnaire, we used descriptive statistical methods. The data was entered into Google Forms and then exported to Microsoft Excel 2013 for calculation and analysis. According to Denscombe (2010), descriptive statistics provide a straightforward and rigorous approach to organising data, summarising findings, displaying evidence, describing the profile of findings, and exploring connections between data points, such as correlations and associations. Therefore, descriptive statistics were used to present the percentages of the responses, which were illustrated through tables and bar charts. These visual aids are especially powerful as they clearly show the proportions of each category in a simple and easily understandable manner (Creswell, 2014). By using this method, we ensured a comprehensive and informative presentation of our findings, effectively communicating the distribution and relationships within our data.

Thematic Analysis of the Questionnaires and Interviews' Qualitative Data

Based on Cohen et al. 's (2018, p. 524) definition that qualitative data analysis involves a reflective and responsive exchange between the researcher and the data, we chose to use a thematic approach when analysing the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews. We followed the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), as well as the additional guidelines recommended by Creswell (2008), Dörnyei (2007), Yin (2014), and Cohen et al. (2018), our approach to thematic analysis can be described as follows:

Figure 2.1.

Thematic Analysis Process

*Familiarising Ourselves with Data***:** Once we transcribed the data, we carefully read through

the qualitative transcripts from the questionnaires and interviews. This process, known as

cyclical readings ((Halcomb and Davidson, 2006, p.40), helped us maintain a close

connection to the data and become familiar with it. According to Miles et al. (2014), it is

possible for the researcher to identify segments of the data that can answer specific research

questions during the analysis. With this in mind, we started analysing individual cases and

organising them based on our research questions. Then, we looked for comments and

grouped them. This allowed us to delve deeper into the data and began the coding process.

Generating Initial Codes: After thoroughly reviewing the data, comprehending its content,

and classifying it accordingly, we commenced the coding procedure. Coding involves the

process of "extracting significant categories, concepts, and themes from raw data" (Yin,

2018, p. 116). The interview transcripts were carefully examined. Each noteworthy piece of

data was examined and assigned appropriate codes. We opted for an inductive coding

approach, allowing the categories and themes to emerge organically from the data. In terms

of coding methodology, we employed NVivo coding, which proved advantageous in

capturing participants' exact words and phrases as codes for analysis. An illustrative

example of initial coding is presented in table 2.3 below:

Table 2.3

Example of Initial Coding fromReturnees' Interview.

Data Extract (teacher 3)	Initial Code
"Exposure to multimedia content from various cultures."	Multimedia cultural content

Generating and Reviewing the Themes: Once the initial coding had been completed, we proceeded to cluster similar codes together and color-coded them to establish categories. This step was of paramount importance as it enabled us to consolidate interconnected themes in a coherent manner, thereby preventing any potential overlap or redundancy within the categories. It also guaranteed the appropriateness of the selected quotations for each respective category (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The development of themes was guided by their relevance to the research questions and significance within the dataset.

Table 2.4

Example of Themes' Generating from the Returnees' Interview

Data Extract	Code	Initial Theme	Category
Teacher1: "I had to be very careful in implementing certain cultural aspects that I am afraid do not fit into the cultural background of my students...I tend to choose them better carefully not to offend anybody and that's my own strategy into navigating the Intercultural competence inside my classroom."	Content selection	Integration of intercultural elements	Teaching practices
Teacher3: "Students are open to discuss and accept other cultures when properly guided."	Openness to other cultures	Taboo Subjects and Cultural Sensitivity	Cultural understanding

Interpretation and reporting: We performed a thorough analysis to interpret the themes in relation to our research questions and aims. To enhance our interpretations, we established connections and offered explanations based on evidence from the data. Our findings were presented in a convergent design, we merged the quantitative and qualitative data under five main themes.

Ensuring Research Quality and Trustworthiness

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), the role of the researcher is vital in ensuring the quality of research by adhering to crucial planning steps. Although interpretive studies are not governed by a predetermined set of rules like positivist research, they can still achieve quality by meeting specific criteria (Bryman, 2008). These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 2007). Any factors that undermine the research trustworthiness can impact the findings. Therefore, it is essential to prioritise maintaining the quality and integrity of the current study.

Credibility

In this research, we followed the definition of credibility as the level of confidence that can be placed in the truthfulness of the research findings (Macnee& McCabe, 2008). Credibility plays a crucial role in determining whether the research findings accurately represent plausible information derived from the interpretation of data provided by the participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell &Poth, 2018). Therefore, it was vital to identify effective strategies for managing the results. The use of multiple data gathering methods is said to enhance the value of qualitative research (Bryman, 2008). To ensure the credibility of this study, we employed a mixed-methods approach(triangulation). Triangulation entails employing diverse instruments, data sources, or even researchers

within the study (Denscombe, 2010). This approach increases researchers with greater confidence in their data and findings (Denscombe, 2010). Therefore, we collected data using both questionnaires and interviews in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under investigation. By enhancing credibility, we can cross-validate the findings and avoid biases, thus ensuring more reliable and valid outcomes (Bouacha, 2021).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability to apply research findings to different contexts, allowing for generalisation (Merriam &Tisdell, 2016). It determines how well the findings can be applied to other contexts with different participants. Researchers can enhance transferability by providing comprehensive descriptions and purposeful sampling (Bitsch, 2005). By offering detailed accounts of the research process and the sample, researchers make it easier for readers to determine the relevance of the research data to their own experiences. Therefore, we provided extensive details regarding the research design, data collection settings, participant selection, and data analysis and interpretation methods. This documentation ensures that the study can be replicated in other contexts for those interested in conducting similar research or exploring closely related topics, as it presents information that can hopefully be understood and applied in various settings.

Dependability

Dependability in research refers to the stability and consistent nature of research processes over time. It involves ensuring that research findings can be replicated under similar circumstances (Shenton, 2004). To attain dependability, we maintained constant contact with our supervisor throughout the various stages of data collection and analysis, seeking guidance and support. Furthermore, we provided detailed descriptions of our data

collection methods to the readers. Moreover, the adoption of a convergent mixed-method design facilitated the integration of diverse data types, potentially enhancing the credibility of the findings for other researchers to evaluate the quality of the research (Dörnyei, 2007).

Confirmability

Confirmability in research ensures that the findings are primarily shaped by the responses of the participants and the interpretations of the researcher, rather than being influenced by the biases or values of the researcher (Denscombe, 2010). This guarantees that the research findings are free from researcher bias and are grounded solely in the collected and analysed data. To ensure confirmability, this research predominantly relied on raw data from interviews' recordings and questionnaires' responses. The interpretations of the data were aligned with the views, beliefs, and experiences of the participants. Throughout the synthesis process, transcript quotations were provided as evidence to support the interpretations, thus maintaining fidelity to the voices of the participants (Bouacha, 2021). However, it is important to acknowledge the researcher's positionality and subjectivity during data collection, transcription, analysis, and interpretation (Smith, 2015). Consequently, our subjectivity and positionality cannot be ignored.

Ethical Dimensions

Ethics plays a crucial role in research, impacting every step from the initial design to the final reporting and beyond (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, we made sure to follow ethical considerations in our study. Following the ethical standards set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018), we employed the following methods:

- *Informed Consent:* Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Prior to their participation in the study, all participants were provided with informed consent. They were given detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent forms were utilised, and participants were given sufficient time to review the information and ask any questions before providing their consent (American Psychological Association, 2017).

- *Participant Confidentiality:* Throughout the study, participant confidentiality was strictly maintained. Anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms or numerical codes instead of real names in data analysis and reporting. Identifying information was either removed or altered to prevent personal identification. The data collected, including interviews and questionnaire responses, were securely stored and accessible only to the research team.

- *Protection of Participants:* We carefully considered potential risks associated with discussing experiences related to studying abroad. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. They were also given the option to skip questions or topics they felt uncomfortable discussing. Participants were provided with support resources for any required assistance or additional information regarding the study or the topics discussed. By adhering to established guidelines and implementing comprehensive measures for informed consent, participant confidentiality, and protection, we ensured the integrity of our study and prioritised the well-being of our participants. These practices not only upheld the ethical dimension of our research but also strengthened its credibility and reliability.

Conclusion

      This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of our research methodology, detailing the research design, data collection tools, setting, sampling technique, and data collection procedures, with clear justifications for each methodological choice. We employed statistical analysis for the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire, and thematic analysis for the open-ended questions of the questionnaire as well as the interview data. Additionally, we ensured the quality and integrity of our research by adhering to rigorous ethical standards and meticulously documenting our procedures. The next chapter will present and analyse the findings from the data collection instruments, offering a thorough examination of the participants' responses and insights.

Chapter Three: Results and Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the results and findings generated from the analysis of the data obtained from the research instruments (questionnaire and interview). The quantitative results from the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire's closed-ended items and the qualitative results from the thematic analysis of the open-ended items and the interviews' data are presented and interpreted in relation to the research questions and objectives. This chapter thus will integrate the statistical results from the closed-ended questions with the thematic findings from the open-ended questions and interviews, offering a holistic view of the research findings. This is done under three main sections: Algerian PhD grduate returnees' perception of IC, returnees' integration of IC into their ELT practices,teachers' recommendations and suggestions.

Algerian PhD GraduateReturnees' Perception of IC

This section delves into the perceptions and experiences of Algerian PhD graduate returnees regarding intercultural competence (IC) in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT). Through questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews, this section presents the findings under 06 themes which are presented below:

Algerian PhD GraduateReturnees' Conceptualisation of IC

Figure 3.1 below presents the results from questionnaire item seven (How familiar are you with IC in the context of ELT?).

Figure 3.1

Algerian PhD Graduate Returnees' Conceptualisation of IC
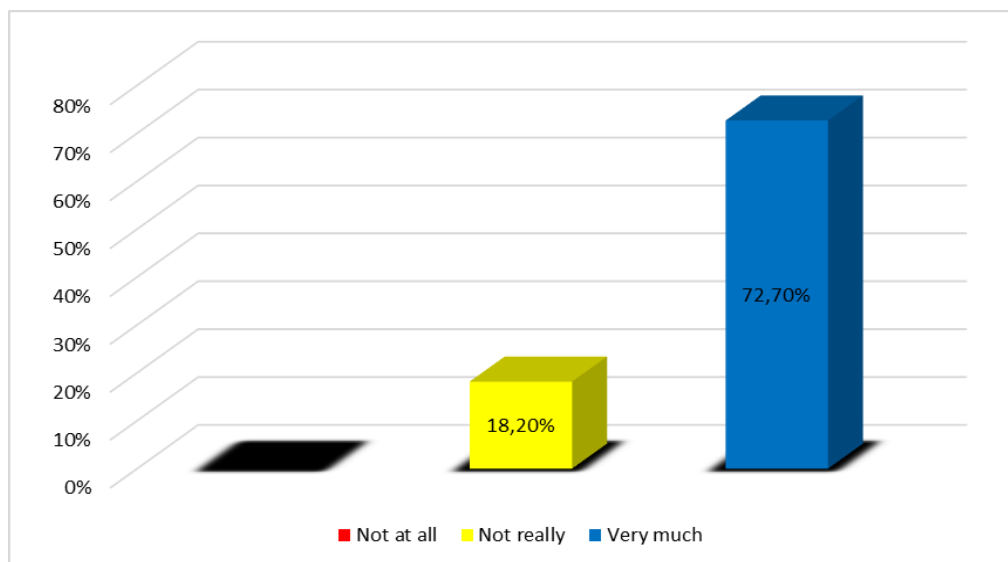
The results provide insights into respondents' familiarity IC in the context of ELT. over 72% of the respondents reported being very familiar with IC while about 18.2 mentioned that they were not really familiar with it. These results highlight a predominant awareness and understanding of IC among respondents, suggesting that most respondents recognize its importance and are knowledgeable about its application in ELT contexts.

The majority of participants in the interviews showed great awareness regarding IC, for instance teacher 5 stated:

"It is the ability of the teacher to understand the local culture and teach it to their students as well as their ability to understand other cultures."

Similarly, teacher 3 teacher 6 mentioned:

"I believe that IC refers to the set of skills that enables a person to effectively and appropriately interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering

understanding, respect, and effective communication in a multicultural

environment.''

It can be noted from the above quotes that the participants teachers demonstrated a strong understanding of IC which reflect a comprehensive awareness of IC, emphasising cultural awareness, respect, and effective communication.

The Influence of Studying in the UK on Returnees' Conceptualisation of IC

Figure 3.2 below presents the results from questionnaire item six (Has your experience studying in the UK shaped your perspectives on IC?)

Figure 3.2

The Influence of Studying in the UK on Returnees' Conceptualisation of IC
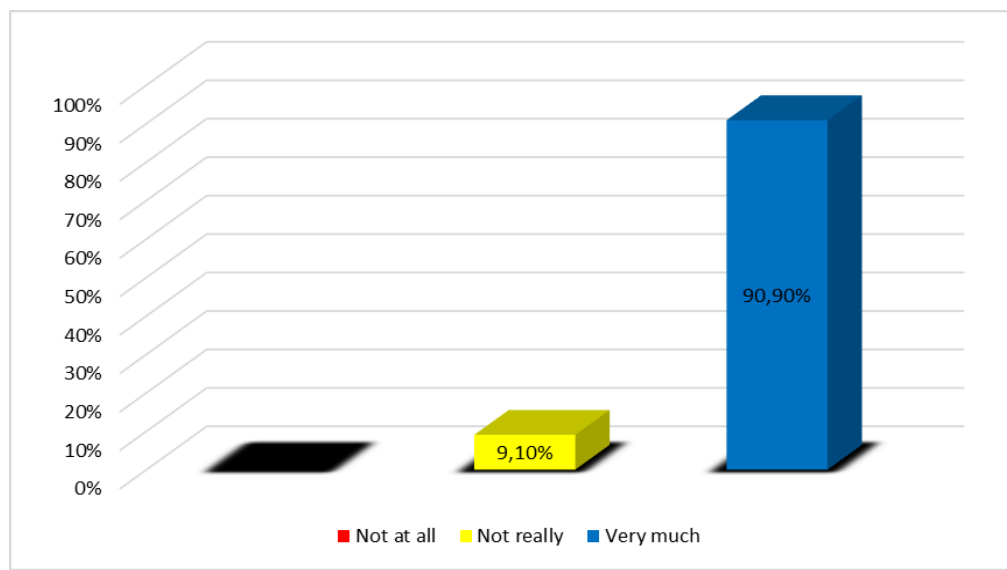
The examination of whether studying in the UK has influenced respondents' perspectives on IC reveals compelling findings. An overwhelming 90.9% of respondents expressed that their experience in the UK significantly shaped their views on IC while less than 10% mentioned that it wasn't really influential. This indicates a substantial impact of their academic tenure in the UK on their understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.

Notably, there were no responses indicating absent influence, suggesting an acknowledgment among participants of the transformative nature of their time studying in the UK.

In line with the questionnaire results, Teacher 3 reflects the impact of intercultural experiences on her teaching practices. The teacher attributes significant personal and professional growth to her interactions with supervisors and peers from diverse cultural backgrounds. As evidenced in this quote:

> *"Yes, it has shaped me a lot. It's my experience with my supervisors. This is the most influential and the first experience that shaped my behaviour with the students. Living with people from different countries in the student accommodation also gets you to know that the Indians are not dirty, the French are not arrogant, the Germans are not whatever, the Spanish they are easy going."*

Similarly, Teacher 2 reflected on her experience with a UK supervisor, realising the importance of cultural knowledge in language learning through the concept of pantomime during Christmas. This awareness underscored the necessity of integrating cultural competence into language education. In this regard, she stated:

> *"Referring back to my experience there I remember my supervisor once told me about a major thing they do in the UK during Christmas, which is called pantomime, which we call in Arabic التمثيل الإيمائي. Unfortunately, I had no idea about pantomimes ... This is something they do during Christmas. And I was thinking, well, why do I don't know about this? If it is that important to their culture?... She said How come you learn about that language? And you don't know important stuff like this."*

Furthermore, teacher 5 indicated that living abroad exposed them to various cultural aspects such as different languages, accents, food, clothing, ways of thinking, marriage traditions,

and work ethics. This exposure highlights the importance of cultural competence in language education. As she mentioned:

> *"Living abroad exposed me to different languages, accents, food, clothing, way of thinking, marriage traditions, work ethics etc."*

The above quotes highlight the impact of international experiences on returnees' IC and perspectives which enable them to challenge stereotypes. These perspectives underscore the value of immersive cultural exposure in fostering intercultural competence and creating inclusive classrooms.

The Impact of Studying Abroad on the Returnees' Teaching Philosophy

Figure 3.3 below presents the results from questionnaire item five (To what extent has studying abroad influenced your teaching philosophy and approach to ELT?)

Figure 3.3

The Impact of Studying Abroad on the Returnees' Teaching Philosophy
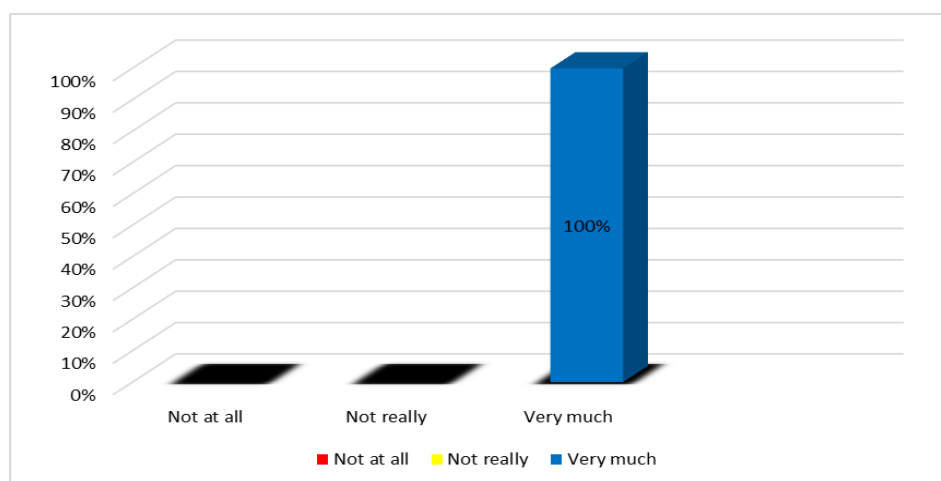
The Results reveal a unanimous acknowledgement of its significance, with 100% of participants affirming that studying abroad had a profound influence on their teaching philosophy and approach.

During the interviews, teacher 1 shared insights into how her experience as a PhD student in the UK shaped his approach to language teaching within the classroom, declaring

> *"I've benefited a lot from that experience. How I would treat my students and how I would deal with my students in terms of language learning inside the classroom where I teach them or perhaps treat them to be the Centre focus of the classroom."*

Teacher 04 reflected on the experience, expressing how it facilitated the adoption of a critical approach towards education and teaching.

> *"The experience enabled me to undertake a critical approach towards education and teaching."*

Moreover, Teacher 6 highlighted the importance of respecting students' opinions, drawing parallels to the practices observed during supervision in the UK. She stated:

> *"I do not impose my opinions on my students, and I respect their opinions even if I do not agree with them; my supervisors in the UK used to do that too."*

These testimonials underscore the transformative impact of international education experiences on educators' perspectives and practices in ELT, highlighting the cultivation of critical thinking, cultural awareness, respect for diversity, and student-centred approaches.

Returnees' Perceptions on The Influence of Integrating IC on Students' Language Learning

Figure 3.4 below presents the results from questionnaire item eight (To what extent do you think that integrating IC influence students' language learning?)

Figure 3.4

Returnees' Perceptions on The Influence of Integrating IC on Students' Language Learning
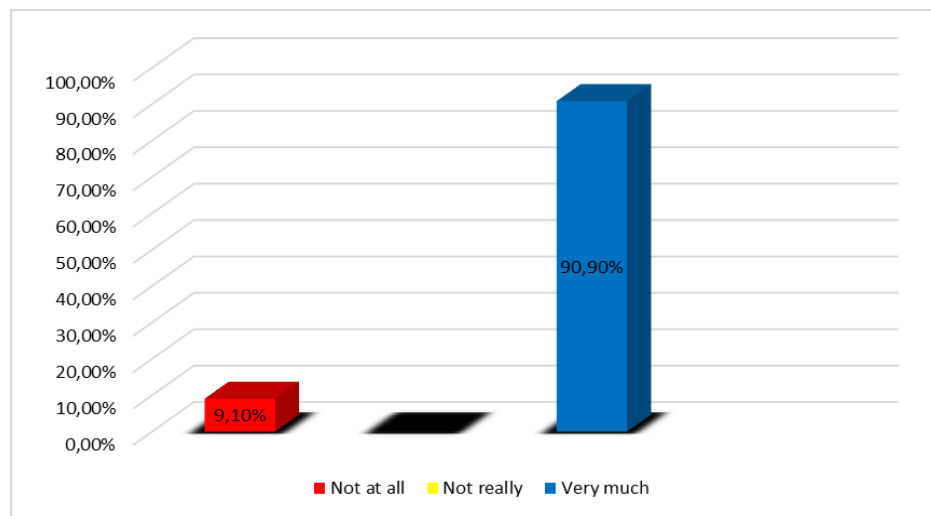
The results reveal that a substantial 90.9% of respondents indicated that IC integration has a significant impact on language acquisition while less than 10% of the respondents mentioned that IC integration has no influence at all. This widespread agreement on the impact of IC integration on students' language learning stresses the perceived importance of intertwining cultural understanding with language learning endeavours.

Similarly, many participants during the interviews agreed on the influence of intercultural competence as evidenced by teacher 2:

> *"I think to learn a language you have to learn the culture. As far as I'm concerned, because I'm a literature teacher… sometimes, we have to read literary texts and we cannot understand them if we don't understand the culture … For example, expressions you have to be aware of that of the culture, okay, in order to understand the literary texts, and analyse them. So, I think it is very, very important to teach culture before we teach language, or we teach them simultaneously…We teach language, we teach linguistics and we did everything related to English, except*

culture. And it is actually a burden for teachers of literature, because sometimes we have to explain for students, you know, the culture and so on. And then we move to analyse literary texts."

Similarly, teacher 3 declared:

"Well, my students are Intercultural in the first place I'm just giving them the space to externalise their interculturality…they listen to each other, the type of the topics they talk about … In Oran we have masters of civilization as speciality is very important because when we talk about people' civilizations here we talk about societies, ethnicities and identities so this module is a good space to incorporate the Intercultural aspects … I also teach in the philosophy departments analysing philosophical texts in English so here again we discuss topics for example identity, ethnicity and all those social values from a philosophical perspective in English, so here we are incorporating those moral values that inform the Intercultural competence."

Teacher 2 and 3's quotes above underscore the importance of cultural understanding in language education, particularly in literature and civilization courses, where cultural context is crucial for comprehension and analysis. The findings highlight the transformative effects of IC, noting that it fosters open-mindedness, reduces judgmental attitudes, and enhances language acquisition through personal cultural engagement and classroom discussions. They emphasise that IC should extend beyond the classroom to maximise its benefits.

Returnees' Participation in Training on IC

Figure 3.5 below presents the results from questionnaire item 14(Have you participated in any training related to intercultural competence and teaching?)

Figure 3.5

Returnees' Participation in Training on IC
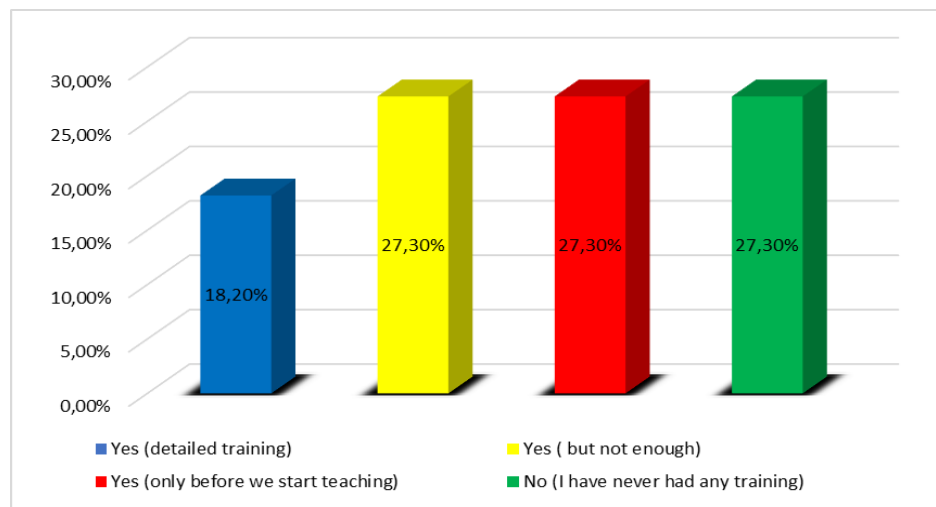
The results above provide insights into respondents' participation in training related to intercultural competence and teaching. Over a quarter (27.3%) of the respondents reported receiving training before they start teaching. The same percentages also indicated they though they received training, yet it was not enough. Additionally, 18.2% stated receiving detailed training. Yet, over 27 % mentioned never having any training related to IC. These results highlight the diverse experiences of respondents regarding training in this area.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews further reveal that most returnees have received varied training on IC. To start with, Teacher 2 maintained that she received training in the UK, specifically tailored for higher education with. She noted:

> *"During my time in the UK, I received training on teaching in higher education, with a particular focus on multiculturalism and cultural diversity. This training was crucial due to the multicultural nature of universities. We learned strategies for effectively engaging students from diverse cultural backgrounds… My experience teaching English classes for two years in the UK further reinforced these insights, especially when dealing with students of varying proficiency levels."*

It appears that teacher 2's teaching experience in the UK, a country known for its cultural diversity, enabled her to acquire the necessary skills for engaging students from diverse backgrounds. This experience, combined with focused training on multiculturalism and cultural diversity, helped her develop effective strategies for teaching English to students of varying proficiency levels.

From another perspective, teacher 3 recapitulated on her training in the field of anthropology which influenced her intercultural awareness. She stated:

> *"I consider myself an anthropologist by training, which implies being interculturally prepared to engage with diverse individuals. Anthropology involves encountering people from various cultures, and as an ethnographer, I've extensively practised observing and interacting with different cultural groups. Through these experiences, I've naturally developed intercultural competence, learning from direct interactions rather than formal study… I received training in Southampton in 2018, where scholars and participants from different universities observed various social spaces like the city centre, bus stations, malls, and museums. This training focused on understanding how people behave and interact in different contexts, preparing us to navigate diverse social situations effectively."*

The above interviews extracts reveal varied experiences with intercultural competence training that focused on multiculturalism or direct experiences with cultures as part of their PhD training.

Returnees' Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Figure 3.6 below presents the results from questionnaire item 15(How do you continue to enhance your own intercultural competence as an EFL teacher?)

Figure 3.6

*Returnees 'ContinuingProfessionalDevelopmen*t *(CPD)*
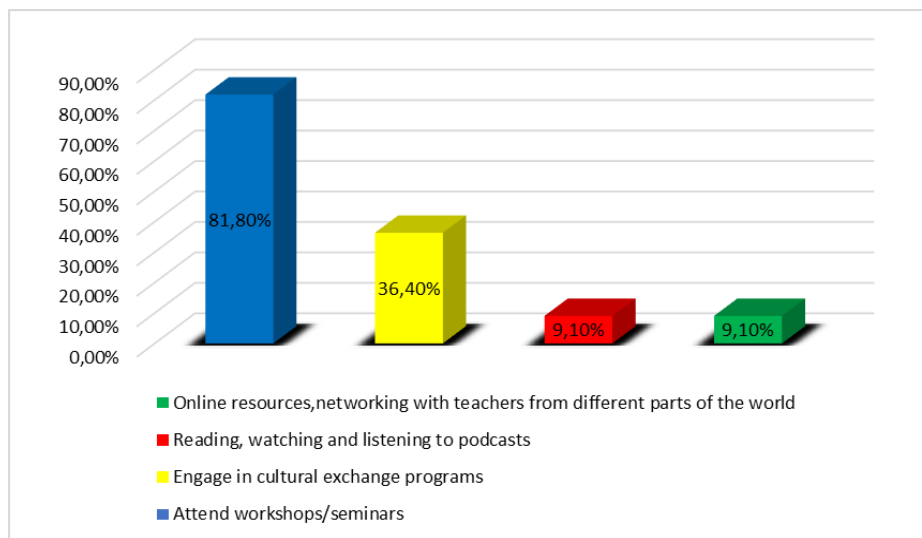
The results provide insights into how respondents continue to enhance their own intercultural competence as ELT teachers. The majority of respondents, (81.8%) chose attending workshops/seminars as a method of CPD. In the second position and with a percentage of 36.4%, respondents chose engaging in cultural exchange programs. In the third position came reading, watching, and listening to podcasts and online resources, networking with teachers from different parts of the world with only 9.1% of respondents. These results underscore the varied approaches employed by respondents to continuously improve their intercultural competence as ELT teachers.

The findings from the interview revealed that many participants tend to network with their colleagues in order to enhance their IC as an ELT teacher. For instance, teacher 2 stated:

> *"Sometimes I coordinate with my colleagues who are only returnees. Some of them from UK, others Jordan. So, I coordinate with them and we want to make some changes to be honest. For example, push boundaries, talk more about taboos get students familiar more with the culture."*

Furthermore, teacher 3 indicated that she enhances her IC trough teaching as evidenced in the following quote:

> *"I enhance my intercultural competence through the wide range of topics I suggest to my students in oral expression."*

It appears that teachers tend to enhance their IC through varied methods such as collaborating with internationally experienced colleagues and introducing diverse topics in oral expression classes. The findings regarding teachers' integration of IC are reported below.

Returnees' Integration of IC into their ELT Practices

In this section, we delve into the multifaceted aspects of Algerian PhD graduate returnees' integration of IC into ELT practices. The exploration is divided into three themes as reported below:

IC Integration Strategies Employed by Algerian PhD Graduate Returnees

Figure 3.7 below presents the results from questionnaire item nine (Which intercultural activities have you used in your EFL classroom?).

Figure 3.7

IC Integration Strategies Employed by Algerian PhD Grduate Returnees
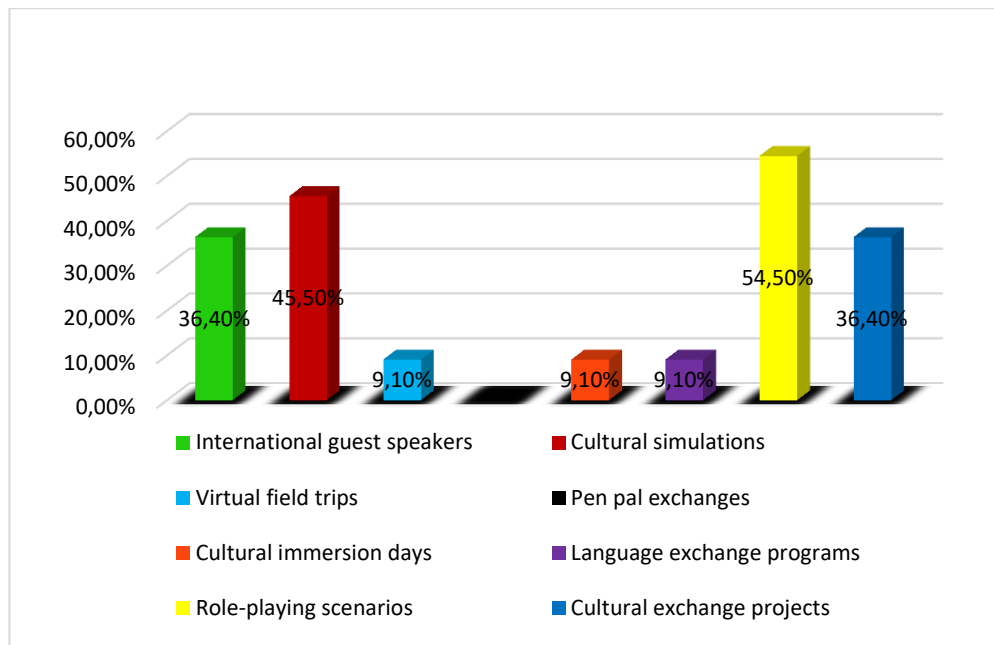
The statistical data reveals that role playing scenarios and cultural simulations are the most favoured strategies for integrating IC into their teaching, receiving respectively 54.5% and 45.5% of the responses. Cultural exchange projects and international guest speakers are the second favourite strategies, each with 36.4% of responses. In contrast, language exchange programs, cultural immersion days, virtual field trips, and discussion-based approaches with the aim to raise intercultural awareness and tolerance all come in the third position each with 9.1%.

Like in the questionnaire results, the findings from the interviews showed that teachers intentionally aimed mainly at developing students' intercultural knowledge and promoting their skills of understanding cultural aspects of different cultures. In this regard, teacher 6 argued:

"I try to incorporate more cultural aspects into my lessons to raise my students'
awareness of other cultures, particularly the British one. I provide examples of
multiple cultural aspects. I also make my students watch videos and listen to
audios…I try to make them aware of what Adrian Holliday calls: 'small cultures'. If
they manage to understand what this concept is about, they will be less judgmental
towards others."

Similarly, teacher 2 explained that her students respond well to a mix of
teaching methods. While audio-visual materials like videos are generally well-
received, her master's students particularly appreciate lectures that include
storytelling and cultural comparisons:

" I find that my students really enjoy when I use audio-visual materials, like videos,
in my lessons. However, with the group of master's students I'm teaching this year,
they seem to prefer it when I lecture and share stories. They appreciate when I draw
comparisons and highlight both the similarities and differences between human
experiences across cultures. This approach helps them feel more connected to the
target language culture, despite its differences from their own. They value these
insights and enjoy engaging in thoughtful discussions during my lectures."

Furthermore, Teacher 3 fosters inclusive classroom discussions and hosts
international speakers to broaden students' perspectives. She encourages reading and
watching movies to understand diverse cultures and stresses the importance of
recognizing regional differences within Algeria. She stated:

"My strategy involves fostering classroom conversations that engage
everyone and ensure all voices are heard. I bring in international speakers
and incorporate academic perspectives … I encourage students to read by

proposing book titles and to watch movies to understand diverse perspectives

and cultures. I emphasise that intercultural competence isn't just about

understanding people from different countries; it also involves addressing

regional differences within Algeria, such as those between the east, west, and

south. This is particularly important in a university setting, which is a highly

intercultural space with students from various cities."

The above quotes highlight that teachers tend to develop students' IC by incorporating various cultural elements into lessons, utilising audio-visual materials, and facilitating discussions about cultural differences while addressing regional differences within Algeria and promoting understanding and respect for diverse perspectives.

Conversely, teacher 1 claimed that the integration of IC is module-dependent. He declared:

"...I am not teaching oral expression or other modules that incorporates those

foreign cultural aspects ... pretty much the integration of intercultural competence

depends on the contents that you are providing to your students. My content about

Linguistics and about methodology that would rarely witness some kind of foreign

cultural aspects in the classroom and if they do happen to appear and I'm talking

about cultural aspect I tend to choose them better carefully not to offend anybody

and that's my own strategy into navigating the Intercultural competence inside my

classroom."

It appears that even when teachers are not deliberately exposing students to IC, they seem to be doing that with care and attention in order to avoid cultural clashes and misconceptions.

Returnees' Involvement of Students in Creating Culturally Inclusive Classroom

Environment

Figure 3.8 below presents the results from questionnaire item 12(Do you involve students in creating a culturally inclusive classroom environment?)

Figure 3.8

Returnees' Involvement of Students in Creating Culturally Inclusive Classroom Environment
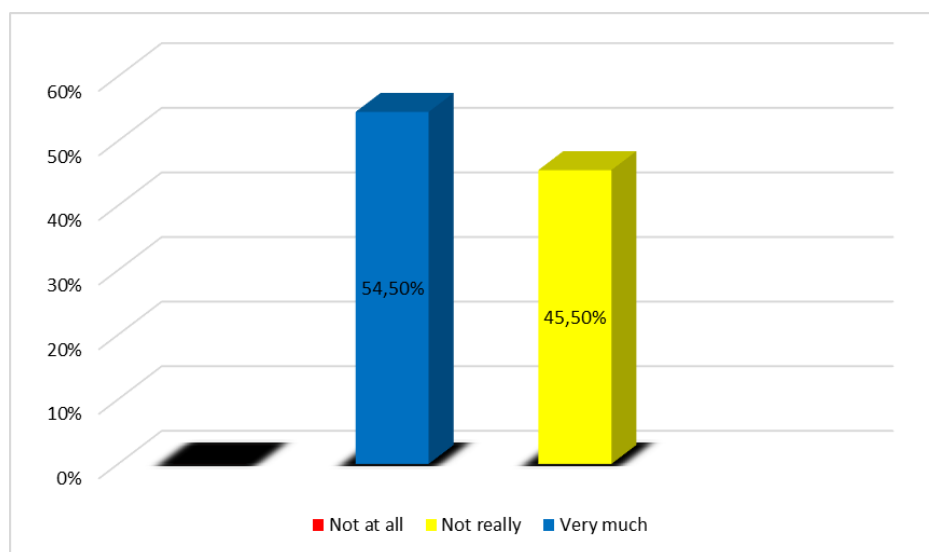
The figure shows that over half of the respondents (54.5%) reported involving students in this endeavour, whileover 40% of them indicated doing that to some extent. These results highlight a significant level of student involvement in fostering cultural inclusivity within the classroom. Such engagement demonstrates the importance of empowering students to contribute to the development of inclusive spaces and promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility for cultivating a welcoming atmosphere for all.

In line with the questionnaire results, the interview findings showed that most teachers focus on making students active participants in their education by using various techniques to enhance their understanding and engagement. Teacher 3 explained that by saying:

"I give the space to the students to provide their own topics and believe me

they are very creative ...We have a very very interesting chatting space

*because they're very open to talk about what is close to them."*

Additionally, teacher 1 mentioned:

"I would give the total freedom to the students if I think I would still manage a good

control over the classroom. Respectful discussion and expressing one's point of view

in the classroom should not be considered shameful or something to fear. I strive to

break the taboo around asking questions in class, which are often viewed as private

or annoying. Students sometimes develop a phobia of asking questions, fearing it

might upset the teacher or result in a poor grade. I enjoy challenging this

misconception, especially in the classroom. I tell my students that learning can be

informal and interactive as long as mutual respect is maintained. If they show

respect to me, I will treat them the same way."

The interview extracts above reveals that teachers prioritise making students active participants in their education by employing diverse methods to boost understanding and engagement and creating an inclusive learning environment. Overall, their efforts aim to cultivate mutual respect and understanding among students while enhancing their intercultural skills and awareness. However, the findings also highlight the challenges faced by teachers in incorporating cultural aspects as we shall see below.

Challenges Facing Returnees in Integrating IC in ELT Classrooms

Figure 3.9 below presents the results from questionnaire item 13(Do you face any challenges integrating IC in EFL classrooms?)

Figure 3.9

Challenges Facing Returnees in Integrating IC in ELT Classrooms
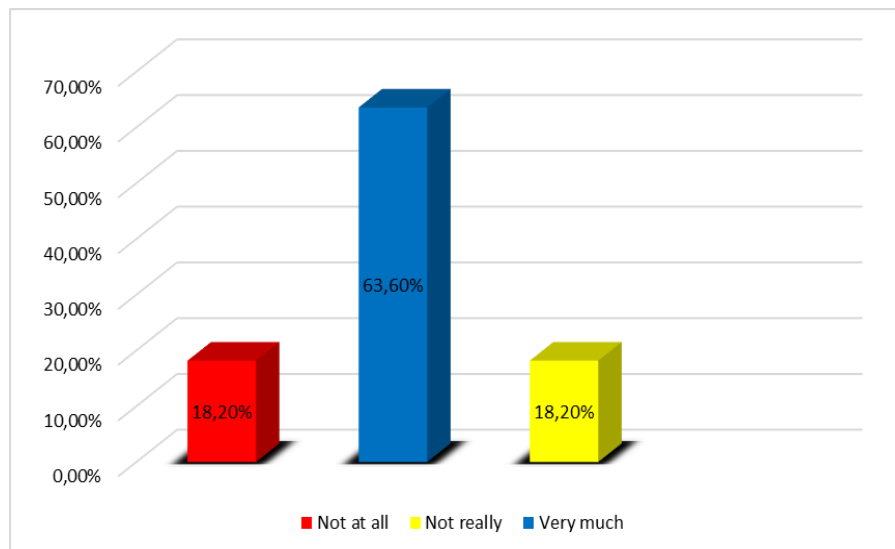
The results reveal that the most respondents (63.6%) reported facing challenges a lot while slightly over 18% of them stated that they rarely do. Yet, a similar percentage (18.2%) noted that they encounter no challenges. These results highlight the prevalence of obstacles related to integrating intercultural competence in Algerian ELT classrooms. The qualitative findings provide further insights into the nature of these challenges.

The analysis of the interview findings showed that some teachers faced challenges in integrating IC due to pedagogical limitations as evidenced by teacher 1 who expressed concerns about integrating intercultural competence into grammar instruction. He questioned its feasibility within a curriculum focused solely on grammar and phonetics, stating:

"If the teacher is teaching pure grammar and phonetics, how can I include intercultural competency in grammar, for example? I don't see any way to do that."

Other participants expressed facing challenges related to the lack of materials and resources that facilitate the integration of IC in their classroomsas mentioned by teacher 5:

"I teach Oral Expression and I never received materials such as a Data Show speaker etc...Sadly I am unable to apply everything I have learned in the UK simply because the Algerian University does not provide enough materials to teach... it is hard to enhance my IC when I do not have materials to apply it."

Teacher 5 further discussed internal factors, such as personal authority, that could hinder the implementation of intercultural education initiatives. She noted:

"Even if someone has the intentions, capacities, and materials to integrate something positive... they might face the hurdle of internal authority that prevents them from doing so... this ultimately impacts the teacher's decision to implement X or Y or any approach that involves intercultural competence".

The above quote underscores a significant challenge in the implementation of intercultural education initiatives which is the barrier of personal authority. Teacher 5 highlights the actual limitations in her ability to effect change within her professional environment, despite having the necessary intentions, capacities, and resources. Particularly in applying the knowledge and skills learned in UK.

Furthermore, some teachers express their concern about students' resistance and cultural sensitivity towards certain topics. Teacher 1 emphasises the careful consideration of cultural aspects to avoid causing offence. He explained:

"I would avoid certain topics that I think are not really appropriate in my classroom... by not delving into something that might embarrass or confuse the students.... I must ensure the scenes chosen are appropriate and respectful. This involves careful consideration to avoid any content that could be deemed inappropriate or culturally insensitive. While I aim to respect students' cultures, I

> *also recognize the need to navigate potentially sensitive topics, such as scenes*
>
> *depicting violence or intimacy."*

The above quotes reveal returnees' insights into the challenges of integrating IC in ELT classrooms. It reflects varied perspectives, from uncertainties about implementation to recognition of barriers. This underscores the complexity of fostering intercultural understanding in education. It emphasises the need for tailored strategies to address these challenges effectively and highlights educators' crucial role in creating culturally respectful environments. Ultimately, these efforts are vital for enhancing the educational experience and promoting inclusivity in learning settings.

Returnees' Recommendations and Suggestions

In this section, we explore the recommendations and suggestions provided by Algerian PhD returnees regarding the enhancement of IC among ELT students. the analysis is organised into two key sub themes: suggested strategies for enhancing IC among ELT students and suggested resources for teaching IC in ELT classrooms.

Suggested Strategies for Enhancing IC Among ELT Students

Figure 3.10 below presents the results from questionnaire item 18 (Do you have any suggestions regarding the integration of intercultural competence into the ELT classroom?)

Figure 3.10

Suggested Strategies for Enhancing IC Among ELT Students
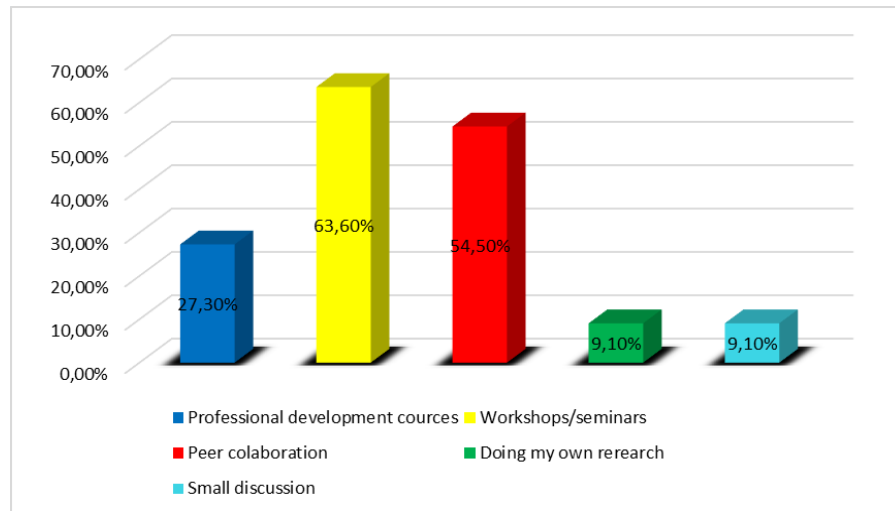
The results reveal that the majority of respondents, accounting for 63.6%, identified workshops/seminars as an effective approach to foster IC while over half of them (54.5%) highlighted peer collaboration as a valuable strategy. Additionally, over a quarter of the respondents (27.3%) emphasised professional development courses. Notably, doing personal research and reading about other teachers' experiences received the same percentage of endorsement as small discussion with 9.1%.

Analysis of the qualitative data from the open-ended questionnaire items and the interviews provide advice and suggestions regarding the implementation of IC.One respondent of the questionnaire (Q18) suggested:

> *"I think teachers should take whatever opportunity to incorporate IC as part of their teaching, raise students' awareness and provide opportunities for them to discuss aspects of their culture and the culture of others. It all has to do with providing learners with a safe place for discussion and inclusivity."*

Additionally, another respondent (Q18) proposed:

"Do it regardless of the "rules" and "norms" of your university. We need to bring some change and introduce students to the target language and its culture, a culture and society. A society deemed as one of the most multicultural nations worldwide."

Respondents' quotes above underscore the importance of integrating IC in raising students' awareness of their culture and other cultures and create opportunities for them to discuss and share their opinions about different cultural aspects.

Moreover, teacher 2 and other respondents (Q18) respectively recommended dedications of some modules to integrate IC, design tasks and assignments to foster students' IC and the necessity toincorporate IC in all language curriculum.

"I think some modules in university should be the focus for integrating IC in class, such as listening and speaking, Civilisation, literature etc. I think students' autonomous study should also be directed in a way to foster IC through targeted tasks and assignments."

"I think it should be part of any language curriculum starting from an early age of education."

Accentuating on this, Teacher 5 further commented:

"Integrating IC should serve the curriculum and enhance our students' learning skills…They need to be aware of the impact of teaching this as we have students from different backgrounds."

The above quotes emphasise the importance of incorporating IC to raise students' cultural awareness and create an inclusive environment for discussion. They advocate for integrating IC regardless of institutional constraints, exposing students to multicultural aspects of the target language, and giving students space to share their perspectives. These insights highlight the critical role of IC in developing culturally competent, well-rounded students

Suggested Resources for Teaching IC in ELT Classrooms

Figure 3.11 below presents the results from questionnaire item nine (which resources do you find most helpful for teaching IC in ELT classrooms?)

Figure 3.11

Suggested Resources for Teaching IC in ELT Classrooms
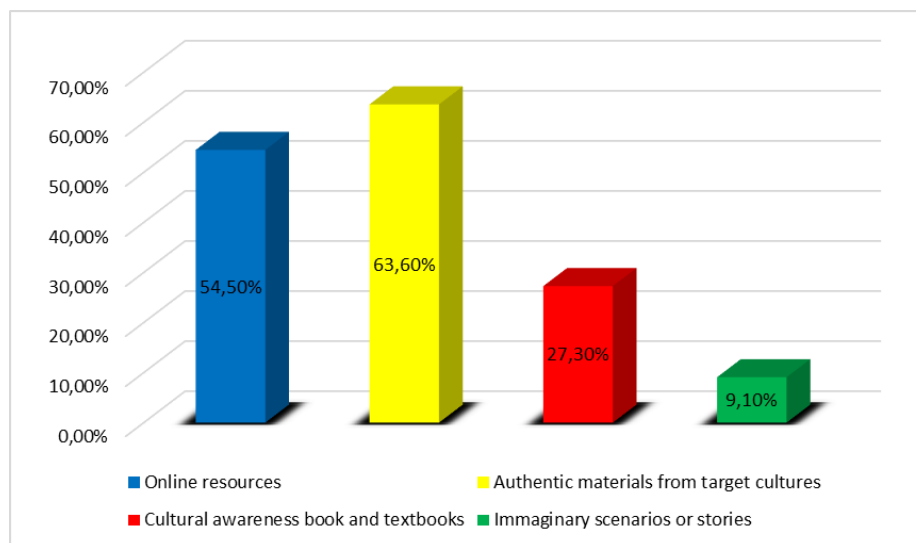
Based on the results, several resources and strategies have been suggested as helpful for teaching IC in ELT classrooms. Authentic materials from target cultures are considered the most effective, with 63.6% of respondents endorsing them. Online resources are also highly rated, with 54.5% of respondents finding them helpful. Cultural awareness books and textbooks are used by 27.3% of respondents, while only 9.1% find imaginary scenarios or sharing stories as examples useful. These results suggest a preference for authentic materials and cultural awareness resources, highlighting the value of incorporating real-world examples and cultural context into language learning activities and emphasise the importance of utilising a diverse range of resources to effectively teach IC.

Analysis of the data from open-ended questionnaire items and the interviews provide returnees' suggestions for valuable resources for teaching IC. One questionnaire respondent (Q 9) suggested having

"Anything can be used. Textbooks, mini projects as well as online videos that provide snapchats of different cultures."

Additionally, teacher 5 and teacher 6 respectively stated:

"It seems absurd, but YouTube can be a good reference."

"Adrian Holiday's book on Intercultural Communication."

From another perspective, Teacher 04 recommended open-mindedness and cultural appreciation.

"Keep an open mind and heart. Diversity of cultures is not a threat, it's a rich resource."

It can be said that the above quotes echo the need for diverse resources to support IC teaching practices.

Conclusion

The present chapter displayed the results and findings gathered from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. The participating PhD graduate returnees integrated IC into their teaching through various strategies, such as using audio-visual materials, facilitating discussions about cultural differences, incorporating international guest speakers, and engaging in cultural exchange projects. These methods aimed to develop students' intercultural knowledge and skills, promoting an understanding of diverse perspectives and creating inclusive classrooms.

Despite these positive developments, the study identified several challenges in integrating IC into English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. Teachers reported difficulties in accessing culturally diverse materials, limited opportunities for professional development in IC, and student resistance to new teaching methods and cultural content. This resistance is often rooted in deeply ingrained cultural norms and educational traditions, which can hinder the adoption of innovative teaching practices. These challenges align with existing literature, emphasising the need for systemic changes and support to effectively integrate IC into ELT.

General Conclusion

Discussion of the Results and Findings

      This section discusses the findings of the study on the implementation of ICin ELT by Algerian PhD graduate returnees. The discussion contextualises and connects these findings within the existing literature, examining correlations, patterns, and relationships. The findings will be discussed under three main headings:Algerian PhDgraduate returnees' perceptions and integration of IC, the impact of studying abroad on the returnees' IC integrationandperceived challenges and suggestions for integrating IC in ELT classrooms.

Algerian PhD Graduate Returnees' Perceptions and Integration of IC

      The literature review underscores the significance of IC in language education, particularly in fostering a comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity (Byram, 2008; Kramsch, 1993). The findings from this study reveal that Algerian PhD returnees perceive IC as a vital component of ELT. They believe that it not only enhances language proficiency but also promotes critical thinking and cultural awareness among students. These perceptions are consistent with the literature, which emphasises the importance of IC in developing students' ability to navigate and understand diverse cultural contexts (Kramsch, 1993). The returnees highlighted the need for ELT to go beyond linguistic skills, incorporating cultural knowledge and intercultural communication skills. This holistic approach aligns with the views of Byram (2008), Kramsch (1993), García (2018) whoargue that IC is crucial for fostering global citizenship and intercultural understanding.

      In addition, the literature on IC identifies various strategies for integrating it into language teaching, such as using culturally diverse materials and promoting intercultural dialogues (Byram, 2008; Fantini, 2009; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008). The findings indicate that Algerian PhDgraduate returnees are increasingly incorporating these strategies into their

ELT practices. They use authentic materials from target culture and cultural simulations to expose students to different cultural perspectives. This integration of IC into ELT practices is supported by the literature, which suggests that using culturally relevant materials can enhance students' engagement and understanding of different cultures (Larzen-Ostermark, 2008; Holliday, 2011; Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999). Teachers also encourage intercultural dialogues and collaborative projects that require students to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds. This aligns with Byram's (2008) model of intercultural competence, which includes skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction.

The Impact of Studying Abroad on The Returnees' IC Integration

The literature review highlights the transformative impact of studying abroad on teachers' pedagogical approaches, promoting more student-centred and culturally responsive teaching methods (Bennett,1993; Paige, 1993). The findings from this study reveal that Algerian PhD graduate returnees who studied abroad have adopted more innovative and reflective teaching approaches. They reported incorporating real-world examples and cultural contexts into their lessons, which they believe make their teaching more relevant and engaging. These findings are consistent with previous studies that found exposure to different educational environments enhances teachers' pedagogical strategies (Kramsch, 1993). The returnees emphasised that their study-abroad experiences had reshaped their views on language teaching, making them more open to diverse teaching methods and cultural perspectives. This transformation aligns with the literature, which asserts that studying abroad promotes reflective and adaptable teaching practices (Larzen-Ostermark, 2008).

The findings on learner involvement in the learning process are particularly significant. The returnees reported a notable shift towards teaching approaches that prioritise the learner. They stressed the importance of engaging students in discussions about cultural differences and encouraging them to share their own cultural experiences and perspectives. This approach not only creates a more inclusive classroom environment, but also improves students' intercultural awareness and communication skills. The returnees observed that by actively involving learners, they could facilitate a deeper understanding of cultural contexts and promote critical thinking. This is consistent with existing literature, which emphasises the benefits of student involvement in fostering an interactive and dynamic learning environment (Freeman, 1998).

Perceived Challenges and Suggestions for Integrating IC in ELT Classrooms

The literature identifies several challenges in integrating IC into language teaching, such as lack of resources, inadequate teacher training, and resistance to change (Kramsch, 1993; Holliday, 2018; Byram, 2008). The findings from this study highlights similar challenges faced by Algerian teachers. They reported difficulties in accessing culturally diverse materials and limited opportunities for professional development in IC. Teachers also mentioned that students' resistance to new teaching methods and cultural content poses a significant challenge. This resistance is often rooted in deeply ingrained cultural norms and educational traditions, which can hinder the adoption of innovative teaching practices. These challenges are echoed in the literature, which emphasises the need for systemic changes and support to effectively integrate IC into ELT (Sercu et al., 2005; Sercu, 2006; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008).

The findings from this study also provide several practical recommendations for enhancing IC in ELT contexts. Teachers suggested increasing the availability of culturally

diverse materials and incorporating intercultural competence modules into the curriculum. They also emphasised the importance of providing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding and skills in IC. This recommendation aligns with the literature, which highlights the need for ongoing training and support to effectively integrate IC into teaching practices (Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Sercu, 2006). Additionally, promoting student exchanges and collaboration with international institutions were suggested as effective ways to provide students with real-world intercultural experiences.

In conclusion, the findings of this study align with literature review. They highlight the importance of IC in language education and the positive impact of studying abroad on teaching practices. The study also identifies several challenges in integrating IC into ELT and provides practical recommendations for enhancing it. Addressing these challenges and providing ongoing support for teachers are essential for maximising the benefits of intercultural competence in ELT. By overcoming these obstacles, educators can foster a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment in Algerian universities.

Limitations

This research is not without its limitations. Firstly, the study's qualitative nature and the relatively small sample size limit the generalisability of the findings. While the in-depth interviews and questionnaires provided rich data, the insights are specific to the experiences of the selected participants and may not fully represent the broader population of Algerian PhD graduate returnees. Secondly, the study focused on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases. Future research could benefit from a larger sample size and the inclusion of more diverse data sources, such as classroom observations and students' feedback.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance the integration of IC in ELT in Algeria:

- *Enhanced Training Programs*: Develop comprehensive training programs for educators that focus on the principles and practices of IC. These programs should be mandatory and regularly updated to reflect the latest research and pedagogical advancements.

- *Institutional Support*: Educational institutions should provide adequate resources and support for teachers to integrate IC. This includes access to diverse teaching materials including textbooks, multimedia content, and real-life case studies that reflect various cultural perspectives, professional development opportunities, and institutional policies that encourage innovative teaching practices.

- *Enhance student engagement*: Students should be encouraged to engage with different cultures through projects, cultural exchanges, and digital platforms, with assignments designed to foster curiosity, empathy, and critical thinking about cultural diversityusing diverse teaching materials that enhance theirengagement.

- *Curriculum Development*: Revise the ELT curriculum to incorporate IC at all levels of education. Curriculum-developers should focus on incorporating dedicated modules and activities that promote cultural awareness and sensitivity, with lesson plans addressing cultural themes and fostering critical thinking about cultural differences.

- *Collaborative Initiatives*: Foster collaborations between educational institutions and international organisations to exchange best practices and resources. These partnerships can provide valuable insights and support for implementing IC in diverse educational contexts.

- *Research and Feedback*: Encourage ongoing research on IC integration in ELT. This should include both quantitative and qualitative studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and successes. Additionally, feedback from students should be actively sought and incorporated into teaching practices to ensure that the integration of IC is effective and responsive to their needs.

By addressing these recommendations, it is hoped that the integration of IC in ELT in Algeria will be strengthened, ultimately leading to a more culturally responsive and effective language education system. This will not only enhance students' language skills but also prepare them to navigate and succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

Conclusion

This study investigated the integration of IC within ELT practices among Algerian PhD returnees in higher education. The study aimed to explore how these returnees perceive, implement, and face challenges related to IC, contributing valuable insights for fostering a culturally responsive educational environment in Algeria. The research highlighted the significant impact of studying abroad on their intercultural competence, and teaching practices.

The introductory chapter set the stage by outlining the background, research problem, objectives, and significance of the study, emphasising the importance of IC in the globalised educational landscape and the unique position of Algerian PhD returnees in bridging cultural gaps within ELT.

Following this, the literature review provided an overview of the theoretical and empirical research on IC in ELT, tracing its evolution from linguistic competence to intercultural communicative competence, highlighting key models and frameworks, and identifying gaps in existing research, particularly within the Algerian context.

The methodology chapter detailed the research approach, which utilised a constructivist paradigm and mixed-method techniques, including questionnaires and interviews. This chapter explained the rationale for selecting Algerian PhD returnees as participants and described the procedures for ensuring ethical research conduct. The results

and findings chapter presented both quantitative and qualitative data, revealing key themes such as perceptions of IC, strategies for integrating IC into ELT practices, and challenges encountered and suggestions.

The findings highlighted the returnees' strong motivation driven by quality education and cultural immersion, their positive perceptions of IC's importance, and the various strategies they employed despite institutional and cultural challenges. In the discussion, the results were interpreted in connection to the broader literature and theoretical frameworks, emphasising the critical role of IC in enhancing ELT practices and fostering students' cultural awareness. It also discussed the implications for policy and practice, suggesting ways to support teachers in integrating IC more effectively.

The general conclusion summarised the key findings, addressed the study's limitations, and provided recommendations for future research and practice. It asserted the necessity of incorporating IC into ELT to prepare students for global citizenship and recommended ongoing professional development for educators. Overall, this dissertation highlights the vital role of intercultural competence in ELT and provides a foundation for future efforts to enhance educational practices through a more nuanced understanding of cultural integration in teaching and learning.

الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة دمج الكفاءة بين الثقافات في ممارسات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية من قبل العائدين الجزائري الحاصلين على درجة الدكتوراه. تهدف الدراسة إلى فهم كيفية تصور هؤلاء العائدين للكفاءة بين الثقافات وكيف تؤثر على منهجيتهم التدريسية. نظرًا لأهمية الكفاءة بين الثقافات في تعزيز التواصل الفعال في ظل العولمة، فإن هذا البحث يحمل أهمية خاصة في سياق النظام التعليمي في الجزائر، الذي شهد مؤخرًا إصلاحات تهدف إلى تحسين تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. تم استخدام نهج بحثي متعدد الأساليب، يتضمن جمع البيانات الكمية والنوعية من خلال الاستبيانات والمقابلات مع أحد عشر مجيبًا للاستبيان وستة مشاركين في المقابلات. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام التحليل الموضوعي والتحليل الإحصائي لتحديد الموضوعات الرئيسية المتعلقة بتصورات العائدين، والاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمونها لدمج الكفاءة بين الثقافات في تدريسهم، والتحديات التي يواجهونها، وردود فعل الطلاب. تكشف النتائج أنه في حين يعترف العائدون بأهمية الكفاءة بين الثقافات، فإن تنفيذها يختلف بشكل كبير بناءً على التجارب الفردية والدعم المؤسسي تسلط الدراسة الضوء على عدة نقاط مهمة: ضرورة التطوير المهني المستمر الذي يركز على الكفاءة بين الثقافات، وأهمية إنشاء بيئة مؤسسية داعمة، والحاجة إلى تطوير مواد تعليمية تعكس وجهات نظر ثقافية متنوعة. على الرغم من مواجهة تحديات مثل الموارد المحدودة والمقاومة من الطلاب والزملاء، يسعى العائدون إلى خلق فصل دراسي شامل ومتجاوب ثقافيًا. يساهم هذا البحث في فهم الكفاءة بين الثقافات في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في الجزائر ويقدم توصيات للمعلمين وصانعي السياسات لتعزيز تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال دمج الكفاءة بين الثقافات. يوصى بإجراء دراسات إضافية المصلحة وأصحاب لاستكشاف التأثير الطويل الأمد لهذه الممارسات على كفاءة الطلاب اللغوية والوعي الثقافي.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الكفاءة الثقافية، العائدين الجزائريين من حملة شهادة الدكتوراه، الوعي الثقافي.

Résumé

Cette étude explore l'intégration de la compétence interculturelle dans les pratiques d'enseignement de la langue anglaise par les retournés de doctorat algérien. L'étude vise à comprendre comment ces retournés perçoivent la compétence interculturelle et comment elle influence leurs méthodologies d'enseignement. Étant donné l'importance de la compétence interculturelle dans la promotion de la communication efficace dans un monde globalisé, cette recherche revêt une importance particulière dans le contexte du système éducatif algérien, qui a récemment fait l'objet de réformes visant à améliorer l'apprentissage de la langue anglaise. Une approche de recherche mixte a été utilisée, impliquant la collecte de données quantitatives et qualitatives à travers des questionnaires et des interviews avec un total de onze répondants pour le questionnaire et six participants pour les interviews. Les données ont été analysées thématiquement et statistiquement pour identifier les thèmes clés liés aux perceptions des retournés, aux stratégies qu'ils emploient pour intégrer la compétence interculturelle dans leur enseignement, aux défis auxquels ils sont confrontés et aux réponses de leurs étudiants. Les résultats révèlent que si les retournés reconnaissent l'importance de la compétence interculturelle, sa mise en œuvre varie considérablement en fonction des expériences individuelles et du soutien institutionnel. L'étude met en évidence plusieurs points cruciaux : la nécessité d'un développement professionnel continu axé sur la compétence interculturelle, l'importance d'établir un environnement institutionnel favorable, et la nécessité de développer des matériaux pédagogiques reflétant des perspectives culturelles diverses. Malgré les défis tels que les ressources limitées et la résistance des étudiants et des collègues, les retournés s'efforcent de créer une classe inclusive et réactive sur le plan culturel. Cette recherche contribue à la compréhension de la compétence interculturelle dans l'enseignement de la langue anglaise (ELT) en Algérie et propose des recommandations aux éducateurs, décideurs politiques et parties prenantes pour améliorer l'enseignement de la langue anglaise grâce à l'intégration de la compétence interculturelle. Des études supplémentaires sont recommandées pour explorer l'impact à long terme de ces pratiques sur la compétence linguistique des étudiants et leur conscience culturelle.

Mots Clés : Compétence interculturelle, Retournés de doctorat algérien, Conscience culturelle.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Returnees' Questionnaire

Title of the study: An Exploration of Algerian PhD GraduateReturnees' Integration of

Intercultural Competence (IC) into their teaching practices.

Dear participants,

You are cordially invited to participate in completing this questionnaire as a part of

a study that aims to explore how teachers who benefited from the PhD

scholarship program, initiated by the Algerian ministry of higher education and

scientific research, incorporate intercultural competence into their teaching practices.

Your collaboration will be of great help for us to gather the needed data for the study.

 Participation in the study is voluntary, and all information collected will be kept

confidential.

 If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact us at:

houdahanaisma2023@gmail.com

- Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

1. What is your current position?

☐ MAB

☐ MCB

☐ MCA

☐ Other: _____

2.How long have you been teaching English at University?

☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 4-6 years

3. What motivated you to pursue your studies in the UK? (Please, tick all that apply)

☐ Desire for higher quality education

☐Opportunity for cultural immersion

☐ Career advancement

☐ Other: _____

4. To what extent has studying abroad influenced your teaching philosophy and

approach to ELT?

☐ Not at all

☐ Not really

☐ Very much

5. Has your experience studying in the UK shaped your perspectives on Intercultural

Competence (IC)?

☐ Not at all

☐ Not really

☐ Very much

6. How familiar are you with Intercultural Competence (IC) in the context of ELT?

☐ Not at all

☐ Not really

☐ Very much

7. To what extent do you think that integratingInterculturalCompetence (IC) influence

students' language learning?

☐ Not at all

☐ Not really

☐ Very much

8. Which intercultural activities have you used in your ELT classroom? (Please, tick

all that apply)

☐ Cultural exchange projects

☐ Role-playing scenarios

☐ Language exchange programs

☐ Cultural immersion days

☐ Pen pal exchanges

☐ Virtual field trips

☐ Cultural simulations

☐ International guest speakers

☐ Other: _____

9. What specific strategies have you found effective in fostering InterculturalCompetence(IC) among your students?

☐ Professional development courses

☐ Workshops/seminars

☐ Peer collaboration

☐ Other: _____

10. Which resources do you find most helpful for teaching Intercultural Competence (IC) in

ELT classrooms? (Please, tick all that apply)

☐ Online resources

☐ Authentic materials from target cultures

☐ Cultural awareness books and textbooks

☐ Other: _____

11. Do you involve students in creating a culturally inclusive classroomenvironment?

☐ Not at all

☐ Not really

☐ Very much

12. Do you face any challenges integrating intercultural competence in ELT classrooms?

☐ Not at all

☐ Not really

☐ Very much

13. Have you participated in any training related to ICandteaching?

☐ Yes (detailed training)

☐ Yes (but not enough)

☐ Yes (only before we start teaching)

☐ No (I have never had any training)

14. How do you continue to enhance your own intercultural competence as an ELT teacher?

☐ Attend workshops/seminars

☐ Engage in cultural exchange programs

☐ Other: _____

15. Do you think intercultural competence should be a core component of ELT curriculum?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Justify: …………………………………………………………………………………………….

16. What advice would you give to other Algerian EFL teachers interested inintegrating intercultural competence into their classrooms?

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17. Are there any resources or materials you would recommend for ELTteachersseeking to enhance their intercultural teaching practices?

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18. Do you have any suggestions regarding the integration of IC into the ELT classroom?

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Appendix 2

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

An Exploration of Algerian Returnees' Integration of Intercultural Competence (IC) into their teaching practices.

Introduction

1. Could you please start by introducing yourself briefly?

-What inspired you to become a teacher?

- Your educational background in Algeria and UK.

- Current position and teaching Experience.

2. What motivated you to pursue your studies in the UK? How has your experience studyingabroad influenced your teaching philosophy and approach to language education?

Understanding Intercultural Competence

3. How would you define Intercultural Competence (IC), particularly in the context of English language teaching?

4. Can you share any personal experiences related to intercultural communication during your time studying abroad?

Professional Development

5. Have you participated in any continuing professional development opportunities or training related to intercultural communication and teaching, either during your studies in the UK or since returning to Algeria?

6. How do you continue to enhance your own intercultural competence as an ELT teacher?

Integration into ELT Classroom

7. In what ways do you currently incorporate elements of Intercultural Competence (IC) into yourELT teaching practices?

8. What specific strategies or activities have you found effective in fostering intercultural awareness and understanding among your students?

9. Have you encountered any barriers or challenges in integrating Intercultural Competence

(IC) into the EFL classroom, and if so, how have you addressed them?

10. In what ways do you create opportunities for students to understand and experience other cultures? How do you help them to avoid intercultural misunderstanding?

Impact and Reflection

11. What impact do you believe integrating Intercultural Competence (IC) into the EFL classroom has on students' language learning and overall cultural awareness?

12. Looking back, how has your experience studying in the UK shaped your perspectives on language teaching and intercultural communication?

Advice for Other ELT Teachers

13. What advice would you give to other Algerian EFL teachers who are interested in integrating Intercultural Competence (IC) into their classrooms?

14. Are there any resources, materials, or professional networks you would recommend for ELT teachers seeking to enhance their intercultural teaching practices?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add or any final thoughts you would like to share regarding the integration of Intercultural Competence (IC) into the ELT classroom?

Appendix3

Consent Form for Interview Participants

Title: An Exploration of Algerian returnees' integration of intercultural competence

Investigators: DiafHouda, Chouadra Hana, BenmoussaIsmahene

Supervisor: Dr. Nour El HoudaBouacha

Dear teacher,

You are cordially invited to participate in a research study that aims to explore how teachers who benefited from the international PhD scholarship program, initiated by the Algerian MHESR, incorporate IC into their teaching practices.

Procedures: This study entails an interview, during which you will be queried on your experiences while studying in the U.K., as well as the techniques you employed to foster IC within your own teaching methodologies. The interview will be conducted online and will take approximately 30-40 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis. Your name will not be used in any publications or reports. All data collected will be kept confidential, and the audio recordings will be destroyed once the research is completed.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in the study, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Risks and Benefits: There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. However, the benefits of participating in this study include contributing valuable insights into effective practices that enhance intercultural competence in EFL classrooms.

Confidentiality: All information collected in this study will be kept confidential. Any identifying information such as your name will not be used in any reports or publications. The audio recordings will be securely stored and only accessible to the research team.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or the interview process, please contact the investigators at: houdahanaisma2023@gmail.com

Consent: By signing this form, you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided and that you agree to participate in the study. You also confirm that you understand that participation is voluntary, and that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Participant 'Signature : _____ Date :

Investigators' Signature : _____ Date :