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**Investigating Byram's Critical Cultural Awareness in  
EFL Classes :**

**The Case of Second Year Students – M'sila University**

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**2025**

## *Dedication*

First and foremost, I offer my praise to Almighty Allah, who helped me complete this work.

I dedicate this research work to:

The loving memory of my mother, and to my sympathetic father for his care and support,  
without which I would not be here today.

My husband, who encouraged me at every step.

My children, sisters, brother, and friends.

Amina

## *Dedication*

This work is dedicated to,

My mother and father ; who taught me to believe in myself and help me make my dreams come true.

My husband Abderrahmane ; for his constant support, gentle encouragement and endless patience.

My beloved children ; Maram, Aridj, Yahya, Tamim.

My dearest sisters ; Assia, Sihem, Ikram, Rima.

My kind friends ; Amina, Amel, Fouzia, Salima.

Amel

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## ***Declaration***

We, **Amel Djabari and Amina Hadjab** hereby declare that all the information in this document has been carried out and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. We hereby declare that the research work presented in this dissertation is our own original contribution and has not been submitted previously for any academic degree or diploma. This work has been conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ladjini, who has read and approved its final version. This research project has not been submitted before to any other institution or university for a degree. This work was carried out and completed at Mohamed Boudiaf University of MSILA, ALGERIA.

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## *Abstract*

This study investigates the integration of Michael Byram's concept of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at M'Sila University, with a focus on second-year students. A descriptive case study methodology was employed to explore how CCA is perceived, addressed, and implemented in classroom practices. Data were obtained through a questionnaire completed by 47 students and semi-structured interviews with 7 instructors. CCA appears to contribute meaningfully to EFL education, as it enables learners to critically engage with cultural practices, beliefs, and values—their own and those of others. By addressing issues such as stereotyping and ethnocentrism, it may support the development of intercultural competence and promote more effective participation in diverse communicative contexts. Its presence in language instruction also seems to encourage reflection and awareness, aligning language learning with broader educational and social objectives. The findings indicate that while participants demonstrate some awareness of CCA, its integration into classroom practice remains limited. This limitation appears to be shaped by multiple factors, including curriculum constraints, the level of teacher preparation, and the sensitivity associated with certain cultural topics. Nevertheless, the study points to possible avenues for incorporating intercultural engagement and critical reflection through informed and intentional pedagogical strategies. It appears that more explicit inclusion of CCA in EFL syllabi and teacher education programs in Algerian higher education could enhance the development of learners capable of engaging critically with cultural content within language learning environments.

**Keywords:** Byram's Model, Critical Cultural Awareness, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Intercultural Competence

## ***List of Abbreviations and Acronyms***

**CCA** – Critical Cultural Awareness

**EFL** – English as a Foreign Language

**ICC** – Intercultural Communicative Competence

**L2** – Second Language

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# *General Introduction*

## **1- Background of the study**

In the context of globalization, the development of intercultural competence (ICC) represents a necessary component of educational practice. As cultural diversity increases in classrooms, students must learn to communicate, understand, and cooperate across cultural boundaries. This involves not only learning a second language (L2), but also fostering respect, empathy, and openness toward others.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) plays a key role in this context. As a global language, English connects people from different cultures and supports international communication. In Algeria, English is gaining importance and is now taught at all levels, including higher education. At M'Sila University, EFL teaching is shifting from focusing only on language rules to including cultural understanding and global citizenship.

To support this shift, Michael Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is widely recognized. One of its core components is Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA)—the ability to evaluate one's own and others' cultures critically and respectfully. CCA encourages learners to think deeply, reflect ethically, and engage in meaningful intercultural dialogue.

This dissertation explores how CCA is integrated into EFL classes at M'sila university, focusing on second-year students. Using a descriptive case study method, the research examines how students and teachers understand and apply CCA in practice. The goal is to show that CCA is not just useful but necessary for preparing students to become globally aware, critically thinking language users. It also highlights the changing role of teachers—from language instructors to guides in intercultural learning.

## **2- Problem Statement**

University-level EFL classes frequently lack the integration of cultural reflection and critical thinking, resulting in limited opportunities for students to develop intercultural competence. This issue is compounded by the underexploration and insufficient implementation of Critical Intercultural Awareness (CIA) within many EFL curricula, which further hinders learners' ability to engage in meaningful intercultural reflection and understanding.

## **3- Research questions:**

This study explores the integration, perception, and enhancement of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) in university-level EFL education through the following questions:

1. To what extent is Byram's concept of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) integrated into university-level EFL curricula?
2. How do EFL teachers and students perceive the role and significance of Critical Cultural Awareness in language education?
3. What strategies can be implemented to more effectively integrate Critical Cultural Awareness into EFL instruction?

## **4- Aims and objectives :**

This study aims to investigate the integration of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) within university-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Specifically, it seeks to :

1. To examine the extent to which Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) is present and implemented in university-level EFL contexts.

2. To explore the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of instructors and students regarding the role of CCA in EFL education.
3. To develop recommendations for enhancing the integration of CCA into language teaching and learning practices.

## **5- Significance of the Study**

This study contributes directly to curriculum development and teacher training in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It provides practical insights into how Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) can be effectively integrated into university-level EFL instruction, supporting the design of culturally responsive curricula. It also informs the development of training programs that prepare teachers to promote intercultural understanding in their classrooms.

Furthermore, the study highlights the role of language learning in developing intercultural sensitivity and global citizenship. By focusing on CCA, it encourages learners to engage critically with cultural differences and become more empathetic, open-minded, and globally aware.

## **6- Research Hypotheses**

To respond to the research questions, let us suggest the following hypotheses :

1. **H1:** Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) is insufficiently integrated into university-level EFL curricula.
2. **H2:** EFL instructors and students hold generally positive attitudes toward the inclusion of CIA but lack sufficient training or resources to implement it effectively.

**3. H3:** Implementing targeted strategies and training programs will significantly improve the integration of CCA into EFL instruction and promote intercultural competence among learners.

The first part is divided into two main parts which are Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model and the concept of critical intercultural awareness.

The second part is divided into two into two main parts; the first part deals with integrating Byram's concept of critical intercultural awareness into EFL classes and the critical dimensions or importance of of IC in lage learning.

# *Chapter I*

# *Section I*

## *Review of Literature*

## **Introduction**

Language education is inseparable from culture. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially in multicultural societies like Algeria, teaching linguistic competence alone is insufficient. Language is not only a system of rules but also a medium through which cultural values, beliefs, and worldviews are expressed. Thus, integrating cultural content into language instruction is essential to enable learners to interpret and respond to cultural differences with sensitivity and awareness.

In today's globalized world, language learning must develop both structural and cultural competencies. Culture—both visible (e.g. customs, dress, celebrations) and invisible (e.g. communication styles, social norms, values) —shapes how meaning is constructed and interpreted. For Algerian EFL learners, unfamiliarity with English-speaking cultures' values—such as individualism, directness, or secularism—can lead to misunderstanding or communication breakdown. Conversely, features of Algerian culture, such as collectivism, indirect communication, or religious centrality, may be misunderstood without proper contextualization.

To address this challenge, Michael Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model provides a comprehensive framework for incorporating culture into language teaching. It outlines five key components: (1) attitudes of openness and curiosity, (2) knowledge of social and cultural contexts, (3) skills of interpreting and relating, (4) skills of discovery and interaction, and (5) Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA)—the ability to critically evaluate one's own and others' cultural practices through ethical reflection and dialogue.

Integrating Byram's model into EFL classrooms promotes not only language proficiency but also intercultural understanding. It helps learners navigate differences between Algerian and English-speaking cultures with respect and insight, reduces stereotypes, and

fosters global citizenship. Ultimately, this approach positions the EFL classroom as a space for developing culturally aware, critically engaged communicators equipped for real-world intercultural interactions.

This section is divided into two main parts. The first part discusses the concept of culture and the importance of teaching it in EFL contexts. The second part explores Byram's ICC model and highlights Cultural dimensions that influence intercultural awareness and communication.

## **1- Culture**

Defining culture has long posed a challenge, particularly in a globalized world where cultural boundaries are increasingly fluid. Even anthropology—the discipline most concerned with studying cultures—offers no single, universally accepted definition. Nevertheless, developments in second and foreign language (SL/FL) education have fostered a more nuanced understanding of culture as a vital component of communication and identity. Bouazid (2023) defines culture as “all the accepted and patterned ways of behavior of a given people; it is that fact of human life learned by people as a result of belonging to some particular group; it is that part of learned behavior shared with others” (p. 298). Similarly, Brown (2013, as cited in Cooper et al. 2007, p. 6) defines culture as “the set of values and beliefs, norms and customs, and rules and codes that socially defines a group of people, binds them to one another, and gives a sense of commonality.”

Culture is now commonly understood as a dynamic and evolving system of shared meanings, symbols, norms, and practices that guide the behavior and thought patterns of members within a social group. It encompasses both material aspects—such as tools, architecture, and clothing—and immaterial dimensions, including beliefs, values, ideologies,

customs, and worldviews. This dual nature emphasizes that culture is not merely what people produce but also how they interpret and engage with the world.

Moreover, culture is not static; it is shaped by historical, environmental, institutional, and interpersonal influences. It evolves through processes such as innovation, diffusion, adaptation, and acculturation. Hofstede (2012, as cited in Brown et al., 2013, p. 20) refers to culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. According to Samovar et al. (2010, as cited in Brown, 2013, p. 10) describe culture as “the rules for living and functioning in society”.

In essence, culture is like a complex tapestry, woven from the threads of a group’s shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and material expressions. It is learned, shared, and transmitted across generations, shaping how individuals think, feel, and interact both within their own communities and with those of others. This multifaceted nature makes cultural understanding indispensable in language education, especially as learners navigate increasingly diverse and interconnected environments.

## **1-1 Forms of Culture**

Culture manifests in various forms through which societies express shared values, beliefs, and traditions. These cultural expressions include language, customs, art, music, food, clothing, and architecture—each reflecting how individuals live, communicate, and celebrate. Scholars commonly distinguish between two interrelated dimensions of culture: Big ‘C’ culture and small ‘c’ culture. According to Bouazid (2023), “culture with a big C denotes formal culture: sociopolitical and economic institutions, music, literature, and the arts.” Big ‘C’ culture, also known as Capital C Culture, refers to formal, institutionalized, and often tangible cultural artifacts that embody a society’s intellectual and artistic heritage. Examples

include canonical works such as Shakespeare’s plays, the Mona Lisa, the Taj Mahal, and Beethoven’s symphonies—typically preserved in museums, libraries, and universities.

In contrast, small ‘c’ culture, as defined by Bouazid (2023), “indicates informal culture: the products of individuals’ everyday lives,” such as clothing, food, personal beliefs, behaviors, and values. This dimension encompasses the informal practices and social routines—like greetings, food habits, humor, family roles, and communication styles—that shape everyday interactions and individual identity. Though less formalized, small ‘c’ culture is essential to understanding how people experience culture in daily life.

Recognizing the distinction between Big ‘C’ and small ‘c’ culture is fundamental to developing critical cultural awareness. It helps prevent cultural stereotyping by encouraging a comprehensive perspective that values both prestigious cultural achievements and ordinary social practices. Furthermore, it acknowledges the diversity within cultural groups, as individuals may engage differently with cultural elements depending on context and personal experience. Finally, this dual understanding enhances intercultural sensitivity by equipping individuals with the awareness needed to navigate both explicit and implicit cultural norms—an essential skill in fostering respectful and effective cross-cultural communication.

## **1-2 Culture and Language**

Language and culture are deeply interconnected, each shaping and reflecting the other. As Brown (2013, p. 65) states, “A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language... one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either.” Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for expressing cultural beliefs, values, and worldviews. It transmits social norms and preserves cultural identity across generations. Bouazid (2023, as cited in Emmitt & Pollock, 1997) explains that language is rooted in culture and simultaneously carries it forward. Similarly, Sapir (1970,

cited in Bouazid, 2023) affirms that language cannot exist apart from culture. Kramsch (1998) adds that language embodies and symbolizes cultural values and is inseparable from the cultural context in which it is used. Understanding this interdependence is essential for effective communication and for fostering intercultural awareness. In essence, language and culture are two sides of the same coin—each giving meaning to and shaping the other.

### **1-3 Culture and communication**

Culture and communication are mutually constitutive, with each continuously shaping and sustaining the other. Communication functions as the primary medium through which cultural knowledge is created, transmitted, and internalized, while cultural norms, values, beliefs, and codes—both verbal and nonverbal—govern how communication is understood and enacted. As Brown (2013, cited in Haslett, 1989, p. 20) notes, culture is “a shared, consensual way of life made possible only through communication,” highlighting their interdependence. Distinctions between high- and low-context cultures or individualistic and collectivistic orientations illustrate how cultural frameworks inform communicative styles. Conversely, communication enables individuals to acquire cultural competence, negotiate identities, and participate in social realities. Brown (2013, cited in Triandis, 1994, p. 23) underscores this by defining culture as a set of shared human-made elements that emerge through communicative interaction. Hall’s assertion that “culture is communication and communication is culture” (Brown, 2013, cited in Hall, 1973, p. 97) encapsulates this inseparability. In an era marked by globalization and digital media, communication also serves as a catalyst for cultural change, enabling exchange, adaptation, and hybridity. Thus, understanding the dynamic relationship between culture and communication is essential for effective intercultural engagement and for navigating complex global interactions.

## **2- The importance of teaching culture**

Effective communication in a globalized world requires not only proficiency in grammar, phonology, and lexis, but also a deep understanding of culture. Culture is a complex, multidimensional construct that can be examined through several theoretical lenses, including the communicative view, the classical curriculum view, the instrumental (or culture-free) view, the deconstructionist view, and the competence view. Although the communicative era has encouraged greater integration of these perspectives, the first three tend to underrepresent the critical role of cultural context in shaping language use and comprehension.

Helena (2016, as cited in Holme, 2018) underscores the inseparability of language and culture, emphasizing that true linguistic competence cannot be achieved without cultural awareness. From this standpoint, language is not only influenced by culture—it is also a manifestation of it. The deconstructionist view expands on this notion by encouraging learners to critically engage with the implicit cultural meanings embedded in language. By framing language as a social semiotic system, this approach draws attention to the significance of metaphors, idioms, and culturally specific expressions—elements that often lose their intended meaning when translated literally.

This reinforces the importance of context in both language interpretation and acquisition. Helena (2016, as cited in Holme, 2020) also advocates for the competence view, which posits that knowledge of a language's cultural underpinnings is essential for understanding its nuanced meanings. Within this framework, language and culture are mutually constitutive components of communicative competence. Accordingly, English language teaching (ELT) must prioritize cultural integration to enable learners to interpret and negotiate meaning across diverse cultural contexts.

This imperative has practical implications for pedagogy. Teaching materials should be designed to incorporate rich cultural content, while educators must play an active role in fostering curiosity, openness, and respect for other cultures. Culture, moreover, can be approached through various disciplinary perspectives—including anthropology, psychology, sociology, and linguistics—making it a dynamic and essential component of the language classroom. While cultural discussions often focus on food, festivals, music, and art, culture is fundamentally tied to identity.

Language, as the most direct expression of culture, functions as a conduit for transmitting values, worldviews, and traditions. Helena (2016, as cited in Çakir, p. 155) further asserts that a person’s thoughts, emotions, and communication style can shift when transitioning between cultural environments. She contends that “to speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language,” adding that “language is the soul of the country and the people who speak it.” This view reinforces the argument that language and culture are inextricably intertwined and should be integrated holistically within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) syllabi.

Cultural values deeply influence human identity and social interaction, highlighting that while all people are equal in worth, their beliefs and priorities often differ. Western societies tend to emphasize individual achievement and material success, whereas many Indigenous cultures prioritize spiritual well-being and community harmony. These contrasting value systems can create cultural gaps and misunderstandings that language alone cannot bridge. Therefore, cultural awareness is essential for fostering true connection, empathy, and mutual understanding across diverse communities.

### **3- Intercultural Communication**

Intercultural communication refers to the dynamic and complex process through which individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds create shared meanings, negotiate identities, and manage cultural differences across a variety of interactional contexts. It is essential in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world where cultural contact is frequent and inevitable. According to Samavor et al (2010, 13 th edition)’’ The requirement to understand cultural differences and communicate across cultural borders has increased exponentially.’’ Samavor mentions that’’ A knowledge of intercultural communication, and the ability to use it effectively, can help bridge cultural differences, mitigate problems, and assist in achieving more harmonious, productive relations.’’

### **4- Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)**

Byram (1997) defines Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural contexts by integrating linguistic proficiency with cultural understanding, critical reflection, and relational skills. Unlike traditional models that emphasize native-like fluency, ICC highlights the role of the intercultural speaker—someone capable of mediating between cultures, interpreting cultural meanings, and managing differences with sensitivity.

Central to this competence is the ability to decentre, or to view one’s own and others’ perspectives with openness and critical awareness. Byram’s model comprises five interrelated components: attitudes (*savoir être*), which involve curiosity, openness, and suspension of judgment; knowledge (*savoirs*), or understanding of social groups and cultural practices; skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*); skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*); and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*)—the ability to evaluate cultural practices using ethical principles such as democracy and human rights. Together,

these dimensions prepare language learners to engage meaningfully and ethically in multilingual and multicultural interactions.

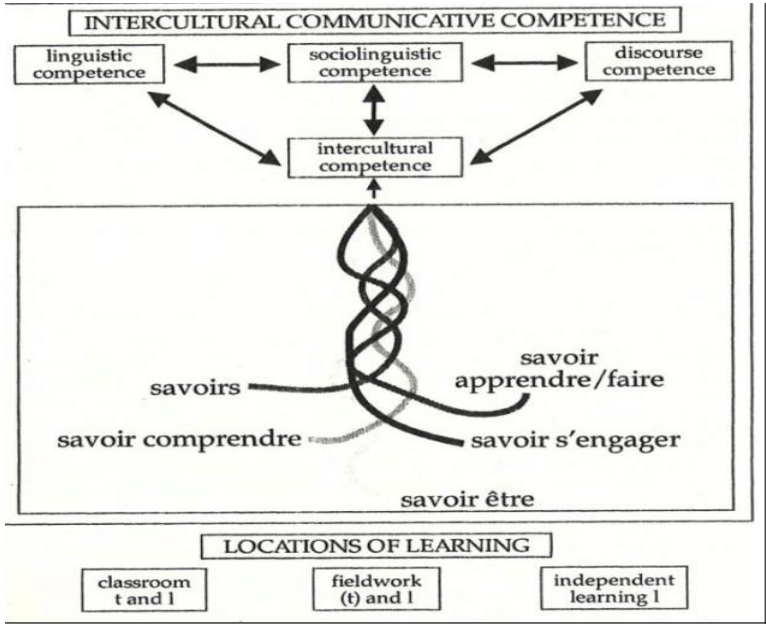


Figure 01 : Intercultural communication competence

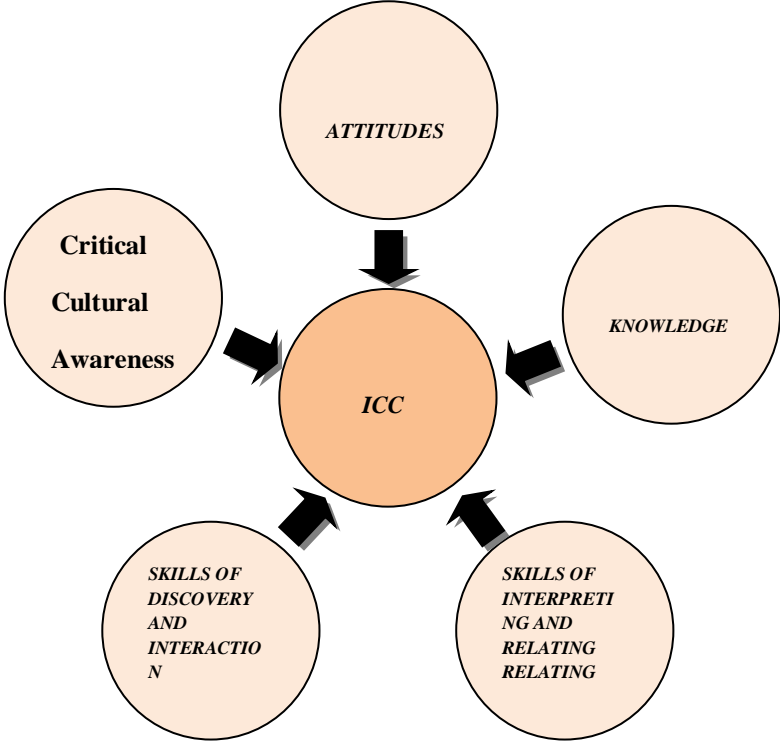


Figure 02 : Intercultural Communication Competence

#### **4-1- Attitudes (savoir être)**

Attitudes are a core component of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), shaping how individuals engage with different cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors. They go beyond simple likes or dislikes, as even positive stereotypes can obstruct authentic understanding (Allport, 1979). Effective intercultural engagement requires openness, curiosity, and the ability to suspend judgment—not only toward others but also toward one’s own culturally shaped assumptions. A key process is decentring, or viewing one’s culture from another’s perspective, which is cognitively demanding yet essential for genuine intercultural understanding (Kohlberg et al., 1983; Melde, 1987).

This reflective process may even lead to a reshaping of one’s worldview, termed tertiary socialisation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Byram, 1989). Attitudes also interact dynamically with knowledge and skills: without the willingness to relativize one’s own norms and respect others’, interpretation remains superficial or biased. While knowledge alone cannot guarantee positive attitudes (Byram, Morgan et al., 1994), it supports empathetic understanding, and attitudes of openness and curiosity help reduce resistance in intercultural encounters (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Kim, 1988). In education, fostering such attitudes requires critical reflection on how cultural meanings are formed, thereby reinforcing the development of critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

#### **4-2- Knowledge (Savoirs)**

In intercultural communication, knowledge (savoirs) refers to two main domains: knowledge of social groups and cultural practices, and knowledge of interactional processes at both individual and societal levels (Byram, 1997). The first involves culturally acquired understandings through socialization, including visible practices such as greetings and dress, as well as implicit elements like historical narratives, religious beliefs, and shared values that

construct social identity and define group boundaries (Barth, 1969). The second concerns how identities are shaped and influence behavior in intercultural contexts, requiring both declarative knowledge (awareness of cultural systems) and procedural knowledge (how to act appropriately in specific situations).

For example, understanding the cultural significance of tea-drinking or the ideological interpretations of policies like educational centralization illustrates the need for contextual sensitivity. Intercultural knowledge is relational, shaped by contrasts with one's own culture, and its depth is influenced by factors such as contact intensity, geopolitical relations, and media representation. Thus, effective intercultural competence depends on the development of interpretive and interactional skills that enable individuals to navigate cultural diversity with awareness and adaptability.

#### **4-3 Skills of Interpreting and Relating (Savoir-comprendre)**

This skill involves interpreting and explaining cultural documents, practices, or behaviors by drawing upon both formal and informal cultural knowledge. Interpretation requires understanding the meanings and implications embedded within cultural products and recognizing one's own ethnocentric assumptions (Ertelt-Vieth, 1991). Effective interpretation entails identifying shared meanings and navigating contradictions that may arise between cultural frameworks. Unlike interaction, this skill can be exercised individually and without immediate engagement with others.

Byram (1997) defines skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) as 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.” To judge means to form a reasoned opinion about cultural practices through careful analysis and reflection. To evaluate involves interpreting these practices using explicit criteria based on known ethical or cultural frameworks

#### **4-4 Skills of Discovery and Interaction (Savoir-apprendre / faire)**

Discovery involves acquiring new cultural knowledge in unfamiliar situations, especially when pre-existing frameworks are lacking or incomplete. This skill may be instrumental, addressing practical needs, or interpretative, driven by curiosity about cultural meanings. Discovery may occur independently—such as through observation or media exposure—though it becomes more challenging in unfamiliar or culturally distant settings. Interaction, on the other hand, refers to the real-time application of knowledge and attitudes during intercultural encounters. It requires openness, sensitivity, and the ability to manage perceptions, time constraints, and potential misunderstandings. Interaction also involves mediating cultural differences and fostering mutual understanding, distinguishing the intercultural speaker from the native speaker by emphasizing adaptability and relational competence in diverse contexts (Byram, 1997).

#### **4-5 Critical cultural awareness (Savoir s’engager)**

Critical Cultural Awareness (Savoir s’engager) is a central component of Byram’s (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). It involves the capacity to critically analyze and assess the perspectives, values, and practices of both one’s own culture and other cultures through clearly defined ethical principles, such as human rights, democratic values, and social justice.

Byram (1997) defines critical cultural awareness as “the ability to evaluate, using explicit criteria, the beliefs, behaviors, and cultural products of one’s own culture and those of others. This concept does not refer to criticism in the negative or fault-finding sense, but rather to the ability to analyze and make reasoned judgments based on evidence and reflection.” Unlike basic cultural awareness or passive tolerance, CCA emphasizes reflective evaluation and ethical engagement with cultural diversity. Byram (1997) refers that it is “an

ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit systematic process of reasoning, values present in one's own and other cultures and countries.” (p. 63).

This means that learners are expected not only to understand cultural materials like texts, media, or social practices, but also to critically assess them. According to Byram (1997) "the development of Critical Cultural Awareness in language education entails the ability to identify and interpret both explicit and implicit values embedded in documents and events across one's own and other cultures.

According to Byram (1997) the concept critical is “an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.” This involves critically engaging with cultural texts and practices by recognizing underlying value systems and social norms, whether overtly expressed or subtly implied. Learners must also be able to conduct evaluative analyses of these cultural materials by applying explicit criteria and perspectives, enabling informed cultural judgment. Furthermore, effective intercultural competence requires the capacity to interact and mediate across cultural boundaries, drawing on one's knowledge, interpretive skills, and attitudes of openness and respect. Such mediation includes negotiating mutual understanding and acceptance, especially when cultural differences arise, thus fostering meaningful and ethical intercultural communication.

Byram's model of Intercultural Competence (ICC) and Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) emphasizes the idea that language learning must go beyond the acquisition of linguistic skills to include the ability to ethically reflect and critically engage with cultural values and practices. This model enables learners to interpret cultural meanings, evaluate social phenomena through clear ethical frameworks, and mediate intercultural interactions with insight, integrity, fairness, and intercultural responsibility.

In sum, Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) represents the ethical and reflective dimension of intercultural communicative competence. It requires learners to move beyond surface-level engagement with cultural content toward a deeper, evaluative understanding based on explicit criteria and ethical reasoning. By promoting the capacity to interpret, analyze, and mediate cultural differences, CCA fosters not only linguistic competence but also responsible intercultural citizenship. Integrating CCA into language education empowers learners to navigate cultural complexity with critical insight, fairness, and respect—skills essential in today’s increasingly interconnected and multicultural world.

## **5- Cultural dimensions that influence intercultural awareness and communication**

Each individual possesses distinct strengths and limitations; no two people are exactly alike. Human survival and well-being depend on social connection, yet comparisons between individuals often lead to polarization, judgment, and communication breakdowns. Positive interactions are more likely when we focus on others’ strengths and support their areas of difficulty.

This principle extends to cultures. Every culture is shaped by its own unique history, values, and social norms, making direct comparisons problematic. Viewing another culture through the lens of one’s own can lead to stereotyping, prejudice, and misunderstanding, which hinder effective intercultural communication. Acknowledging the moral codes, religious beliefs, and historical backgrounds that shape each society is essential for fostering mutual respect and reducing cultural barriers. Furthermore, historical experiences—such as wars, natural disasters, and periods of prosperity—play a critical role in shaping collective values and behaviors. These experiences influence how societies develop norms that promote

stability, cohesion, and cooperation, particularly in social and economic contexts (Haller et al. 2019).

## **5-1 Historical Influences**

Historical influences refer to the collective experiences of a society—such as colonization, war, and migration—that shape its cultural identity, social norms, and collective memory. These historical narratives significantly influence how groups perceive one another and interact in the present. According to Byram (1997), intercultural competence requires an understanding of: (1) the historical and contemporary relationships between one's own country and that of the interlocutor; (2) how one's national history is interpreted from the perspective of the other; and (3) how the interlocutor's history is viewed from one's own cultural standpoint. Such reciprocal awareness fosters critical cultural understanding and mutual respect. Byram (1997) further explains that much of this knowledge is relational and socially acquired, as individuals form perceptions of other nations through educational and socialization processes. For instance, national histories and geographies often frame other countries in particular ways that influence intergroup attitudes and behaviors.

## **5-2- Socialization and Stereotypes**

Byram(1997) says that " the intercultural speaker knows about the social distinctions dominant in the two countries e.g. those of social class, ethnicity, gender, profession, religionand how these are marked by visible phenomena such as clothing or food, and invisible phenomena such as language variety e.g. minority languages, and socially determined accentor non-verbal behaviour, or modes of socialisation and rites of passage." Cultural values and norms are learned early through family and socialization, forming essential frameworks for one's own society but often hindering understanding of other cultures. Individuals develop stereotypes based on limited experience and media exposure,

which lead to overgeneralizations and rigid biases. These stereotypes support cultural identity and are rarely questioned. Misunderstandings, especially negative intercultural experiences, can reinforce stereotypes and act as defenses against self-reflection and growth in intercultural competence.

### **5-3- Ethical Factors**

In Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence, ethical considerations are central to the development of critical cultural awareness (CCA). This component encourages learners not only to understand and compare cultures but also to evaluate cultural practices and beliefs through ethical and democratic lenses. Rather than promoting cultural relativism or ethnocentrism, Byram (1997) emphasizes the use of universal principles—such as human rights, social justice, and equality—as explicit criteria for critical judgment. Ethical engagement involves respecting cultural diversity, avoiding stereotypes, and fostering open-minded, reflective dialogue. Moreover, moral values and principles embedded within cultures guide behavior and shape perceptions of right and wrong, influencing levels of trust, respect, and cooperation. These ethical foundations play a vital role in shaping how individuals and societies interact and communicate across cultural boundaries.

### **5-4- Culture shock**

Byram (1997) refers that " The intercultural speaker is able to cope with different kinds of experience of otherness as enthusiasm and withdrawal during residence, and place them in a longer period of phases of acceptance and rejection ".Culture shock is a key dimension in intercultural communication and adaptation which refers to the emotional and psychological stress, confusion, or anxiety individuals may experience when they encounter a cultural environment that is significantly different from their own. This reaction often stems from differences in language, social norms, customs, and values. Recognizing the impact of culture

shock is essential, as it allows individuals to develop strategies for smoother cultural adjustment and more effective communication.

Byram(1997) explains "this requires a high degree of self-awareness, the ability to analyse one's own feelings of enthusiasm or of dismay, and to see them as part of a developmental reaction to otherness". The analysis may take place simultaneously ('I know I am experiencing culture shock and this phase will pass') or retrospectively ('I remember that I thought everything was perfect at the beginning'). The stimulus for this selfanalysis can come from within the learner, particularly if they have had previous experience of culture shock. It can also come from another person, a teacher or mentor who urges the learner to reflect on their affective responses by referring them to a framework of ideas on culture shock." Byram (1997) sees that "in both cases the evidence comes from the learner's reflections, rather than from a closely structured assessment instrument. The evidence is also likely to appear at a number of different points in the experience, and this suggests it needs to be collected over time, for example as part of a portfolio."

### **5-5- Cultural surprises**

Cultural surprises refer to the unexpected norms, behaviors, or practices that individuals encounter when engaging with a culture different from their own. Such experiences often arise due to contrasting assumptions about everyday social conduct, and they can evoke confusion, discomfort, or curiosity. According to Byram (1997) "the development of intercultural communicative competence—particularly critical cultural awareness—requires not only the ability to recognize these cultural differences but also to interpret and respond to them thoughtfully and respectfully".

## **5-6- Values**

Values are one of the core dimensions used to understand how cultures differ and how individuals behave within their cultural context. It represent the deeply held beliefs about what is important, right, or desirable in life—such as morality, ethics, freedom, respect, or beauty. These values guide our decisions, shape our behavior, and influence how we interact with others. While each individual has personal values, we also share cultural values that are shaped by our upbringing and social environment. Byram mentions" school should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Byram (2025) adds that "actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values."

Cultural values help societies reduce uncertainty, resolve conflicts, make collective decisions, and organize social life. They act as a motivating force behind behaviors and attitudes, often determining what is considered acceptable or unacceptable within a specific culture.

## **6- Conclusion**

Intercultural understanding requires acknowledging diverse perspectives without imposing one's own. Maintaining cultural identity is vital, as full assimilation can hinder mutual respect. Intercultural competence involves continuous learning, openness, and awareness of personal biases. Sensitivity to nonverbal communication is equally important in conveying respect. Genuine interaction depends on balancing cultural appreciation with self-awareness. This ongoing process is essential for building trust and effective global collaboration.

## *Section II*

*Integrating Byram's*

*concept of critical*

*cultural awareness*

## **1- Introduction**

Culture has taken a significant place in foreign language teaching and learning studies. It has been widely recognized that culture and language are used as a main medium through which culture is expressed. However, "pure information" is used but does not necessarily lead learners' insight; whereas the development of students' cultural awareness leads them to more critical thinking. Byram's concept of critical cultural awareness (CCA) highlights the need for students not only to understand other cultures but to engage with them critically. This section lies at the heart of the present dissertation as it tackles the importance of integrating the cultural elements into the Algerian university syllabus. It also investigates techniques for developing students' CCA, and examines the challenges of teaching culture. Next, it considers students' and teachers' attitudes towards cultural differences and the teaching of culture. Offering insights into how Byram's theoretical framework can be practically implemented in Algerian EFL classrooms.

## **2- The place of culture in the Algerian university syllabus**

Culture is a significant aspect in learning English as a foreign language and it captured the attention of many researchers and educators, and some of them even regard it as a distinct educational goal in itself rather than as a component of intercultural competence (Guilherme, 2002). Teaching culture is considered one of the most effective ways to share a lot of knowledge about the target language, so, the idea of integrating culture content in teaching EFL has become inevitable because language without culture is not considered as communication as Harumi (2002) states, culture is a crucial element in understanding societies, analyzing differences among them.

Nowadays, the majority of English syllabi aim to foster cultural awareness, primarily by presenting factual content related to American and British culture. Despite the fact that the

English syllabi at the Algerian higher education universities comprise different subjects that can be grouped under language skills, subjects and content subjects, few of them seem to integrate cultural and intercultural elements. More specifically, students are introduced to cultural knowledge in subjects like literature and civilization only. Subjects like American and British civilizations and literature are, however, taught through traditional narrations of the history of the American and British people or across an analysis of literary works except for teachers' individual efforts. There has been a lack of guidance regarding the integration of the intercultural element in designing foreign language syllabi. Integrating intercultural components to syllabi should go beyond the course of civilization and literature.

Along these lines Byram (2004) emphasized that culture learning needs to be experiential as it is less achievable if limited to the confines of theoretically-driven subjects. A central subject like oral expression offers an excellent and more flexible platform in which intercultural components can be integrated to develop Algerian EFL learners' ICC. Since students have no chance to practice communication, oral expression sessions can better serve students to communicate, especially if the subject is designed to reflect an authentic setting where a variety of intercultural situations can be used and where students can be exposed to several intercultural experiences.

As a conclusion and as have mentioned before, integrating culture in the Algerian university syllabus is a significant step to enhance the students' ICC. An EFL syllabus that excludes culture risks producing linguistically competent but communicatively incompetent learners Risager, K. (2007). Foreign language institutions are in need to adopt intercultural communication competence in higher education (Fares, S., & Boudersa, P. 224,279). Integrating culture in the syllabus is a must if we want to prepare our students for using English in real communication. Without culture understanding communication in English will

encounter many difficulties and culture misunderstanding may create a lot of problems. Ahmed et al. (2019)

### **3- Approaches to teaching ICC**

Effective teaching of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) relies on approaches that foster critical reflection and validate learners' cultural identities. The following methods support deeper intercultural understanding and meaningful communication .

#### **3-1- Intercultural approach**

The intercultural approach is reflected in the intentional design of the curriculum, tasks, and activities, along with the encouragement and facilitation of interactions within the classroom. Additionally, this approach is demonstrated through the establishment of a culturally inclusive environment that characterized the classroom and the discipline represented by the teacher who plays a crucial role in fostering an environment where all participants can reflect on and engage with diversity. Further, to develop an awareness, and ability to collaborate effectively, reflecting attributes that commonly define global citizenship.

Carefully crafted curriculum activities offer an effective means to move away from generalization, stereotypes and bias, allowing a learner's cultural identity, knowledge, and experiences legitimacy in the learning and teaching interaction.

#### **3-2- Comparative approach**

On the other hand, it is highlighted that foreign cultures should be connected to the learner's own cultural experiences. According to Buttjes and Byram (1991), rather than providing students with "a one-way flow of cultural information", they should be encouraged

to reflect on both their own culture and that of others. The comparative approach draws on the learners' own knowledge, beliefs and values, which serve as a foundation for effective communication with individuals from different cultures. Byram also points out that students cannot completely detach from their own culture and simply immerse themselves in another.

### **3-3- Problem-oriented approach**

This approach is also based on learners' own research. Unlike the previous one, it is characterized by co-operative tasks. Students collaborate in pairs or small groups to explore various aspects of the target culture. They then share and discuss their findings to create and form a more clear picture about the other culture. Lastly, students analyze the information within the context of the other culture and juxtapose it with their own. (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993)

### **3-4- The skill-centered approach**

This approach differs from the previous approaches. It is more practical and might be beneficial for those who need to live within the target-language community. Its goal is to enhance learners' abilities necessary for navigating the (mis)communication between cultures/societies. It does not primarily mean knowledge of the other culture. According to Bolt.

## **4- Techniques and strategies for developing students' CCA**

Developing critical cultural awareness is increasingly important as English language becomes a global lingua Franca. It contains not just linguistic forms but also cultural values, ideologies, and perspectives. So, in order to prepare students for intercultural interactions and help them engage critically with others culture without accepting it blindly. According to Byram (1997), critical cultural awareness refers to "the ability to evaluate critically and on the

basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, M. 1997). Accordingly many scholars has discussed the teachability of culture in the classroom. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) proposed different strategies for teaching culture which help teachers use practical ways to integrate cultural elements into their language lessons.

#### **4-1- Authentic materials**

The use of authentic sources may help engaging students in real cultural experiences. Sources can include films, news broadcasts, and TV shows, websites, magazines, restaurant menus, and other printed materials.

#### **4-2- Proverbs and sayings**

Students would recognize how the proverbs are different from or similar to proverbs in the target language.

#### **4-3- Role play**

In role plays, students can act out a miscommunication that is based on cultural differences.

#### **4-4- Cultural Capsules**

Students are asked to explore culture items like tools or art from the target language. They search or follow clues to learn about their items' meaning. After that, they present their findings through a summary or class presentation. This help students understand culture more deeply and discuss larger cultural, historical and linguistic factors that lie in within the objects.

#### **4-5- Students as Cultural Resources**

Exchange students, immigrants, students, or students who use the target language in their households could be welcomed into the classroom as expert resources. They possess first hand knowledge that allows them to provide genuine perspectives on home life and culture aspects of native language speakers.

#### **4-6- Ethnographic studies**

It involves sending students to the community of the target language and culture to learn about language and culture.

#### **4-7- Literature**

Literary texts frequently contain cultural information and elicit memorable reactions for readers. Texts that are carefully chosen for a given group of students and with specific objectives can greatly assist students gaining insight into a given target culture.

-Activities to develop the five Intercultural Communicative Competence dimensions :

Byram's model of ICC emphasizes the importance of developing not only linguistic abilities but also cultural understanding and reflective skills, which are essential for navigating diverse cultural contexts in real-life interactions. Regarding ICC Teaching activities, Hartmann and Dittfort (2007) recommend the following activities to develop the five IC dimensions in Byram's model (1997) :

**Intercultural attitudes:** create curiosity and interest by brainstorming using visual aids especially when working with texts written by or about learners from other cultures, telling about their lives, reading authentic texts & songs, interviews and doing face to face encounter projects (e-mail, exchange).

**Intercultural knowledge:** to explore facts from films, texts, internet, authentic materials and talking to guest speakers.

**Skills of interpreting and relating:** Writing new scenes, new ending for dramas, and looking at actions in literary texts from the point of view of minor characters and providing projects to help learners experience a situation from different cultural points of view; roleplaying.

**Skills of discovering and interacting:** Comparing e-mails doing face to face encounter projects (webcam), chatting, joining study visits, negotiating cultural misunderstandings and role playing.

**Critical cultural awareness:** critically comparing, for instance, how German and Japanese deal with small talk.

#### **4-8- The Aim of Teaching Cultural tasks**

The purpose of incorporating cultural tasks into language teaching is crucial for fostering comprehensive intercultural competence. According to Byram (1997), the primary aim of teaching culture in language education is to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence. This involves enabling learners to understand and interpret cultural practices and products, critically reflect on their own and others' cultural perspectives, and interact effectively and appropriately with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The goal is to foster attitudes of openness, curiosity, and respect, which are essential for meaningful intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

Teaching culture aims to achieve intercultural competence, which many students initially lack, and to foster cross-cultural understanding—raising awareness of both their own culture and that of the target language community. Furthermore, teaching cultural tasks helps develop cultural tolerance and appropriate behaviors in diverse cultural contexts, enabling

learners to work harmoniously with people of different nationalities, genders, ages, and backgrounds. It also involves recognizing barriers to intercultural communication, such as ethnocentrism and stereotyping, and identifying language difficulties that arise in intercultural interactions. This includes understanding various nonverbal messages and being aware that rules of etiquette, including direct and indirect politeness, differ across cultures.

Overall, the integration of cultural tasks in language teaching promotes not only linguistic proficiency but also sociocultural competence, which is crucial for effective communication and interaction in a multicultural world. Challenges in Teaching Intercultural.

## **5- Communicative Awareness (ICA)**

The integration of Intercultural Communicative Awareness (ICA) into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms raises several pedagogical challenges for both teachers and students. Byram et al. (1990, as cited in Lazard, 2011, p. 116) identify three key orientations that shape teachers' approaches to culture teaching: (1) their personal philosophy regarding the role of culture in language education, (2) their personal experiences with the target language culture, and (3) their expectations concerning students' cognitive and linguistic capabilities. These individual factors significantly influence how, and to what extent, intercultural elements are included in the curriculum.

In addition to these subjective orientations, cultural diversity among students adds another layer of complexity. Teachers must navigate varying cultural backgrounds and value systems, which can impact the effectiveness of ICA implementation. The need to balance cultural sensitivity with pedagogical goals often complicates the instructional process.

A widespread and persistent obstacle is time insufficiency. Many educators report that rigid curricula and exam-focused teaching leave little room for the integration of cultural

content. As a result, ICA is often marginalized or treated as supplementary rather than essential.

Another significant issue is the lack of adequate teaching materials, particularly in the Algerian higher education context. The scarcity of resources that authentically represent the target culture limits students' opportunities to develop intercultural competence. Widdowson (1990, p. 233) stresses the importance of authentic materials—those originally produced for native speakers and used in the classroom in ways that reflect their original communicative function. In the absence of such materials, students struggle to engage with the cultural nuances of real-life language use.

Furthermore, the assessment of intercultural competence remains underdeveloped. As Piage et al. (n.d.) note, cultural content is often perceived as abstract and therefore difficult to evaluate through traditional assessment methods. This lack of reliable tools for measuring intercultural awareness discourages educators from incorporating ICA more systematically.

In conclusion, Addressing these issues requires more strong teacher training, curriculum reform, better access to authentic materials, and the development of valid assessment tools .

## **6- Students' attitudes towards Cultural differences**

Language and culture are complementary, helpful and inspiring to one another. Especially for foreign language learners, culture is extremely important to understand the social and cultural background of The target language. Having positive attitudes towards the target culture can effect the teaching/learning process considering the importance of having the target culture knowledge of learning English. The way students perceive cultural differences are not predictable and may differ from one to another. To gain a clearer understanding of these attitudes, we divide them into two distinct stages.

## **Stage One: Denial of Differences**

In this initial phase, students and individuals generally struggle to identify or accept cultural differences. They often exhibit a desire to explore these variations but lack insight into their significance; their unawareness leads to actions taken without comprehension. Individuals in this stage typically project their own viewpoints, often believing their approach is the only correct one. When faced with divergent behaviors, they might view others as "confused," interpreting deviation from their norms as incorrect or misguided. This group may experience feelings of threat towards cultural differences, leading them to adopt a stance of detachment or avoidance from unfamiliar cultures. Typically, these individuals have either limited exposure to diversity or minimal interaction with people from different backgrounds, resulting in little experience in appreciating other cultures (Geertz, G. 1973).

### **- Defense against differences**

Some students become aware that their value systems may not be applicable in all contexts and may express discomfort with this awareness. Initially denying the existence of alternative value systems, they gradually come to recognize them but may still feel unsettled.

They often view their own values as superior and deem other cultures as lesser, leading to feelings of vulnerability. Although they may refrain from imposing their values on others, they maintain a skeptical outlook on different cultures and prefer to associate with those who share similar backgrounds, which shapes their perspectives on cultural differences (Geertz, G. 1973).

### **- Minimizing the Perception of Difference**

People at this stage often are still threatened about differences. While they may not completely deny the existence of disparities, they tend to view them as less important. They

acknowledge that individuals appear different on the surface, yet they believe that a fundamental similarity lies beneath these differences. Those in this phase may recognize variations in behavior but often dismiss them as minor or insignificant. Consequently, they may approach other cultures carefully, minimizing major cultural distinctions (Byram & Morgan, 1994).

### **Stage Two: Acceptance of differences**

At this level, learners begin to perceive differences as significant and valid. They acknowledge that others may have genuinely different viewpoints and accept that these variations are natural. Although they might still find it challenging to adjust their own behaviors accordingly, they do not feel threatened by the differences they encounter. Typically, they do not abandon their own practices; instead, they strive for greater cultural sensitivity, adopting a neutral and accepting attitude toward diverse customs. Essentially, they recognize that differences exist and are an inherent part of life (Byram, M., & Morgan, C., 1994).

### **- Adaptation and Integration**

In these two stages, both behaviours as well as attitudes change. They move from a neutral view of differences to one that actively embraces them with positivity. Not only do they accept cultural diversity, but they are also ready to adjust their behaviors to align better with others. This willingness fosters deeper exploration and engagement with different cultures, enhancing empathy and understanding as they expand their viewpoints (Byram, M., & Morgan, C., 1994).

## **7- Teachers' attitudes towards teaching culture**

It is widely accepted that teachers' beliefs and attitudes play a crucial role in language teaching and learning. Researchers like Borg (2003) emphasize the necessity of understanding what educators know, think, and believe as these elements greatly impact their teaching methods. Teachers can be classified into two groups based on their views on cultural integration: Bandura, E. f. and others. One group believed that including culture in language education was unrealistic and that intercultural skills were generally developed outside the classroom. The other group supported cultural integration, regarding it as just as vital as language teaching and beneficial for enhancing students' tolerance and intercultural skills. Nonetheless, the study found a lack of agreement among educators regarding the significance of culture in foreign language teaching. In this context, different studies show that most educators recognized that culture integration could enhance students' intercultural awareness and language skills. On the other hand Cheng's (2012) indicated that many teachers had only a shallow understanding of culture integration. While they expressed optimistic beliefs, most lacked the preparation to apply such practices in their classroom, aligning with previous/earlier observations who highlighted the importance of fostering cultural self-awareness among EFL teachers are a vital step for effective intercultural instruction. A number of studies were also carried out in Algeria to inquire into Algerian teachers' attitudes towards culture teaching. Through the analysis of Algerian EFL teachers' responses, Messerhi (2014) found that the vast majority of teachers believe that the integration of culture teaching into EFL classes is important. To further investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of culture teaching in Algeria, Messerhi (2014) also reported that most teachers admitted not to have engaged in activities discussing cultural differences especially in non-verbal communication such as distance, eye contact, gestures, etc. Therefore teaching was limited to teaching mainly extracts from English literary texts, songs and so on rather than also teaching non-verbal

communication, values, beliefs, and stereotypes as issues that lie at the heart of the intercultural approach. In summary, while various studies recognize the importance of cultural integration in language teaching, they also reveal a significant gap between educators' theoretical views and their actual classroom practices, so there is an urgent need for more thorough teacher training and development initiatives to improve educators' intercultural competence, knowledge, awareness and attitudes necessary to create an atmosphere where learners are raised as intercultural students.

## **8-Conclusion**

In this previous section, we introduced the importance of integrating Byram's concept into Algerian EFL classes in order to develop learners' cultural communication with sensitivity and critical insight. While the place of culture in the Algerian syllabus remains limited and often underdeveloped, we introduced some approaches for teaching culture, and we suggested various techniques which can be employed to promote students' cultural competence. We further talked about the challenges such as the lack of resources, teachers training, and time insufficiency that must be addressed. Coming up next we spoke about the students' attitudes towards cultural differences with its two main stages. Finally we talked about teachers' attitudes towards teaching culture because understanding these attitudes would directly influence how culture is perceived and taught in the classroom.

# *Chapter II*

## *Methodology*

## **1- Introduction**

The present study aims to investigate the implementation of Byram's concept of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) among second-year students in the Department of Foreign Languages at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'Sila. To support this investigation with relevant and comprehensive data, two research instruments were employed: a questionnaire administered to second-year students, and a semi-structured interview conducted with English language instructors at the same institution. Given the study's focus on assessing the integration and impact of CCA in the EFL context, the selection of these participant groups and data collection tools was intended to provide valuable insights from both the learners' and educators' perspectives.

## **2- Research Design**

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to capture both broad trends in student perceptions of critical cultural awareness and in-depth insights from teachers. Quantitative data from student questionnaires provided generalizable patterns, while qualitative interviews with teachers allowed for deeper exploration of teaching practices and challenges.

## **3- Context and Participants**

The study focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction for second-year students at the Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Languages, Mohammed Boudiaf University, M'Sila. The courses involved primarily included Oral Expression, Grammar, which are core components of the EFL curriculum designed to enhance students' communicative competence and intercultural awareness.

The participants consisted of 47 second-year students studying English as a second language (L2), enrolled in three main academic tracks: English Language, Traduction, English

Literature. There are also students studying English and business administration at the same time during the 2024/2025 academic year.

Seven experienced English language teachers, whose expertise spans modules such as Oral Expression, Grammar, and English for Specific Purposes. These instructors employ interactive and communicative teaching methods, often incorporating intercultural education to enhance learners' cultural awareness. The students come from diverse academic backgrounds, contributing to varied learning needs within supportive and engaging classroom environments.

Purposive stratified sampling was used to select 47 second-year L2 students from English Language, English Literature, Traduction<sup>s</sup> and English with Management or Business streams. This ensured diverse academic backgrounds relevant to English learning and intercultural contexts. Their varied perspectives and sufficient language proficiency made them ideal for exploring the development of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) through English instruction.

## **4- Data Collection Instruments**

### **4-1 Student Questionnaire**

The student questionnaire was selected as one of the primary data collection instruments in a research study that seeks to examine student's awareness of cultural issues, attitudes toward intercultural dialogue, experience with cultural content in their courses at M'Sila University.

## **4-2 Teachers' interview**

Teacher's interview is selected as one of the data collection tools, to gain teachers' different perspectives about how CCA is perceived, addressed and implemented in the classroom.

## **4-3 Population and Sample**

To conduct this study, a randomly selected sample of 47 second-year English students was drawn from the total population (180) percentage( 25%) of learners enrolled in the Department of Foreign Languages at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'Sila during the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants were selected from across all groups to ensure a representative sample.

To carry out our current work, a sample of (7) English language teachers at the department of foreign languages at M'sila University are selected randomly from a whole population.

The decision to focus on second-year English students was based on the assumption that they possess a more developed understanding of both the English language and its associated cultural dimensions. Having received foundational instruction in English grammar and structure during their first year, as well as culture-focused lectures in both the first and second years, these students are considered better prepared to reflect on and engage with Byram's concept of Critical Cultural Awareness. This makes them suitable participants for assessing the extent to which this concept has been integrated into their language learning experience.

## **4-4 Student Survey Administration**

The student survey was administered through a combination of in-person and online methods. In-person responses were collected during oral expression sessions, while online responses were gathered via Google Forms, distributed primarily through email. Additionally, some paper-based responses were manually transcribed into the Google Form to complete the dataset and enhance its comprehensiveness. While the teachers' interview were collected through email responses. The use of digital distribution improved accessibility and enabled students and teachers to participate at their convenience. A total of 47 students' responses were obtained and 7 responses for teachers. For the purpose of analysis, only fully completed and clearly articulated responses were included, as these were deemed most likely to yield meaningful and relevant insights aligned with the research objectives.

## **5- Description and Analysis of Students' Questionnaire**

### **5-1 Description**

The students' questionnaire is composed of five sections, each designed to collect specific data related to the integration of Byram's Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) into EFL instruction.

#### **Section A: Background Information**

This section consists of six questions aimed at collecting basic demographic and academic information, including age, gender, and university year. It also includes questions related to students' self-evaluation of their major and their proficiency in the English language.

## **Section B: Perceptions of Culture in EFL Classes**

This section comprises six questions that seek to explore students' perceptions of the role and presence of culture in their English language classes.

## **Section C: Engagement with Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA)**

This section also contains six questions and is designed to assess students' awareness of the importance of cultural knowledge in foreign language learning, as well as its influence on language use and communication.

## **Section D: Challenges of Learning Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Cultural Awareness**

This section includes ten questions and focuses on identifying the main challenges students face when learning about other cultures, with the aim of understanding the obstacles to developing intercultural competence.

## **Section E: Open-Ended Questions**

This section aims to collect more detailed and reflective responses from students. It invites them to share examples of cultural values, suggest topics they believe should be discussed more to enhance cultural awareness, and comment on methods for improving intercultural communication skills, including the role of international travel, technology, and modern telecommunication tools such as the Internet and teleconferencing.

## **5-2 Analysis**

### **5-2-1 Students' Responses Analysis**

## **Section A: Background Information**

### Item 01 : Age

The participants (47) in this study ranged in age from 19 to 40 years, with a few students opting not to disclose their age. As shown in Table 1, the largest group of respondents (n = 9) were between 19 and 22 years old, representing traditional undergraduate students. A smaller portion of the sample (n = 2) were in the 23–24 age range. Notably, five participants (n = 5) were between 32 and 40 years old, indicating the presence of mature or non-traditional learners. Additionally, a number of students (n = 31) did not report their age.

This age distribution highlights the diversity within the student population. While most are within the typical age for undergraduate study, the inclusion of mature learners suggests a broader range of life experiences and potentially different perspectives on intercultural communication. This variation may influence students' engagement with cultural content, their learning strategies, and their attitudes toward intercultural awareness. As such, pedagogical approaches should consider the different needs and backgrounds of both traditional and non-traditional learners. As shown in the table below :

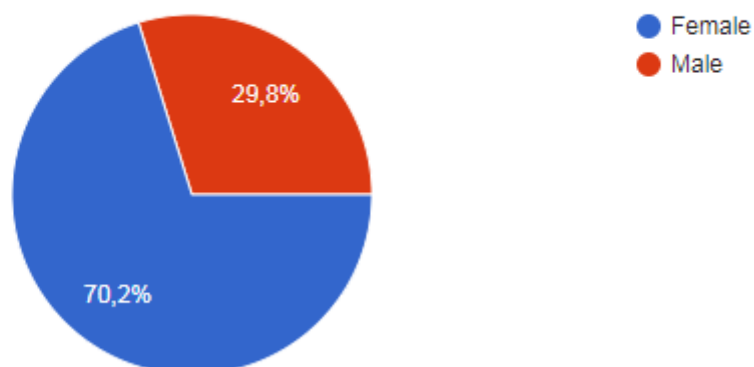
Age Group	Age Range	Number of Students	Percentage
Traditional Students	19–22	9	47.4%
Young Adults	23–24	2	10.5%
Mature Learners	32–40	5	26.3%
Not Reported	—	31	66.0% (example)

**Table 01: Age Distribution of Participants**

## Item 02 : Gender

2- Gender:

47 réponses



**Figure 03 : A pie chart showing Gender distribution of students studying English.**

The results reveal a gender imbalance among the 47 English language learners surveyed, with 33 students (70.2%) identifying as female and 14 (29.8%) as male. This indicates that female students represent more than two-thirds of the sample, while male students account for less than one-third. Such a distribution suggests a notable gender gap in English language study enrollment, reflecting broader sociolinguistic trends in which females are more represented in language and humanities fields. This disparity may influence the study's outcomes, particularly regarding attitudes toward language learning and cultural content. The visual representation further reinforces this finding by clearly illustrating the predominance of female participants in the sample.

### Item 03 : University Year – Descriptive Analysis

The responses to the question regarding university year displayed considerable variation in format, including entries such as “2nd year,” “Second year,” “2L,” “Second year licence,” and “02 nd (2025).” A total of 45 students responded to this item. Despite inconsistencies in phrasing, detailed categorization revealed that at least 26 participants explicitly identified as second-year students. Additional entries such as “2024/2025” or “2025” also correspond to the standard timeline for second-year Licence students in Algerian universities. Phrases like “2nd licence,” “Second year student,” and “2 license” further supported this classification. A small number of responses, including “University of M’sila” and “University Mohamed Boudhief M’sila,” indicated institutional affiliation without specifying the academic year and were thus excluded from the confirmed count. Given the context of the survey—targeted at students in the English Department at the University of M’Sila—it is reasonable to infer that the majority of respondents are second-year English language students.

### Item4 : Descriptive Analysis: Students' Major

Major Category	Count	Percentage (approx.)
English / English Language	24	77.4%
English + Management	2	6.5%
Unclear / Missing	5	16.1%
Total	31	100%

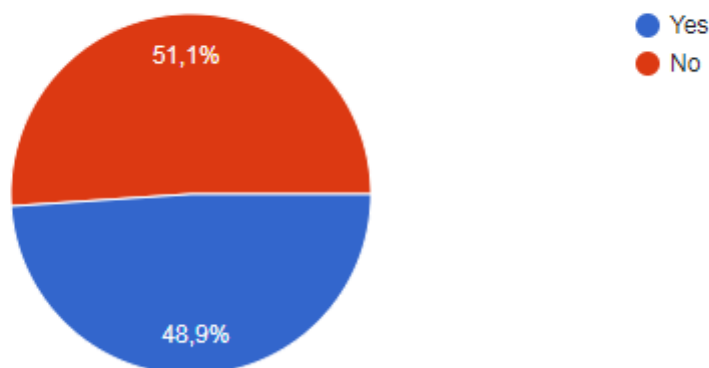
**Table 02: Students' Major**

The data indicate that a majority of respondents (77.4%) identified “English” or “English Language” as their primary field of study. A smaller subset (6.5%) reported a double major, combining English with Business or Management, reflecting some interdisciplinary engagement. A few entries, such as “2nd,” “L2,” or “/,” were ambiguous or improperly formatted, preventing clear classification.

Overall, the findings confirm that most participants are enrolled in English language programs, aligning with the survey’s intended focus on second-year students in the English Department at the University of M’Sila. The minor presence of interdisciplinary or unclear responses does not compromise the relevance of the sample to the study’s objectives.

**Item 5: Have you studied English for more than 6 years?**

47 réponses

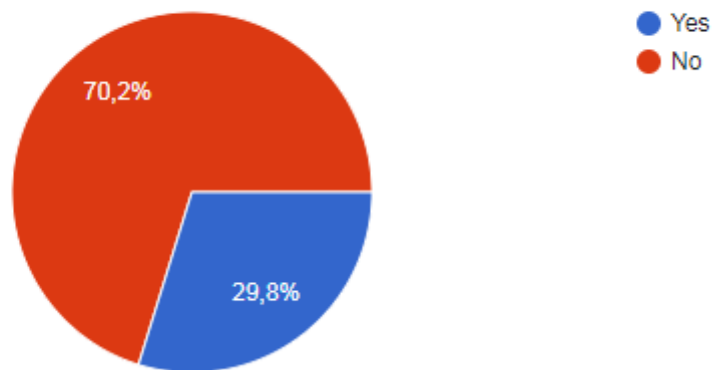


**Figure 04 : A pie chart showing the duration of English Language Study.**

The results indicate that a slight majority of students (24 respondents, 51.1%) reported that they have *not* studied English for more than six years, while the remaining 23 students (48.9%) responded affirmatively. This suggests that over half of the second-year English students have had less than six years of exposure to the English language, highlighting a relatively limited duration of study prior to entering university.

**Item 6: Have you ever participated in a course or activity related to intercultural communication?**

47 réponses



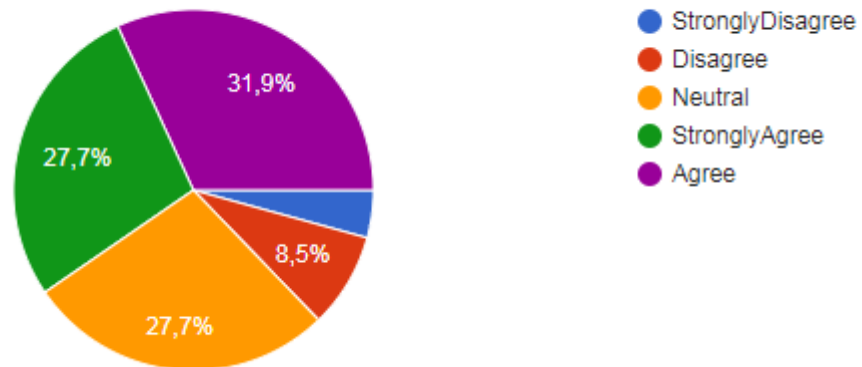
**Figure 05 : A pie chart showing the Participation in Intercultural Communication Activities.**

The results indicate that a significant majority of students (33 out of 47, or 70.2%) have not previously engaged in any course or activity related to intercultural communication. In contrast, only 14 students (29.8%) reported prior involvement in such experiences. This suggests that most learners have limited exposure to intercultural communication outside the formal university curriculum. Consequently, they appear to depend primarily on institutional instruction and assessment—such as coursework, exams, and classroom discussions—for the development of their cultural awareness in English. The accompanying pie chart visually reinforces this finding, highlighting the predominance of students with no prior intercultural communication experience.

## Section B : Perceptions of Culture in EFL Classes

**Item 1 : Culture should be regarded as a fifth language skill alongside reading, writing, listening, and speaking.**

47 réponses

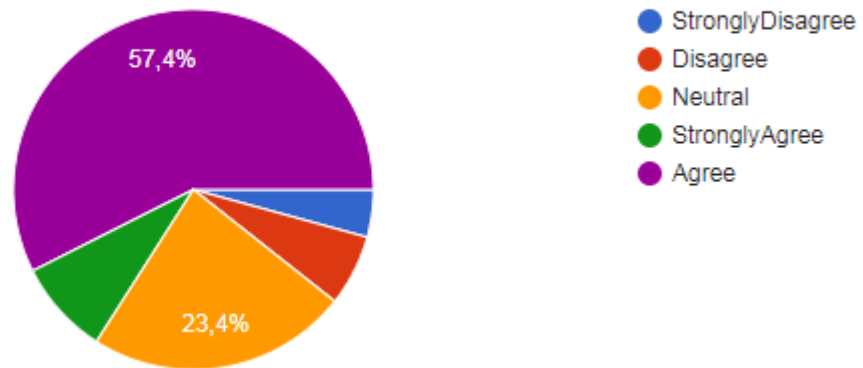


**Figure 06 : A pie chart showing the Students' Perceptions of Culture as a Fifth Language Skill.**

The results indicate that a majority of participants support the inclusion of culture as a fifth language skill alongside reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Specifically, 15 students (31.9%) agreed and 13 (27.7%) strongly agreed, amounting to 59.6% overall agreement. In contrast, 4 students (8.5%) disagreed and 2 (4.3%) strongly disagreed, while 13 respondents (27.7%) remained neutral. These findings suggest a general recognition of the role of cultural competence in EFL education. The relatively high proportion of neutral responses may reflect limited exposure to the concept or insufficient emphasis on cultural dimensions in their academic experience.

**Item 2 : My English classes include information about other cultures.**

47 réponses



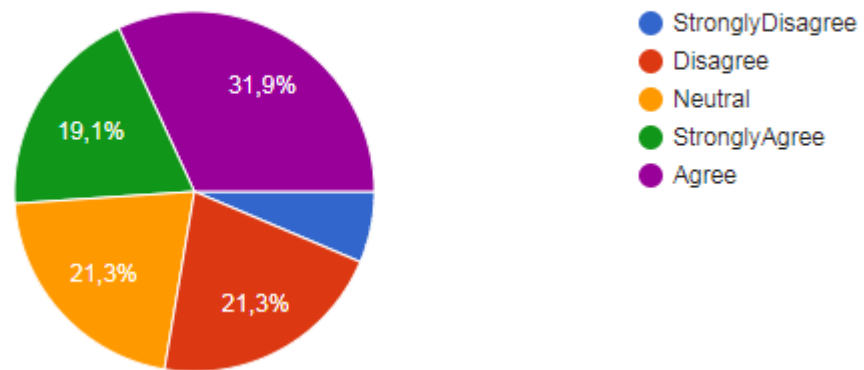
**Figure 07 : A pie chart showing the Inclusion of Cultural Content in English Classes.**

The majority of students (57.4%) agree that cultural content is included in their English classes, while 8.5% strongly agree. Neutral responses (23.4%) indicate uncertainty or limited perception of such content, and 10.7% disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting its absence for some.

These findings imply that although cultural elements are generally present, their integration lacks consistency and depth, highlighting the need for more systematic incorporation across the curriculum.

**Item 3 : My English teacher encourages us to compare our culture with others**

47 réponses



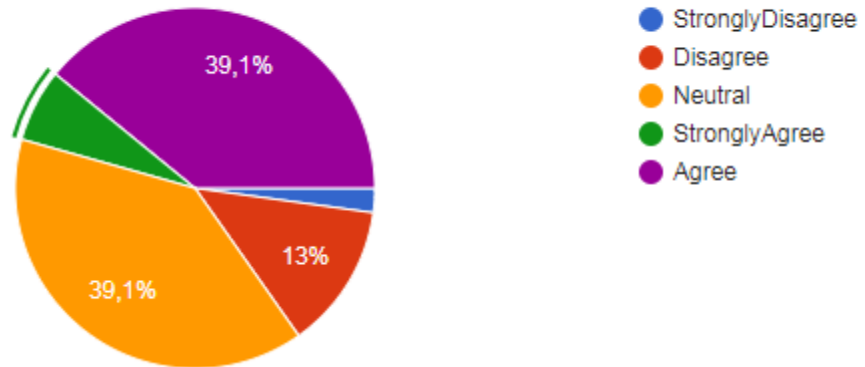
**Figure 08 : A pie chart showing the Students' Perceptions of Teacher Encouragement for Intercultural Comparison.**

The data reflect a generally positive perception among students regarding their teachers' encouragement to engage in intercultural comparison. A total of 51% of respondents (31.9% agree; 19.1% strongly agree) reported that their English teacher promotes comparing their culture with others, indicating a moderate presence of intercultural dialogue in the classroom.

Conversely, 27.7% (21.3% disagree; 6.4% strongly disagree) expressed that such encouragement is lacking, while 21.3% remained neutral—suggesting possible uncertainty, minimal emphasis on cultural content, or limited awareness of such instructional practices.

**Item 4 : I have learned about cultural values, norms, or worldviews in EFL lessons.**

46 réponses



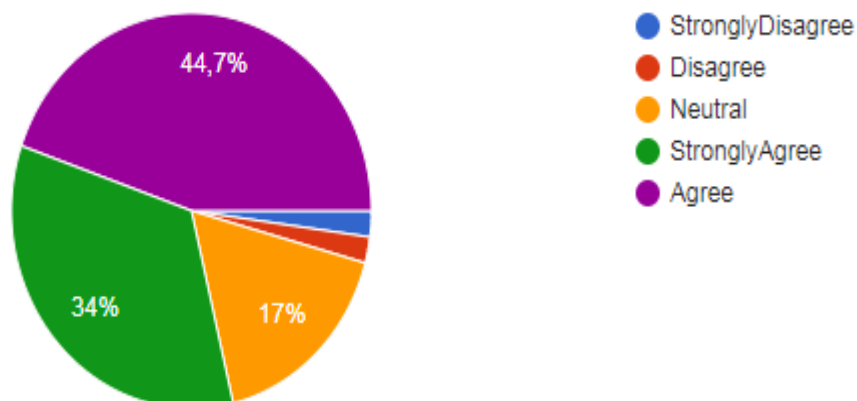
**Figure 09 : A Pie Chart Illustrating Students' Exposure to Cultural Content in EFL Lessons**

The findings indicate that students' exposure to cultural values, norms, and worldviews in EFL instruction is present but inconsistently emphasized. A combined 45.6% of participants (39.1% agree; 6.5% strongly agree) reported learning about these cultural aspects, suggesting that nearly half have encountered some degree of cultural integration in their lessons.

However, 39.1% selected a neutral response, reflecting possible uncertainty or limited recognition of cultural content. This may imply that such elements, if included, are not clearly framed or explicitly addressed. Additionally, 15.2% (13% disagree; 2.2% strongly disagree) reported an absence of cultural instruction.

**Item 5 : Discussions in class help me understand cultural similarities and differences.**

47 réponses



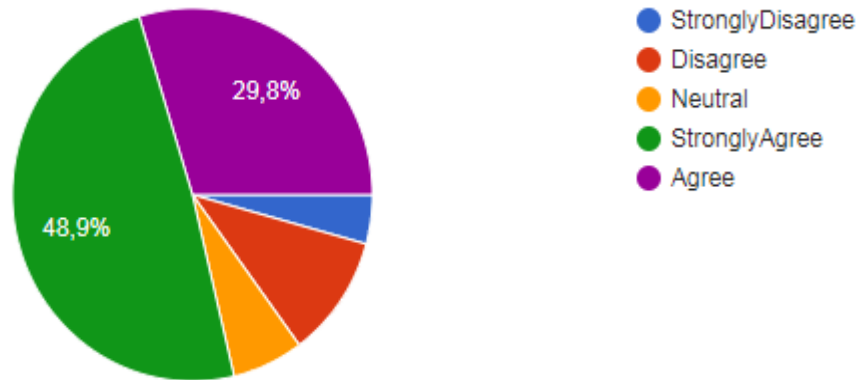
**Figure 10 : A Pie Chart Illustrating the Role of Classroom Discussions in Understanding Cultural Similarities and Differences**

The results indicate a strongly positive perception among students regarding the role of classroom discussions in enhancing their cultural understanding. A significant 78.7% of students either agree (44.7%) or strongly agree (34%) that class discussions help them understand cultural similarities and differences. This high level of agreement suggests that EFL classes at the university foster a dialogic and reflective environment, which is essential for developing critical cultural awareness as conceptualized by Byram (1997).

The low disagreement rate (4.2%), combined with a moderate neutral response rate (17%), reinforces the view that class discussions are generally effective in promoting intercultural understanding, although there remains a small group of students who may either not engage fully in these discussions or may not find them helpful.

**Item 6 : It is important to learn a foreign language within its cultural context.**

47 réponses



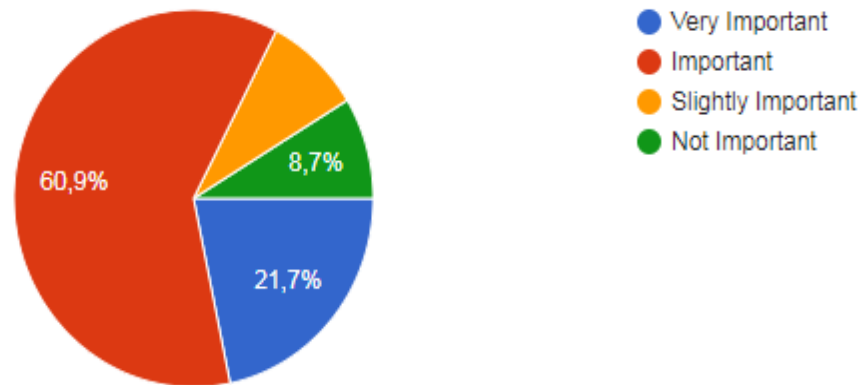
**Figure 11 : A Pie Chart Showing Perceptions of the Importance of Cultural Context in Foreign Language Learning.**

The data indicates strong student recognition of the integral relationship between language and culture. A substantial majority—78.7% (48.9% strongly agree, 29.8% agree)—believe that learning a foreign language should be situated within its cultural context, demonstrating a high level of awareness of the interdependence between linguistic and cultural competence. Minimal disagreement (10.6% disagree, 4.3% strongly disagree) and a low neutral response rate (6.4%) further underscore the overall consensus in favor of culturally integrated language instruction.

## Section C : Engagement with Critical Cultural Awareness(CCA)

**Item 1 :I reflect on my own cultural values when I learn about others.**

46 réponses

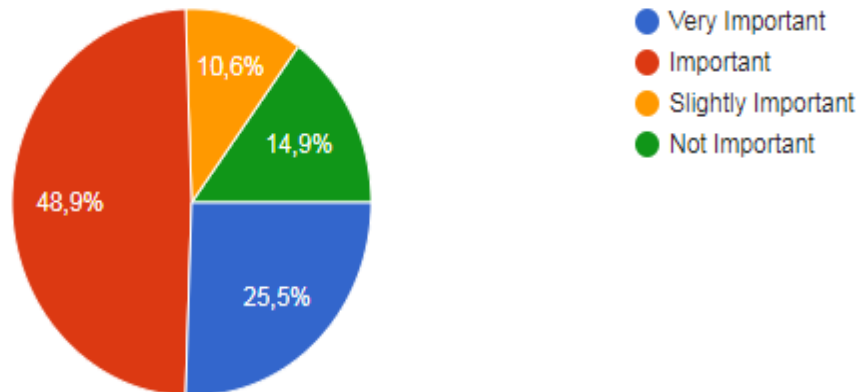


**Figure 12 : A Pie Chart Showing Students' Reflection on Their Own Cultural Values When Learning About Others.**

The result reveal that a majority of students (82.6%) consider reflecting on their own cultural values important when learning about other cultures, with 60.9% rating it as important and 21.7% as very important. However, 17.4% of respondents regard this reflection as only slightly or not important, suggesting that some students may undervalue or find difficulty with self-reflection in intercultural learning. This highlights the need for more explicit classroom strategies that promote structured personal cultural reflection.

**Item 2 : I feel comfortable expressing my opinions on cultural issues in English class.**

47 réponses



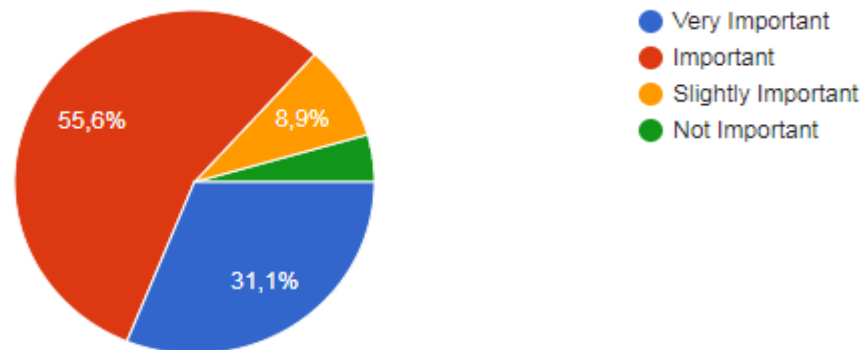
**Figure 13 : A Pie Chart Showing Students' Comfort in Expressing Opinions on Cultural Issues in English Class.**

The data reveal that a substantial majority of students (74.4%) view feeling comfortable expressing their opinions on cultural issues in English class as important or very important.

Nonetheless, 25.5% of respondents rated this comfort as only slightly important or not important, indicating that a notable minority may feel hesitant or disengaged. This may stem from limited confidence, fear of judgment, or insufficient encouragement for open cultural discussion. These findings highlight the need for more inclusive and dialogic pedagogical practices to support all learners.

**Item3: I can critically evaluate cultural practices from an ethical point of view.**

45 réponses



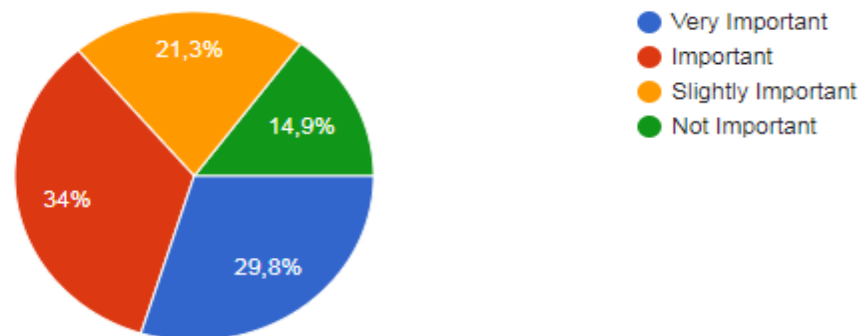
**Figure 14 : A Pie Chart Showing Students' Ability to Critically Evaluate Cultural Practices from an Ethical Perspective**

The data indicate that a substantial majority of students (86.7%) consider the ability to critically evaluate cultural practices from an ethical perspective as important—comprising 55.6% who rated it as important and 31.1% as very important. This reflects strong student awareness of the role of ethical reasoning in intercultural understanding.

A small proportion of respondents (8.9%) viewed it as slightly important, and only 4.4% regarded it as not important, suggesting that ethical evaluation may be underemphasized or less understood by a minority.

**Item4: My English lessons encourage me to question stereotypes.**

47 réponses

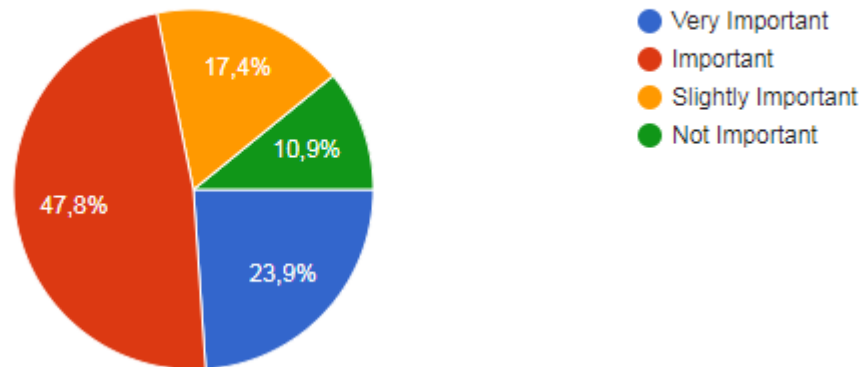


**Figure 15 : A Pie Chart Illustrating Students' Perceptions of Stereotype Questioning Encouragement in English Lessons.**

The data indicates that a majority of students (63.8%) perceive their English lessons as encouraging them to question stereotypes, with 29.8% rating this as very important and 34% as important. However, 21.3% consider it only slightly important, and 14.9% deem it not important. Compared to other intercultural competencies, this reflects a more varied perception, suggesting that the encouragement to challenge stereotypes is present but not consistently emphasized. These findings highlight the need for more deliberate pedagogical efforts to foster critical engagement with stereotypes as part of EFL instruction.

**Item4: I am encouraged to express agreement or disagreement with cultural values presented in course materials.**

46 réponses



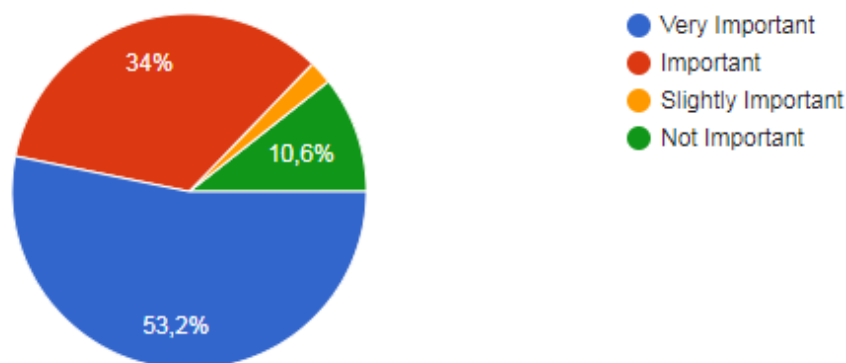
**Figure 16 : A Pie Chart Illustrating Student Encouragement to Express Agreement or Disagreement with Cultural Values in Course Materials.**

The result show that 71.7% of students (23.9% very important, 47.8% important) value being encouraged to express agreement or disagreement with cultural values in their coursework, reflecting a generally supportive environment for critical engagement.

However, 17.4% consider this only slightly important, and 10.9% view it as not important, indicating that a minority may not feel sufficiently supported or may not recognize the relevance of such engagement in language learning.

**Item 5: I believe learning English should include learning how to think critically about cultures.**

47 réponses



**Figure 17 : A pie chart showing student Beliefs on Integrating Critical Cultural Thinking into English Language Learning.**

A substantial majority of students (87.2%) consider it important to include critical thinking about cultures in English language learning, with over half (53.2%) rating it as very important—the highest such rating among all surveyed items. This reflects strong recognition of the role of cultural criticality in language education.

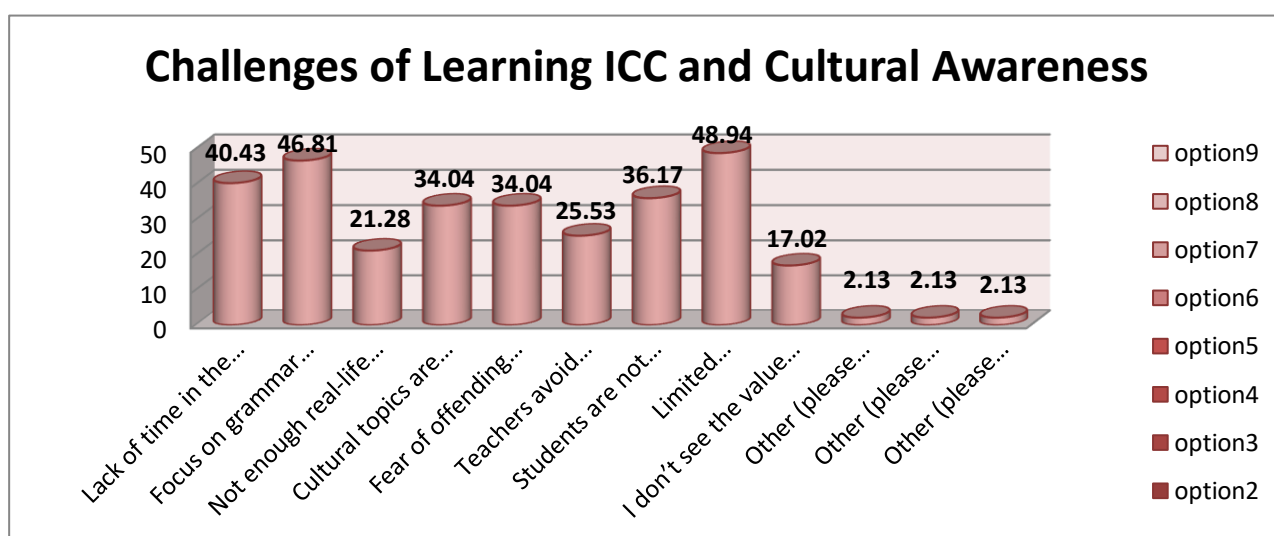
Only 2.1% view it as slightly important, indicating minimal indifference. Meanwhile, 10.6% consider it not important, suggesting a small minority either reject or undervalue the integration of cultural analysis in EFL instruction, possibly due to traditional views of language learning.

## **Section D : Challenges of Learning ICC and Cultural Awareness**

-.What do you think are the main challenges to learning about other cultures and developing intercultural competence in your English classes? (You may choose more than one)

Option	Number	Percentage
Lack of time in the curriculum	19	40,4%
Focus on grammar and vocabulary, not culture	22	46,8%
Not enough real-life or authentic cultural materials	10	21,3%
Cultural topics are presented in a shallow or stereotypical way	16	34,0%
Fear of offending others when discussing sensitive topics	16	34,0%
Teachers avoid controversial or global issues	12	25,5%
Students are not interested in cultural topics	17	36,2%
Limited opportunities for interaction with people from other cultures	23	48,9%
I don't see the value of learning about other cultures in English class	8	17,0%
Other (please specify):	1	2,1%
Other (please specify):	1	2,1%
Other (please specify):	1	2,1%

**Table 03 : Challenges of Learning ICC and Cultural Awareness**



**Figure 18 : Bar Chart showing students' challenges of learning ICC and Cultural**

**Awareness**

The data reflects students' perceptions of the primary challenges to integrating cultural learning in English language instruction. The most commonly reported barriers include limited opportunities for intercultural interaction (48.9%), an overemphasis on grammar and vocabulary at the expense of cultural content (46.8%), and insufficient time allocated within the curriculum (40.4%).

Additional concerns involve student disinterest in cultural topics (36.2%), fear of causing offense (34%), and the superficial treatment of cultural issues (34%). A notable portion (25.5%) also pointed to teachers' reluctance to address controversial or sensitive topics. Less frequently cited obstacles include the lack of authentic materials (21.3%) and undervaluing the importance of cultural learning (17%). Only a minority (2.1% each) mentioned poor study conditions, inadequate knowledge gained, or classmates focusing primarily on exam performance.

## **Section E : Open-ended Questions**

### **Item 1 : Can you give an example of a time you questioned or rethought a cultural value (yours or others') in an English class?**

The responses reveal varying levels of engagement with critical cultural awareness (CCA) among second-year English students. Around one-third reported no recollection of engaging in cultural reflection, indicating a curricular gap in fostering self-awareness. Some students showed emerging critical thinking, particularly on gender roles, authority, and career expectations. Others demonstrated surface-level awareness of cultural differences, which, while descriptive, represent initial steps toward deeper reflection when pedagogically supported. A few students exhibited advanced ethical evaluation, such as critiquing harmful cultural practices in *Things Fall Apart*, reflecting higher-order CCA. These findings

underscore the importance of culturally rich texts and guided classroom discussion in promoting critical cultural inquiry.

**Item 2: What topics would you like to discuss more in EFL classes to improve your cultural awareness?**

The 39 students' responses indicate a strong interest in integrating cultural content into EFL instruction, with varying levels of engagement. The majority preferred concrete cultural topics—such as traditions, food, festivals, and daily life—emphasizing “small c” culture and foundational intercultural knowledge.

A significant minority exhibited emerging critical awareness by expressing interest in complex social issues like discrimination, women's rights, racism, stereotypes, and cultural taboos, reflecting a capacity for critical cultural reflection. Some students showed interest in comparative and global perspectives, including contrasts between Algerian and global cultures, the effects of globalization and technology, and the role of English in intercultural communication. These responses demonstrate openness to cultural relativism and advanced intercultural understanding.

A small number questioned the relevance of culture in language learning, highlighting the need for explicit instruction on intercultural competence. Students recognized the value of current classroom cultural content, emphasizing the importance of embedding culture into core EFL activities to promote reflection and engagement. To cultivate critical cultural awareness, EFL teaching should integrate authentic materials, engage with global issues critically, promote comparative cultural analysis, and encourage reflective dialogue, thereby enhancing both linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence.

**Item 3 : According to you, what helped in increasing intercultural communication skills?**

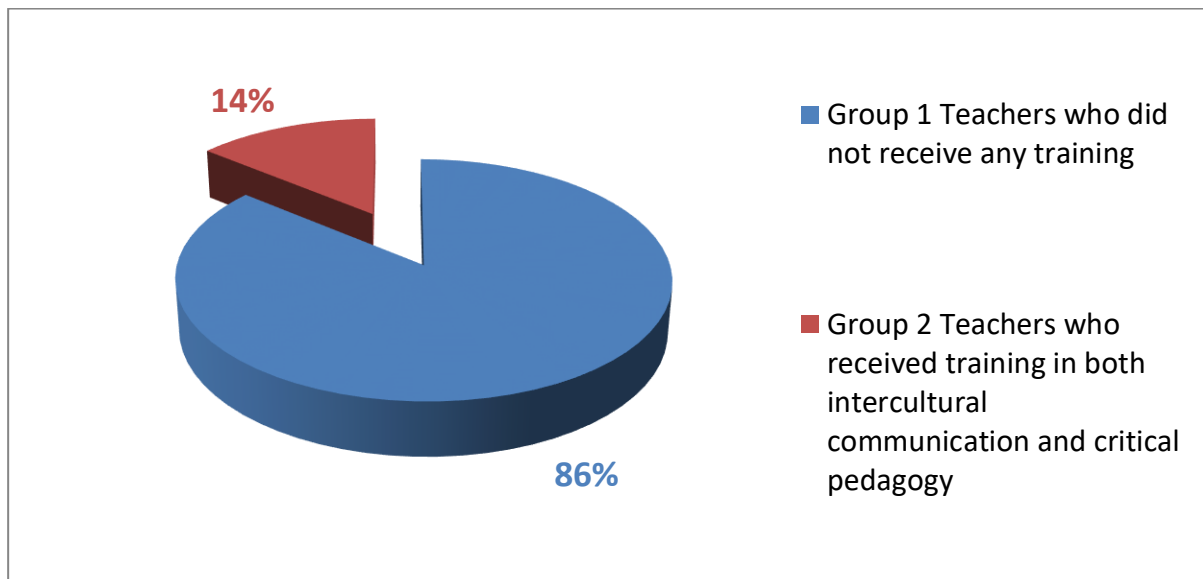
The 39 students' responses reveal a clear division regarding the relative effectiveness of international travel versus technology in developing intercultural communication skills, reflecting ongoing scholarly debates on direct versus mediated cultural exposure. Many students emphasized international travel as the most effective means for enhancing intercultural competence, highlighting that firsthand cultural engagement fosters deeper understanding and empathy, while immersion in natural linguistic environments improves both language proficiency and cultural awareness.

Conversely, a significant group underscored technology's democratizing role by overcoming geographic and economic barriers, enabling sustained, real-time intercultural exchanges via online platforms, and providing exposure to cultural norms through media consumption. Several respondents advocated for an integrative approach, recognizing that travel offers immersive depth while technology ensures broad, continuous access, and that their combination maximizes intercultural learning.

Additionally, informal digital tools such as language learning apps and social media were noted as valuable supplements to intercultural competence development beyond formal or physical contexts. Overall, students demonstrated a nuanced understanding, viewing immersive travel as providing affective, experiential learning and technology as offering accessibility and immediacy, with most endorsing a synergistic use of both to optimize intercultural communication skills.

## 5-2-2 Teachers Interview Analysis

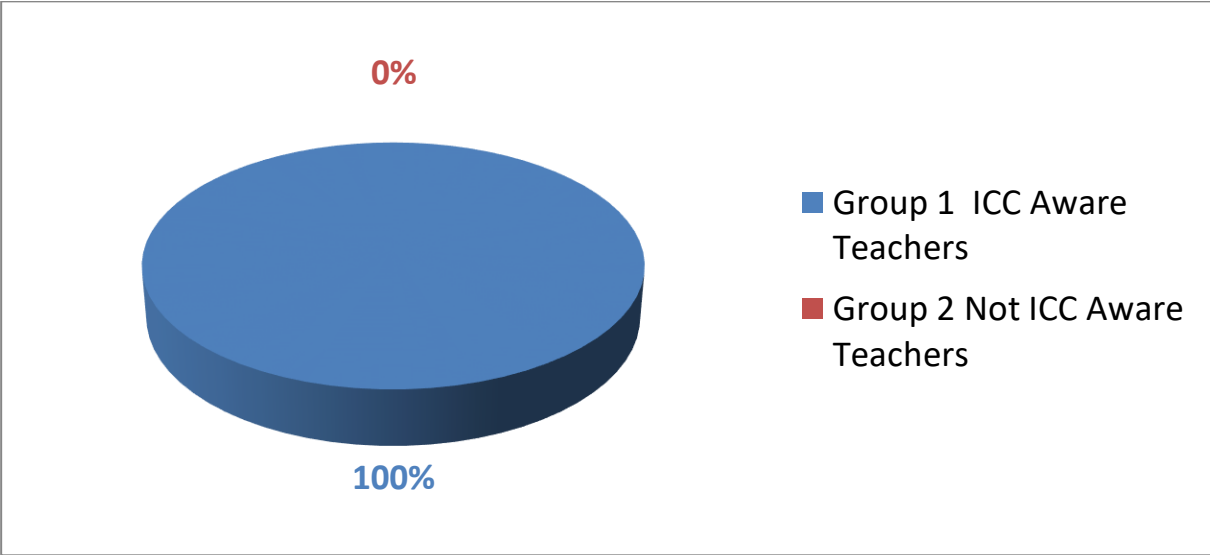
**Question 1: Have you received any training related to intercultural communication or critical pedagogy?**



**Figure 19 : A pie chart showing teacher Training in Intercultural Communication and Critical Pedagogy**

From the results obtained, most of the teachers (86%) reveal that they did not receive any training related to intercultural communication or critical pedagogy. The other teachers (14%) declare that they received training in both intercultural communication and critical pedagogy which help in enhancing their ability to create inclusive classroom environments and better understand diverse student backgrounds. They also noted that this training greatly improved their communication with students, as well as their confidence in adapting their teaching to suit intercultural communicative lessons.

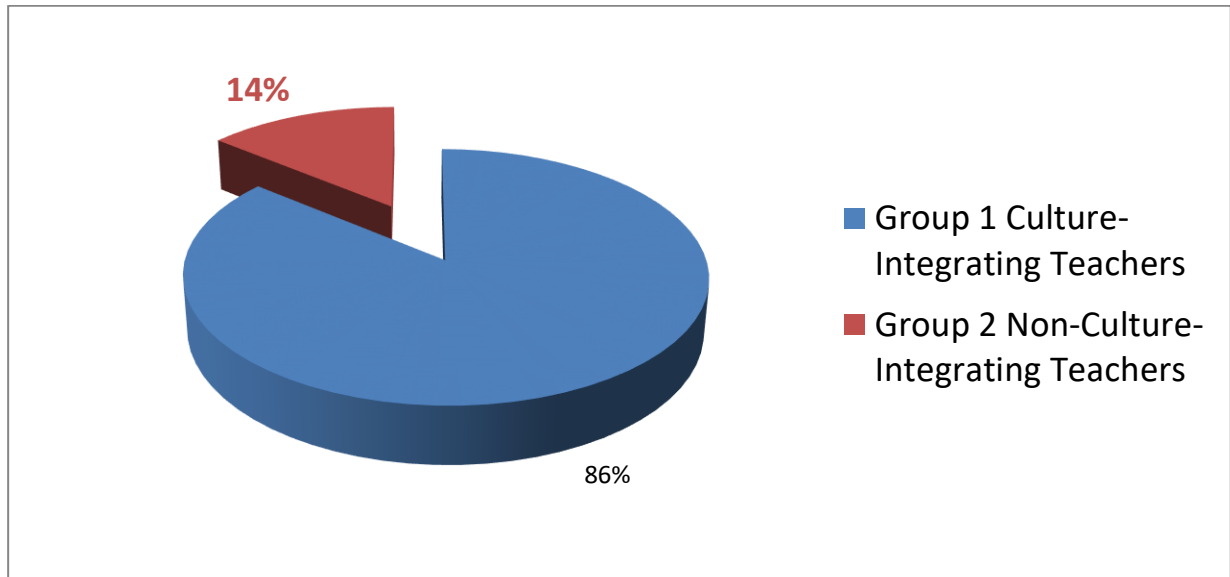
**Question 2: How do you perceive the concept of intercultural communicative competence?**



**Figure 20 : A pie chart showing Teacher Understanding of ICC**

The responses of the whole sample (100%) of English language teachers demonstrate a good understanding of ICC which indicates the teacher's readiness for diverse classrooms and their pedagogical approach to global citizenship. All the teachers emphasize the idea that ICC goes beyond linguistic proficiency, and highlight cultural understanding of norms, values, rituals.

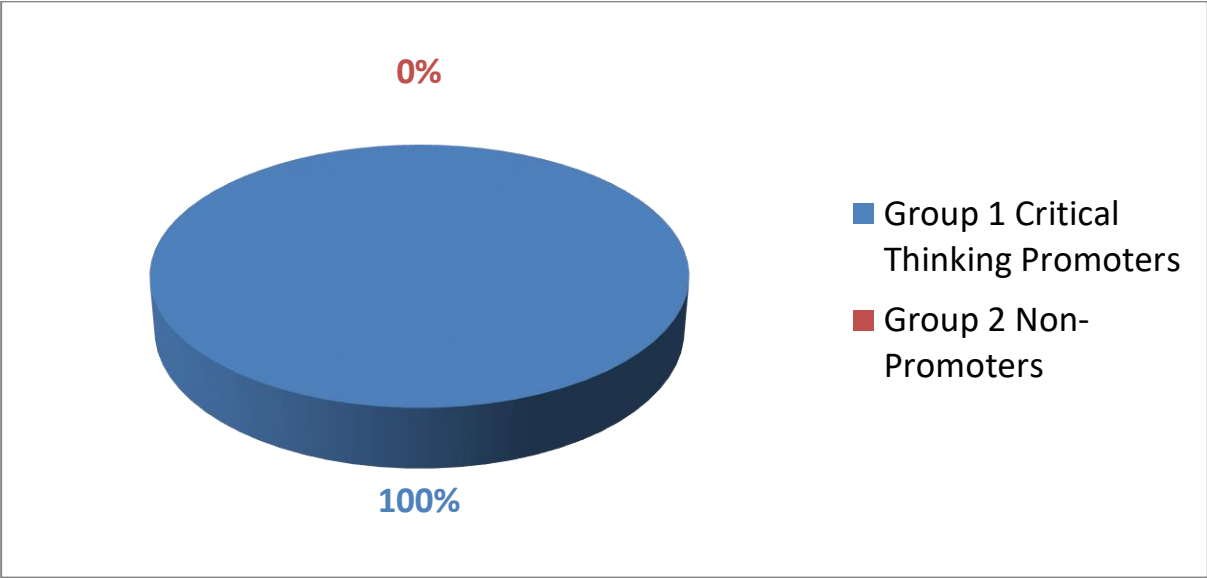
**Question 3: Do you include cultural elements in your English lessons? If yes, how?**



**Figure 21 : A pie chart showing Inclusion of Cultural Elements in English Lessons**

The results show that the majority of teachers (86%) include cultural elements in their English lessons, such as social topics, values, arts, traditions, concepts, and practices. Cultural elements help students understand how language is used in real-life contexts and enhance their intercultural communicative competence. Teachers reveal that they use different ways to incorporate cultural elements, including authentic materials, role-plays, and simulations to practise language in culturally appropriate ways, such as greeting, polite requests, etc., in addition to talking about celebrations and traditions through projects or discussions. However, a low rate (14%) of teachers declare that they do not include cultural elements in their English lessons.

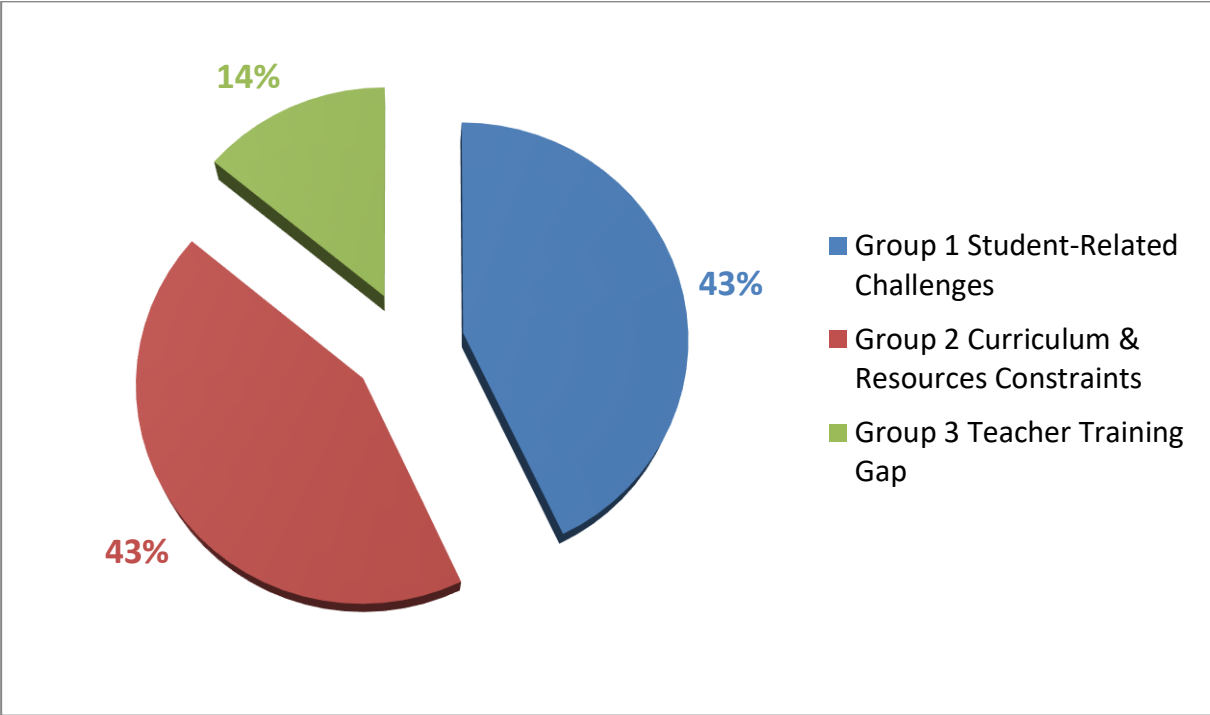
**Question 4: How do you promote critical thinking about cultural content (i.e., not just presenting facts, but inviting students to reflect and evaluate)?**



**Figure 22 : A pie chart showing Promotion of Critical Thinking in EFL C**

This is a crucial point in our work, results show that all the teachers (100%) promote their learners' critical thinking by going beyond presenting facts and creating opportunities for students to reflect, question, and evaluate cultural perspectives through comparative discussions, open-ended questions, case studies and scenarios, encouraging multiple perspectives emphasizing the importance of a safe environment.

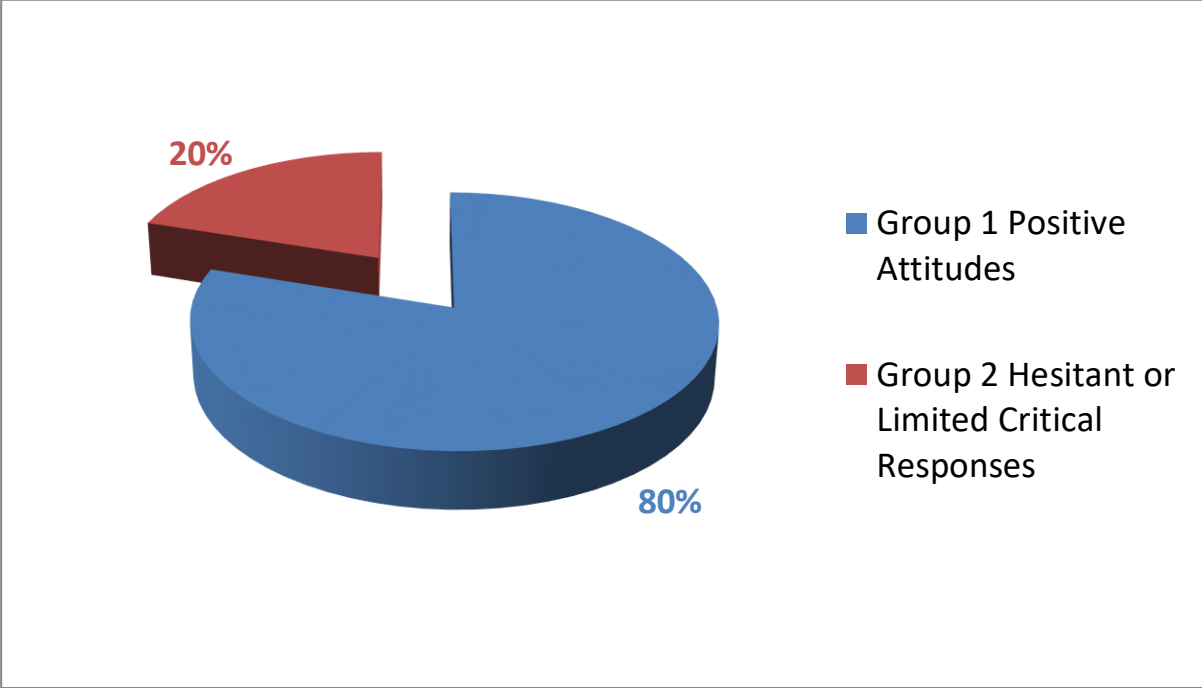
**Question 5: What challenges do you face in integrating intercultural awareness into EFL teaching?**



**Figure 23 : A pie chart showing Challenges to Integrating Intercultural Awareness in EFL Instruction**

An examination of the teachers' answers reveal that incorporating intercultural awareness into EFL instruction is difficult. The majority of teachers (43%) declare that the main challenges are related to the students. These include the sensitivity of some subjects, the pupils' limited past knowledge, and their propensity to accept foreign cultural norms without question. Another group of teachers (43%) noted that the Curriculum and resource limits are regarded as the main obstacles, with time restraints, overburdened curricula, and an absence of authentic materials mentioned. Lastly, a smaller but crucial portion (14%) highlights the need for improved teacher preparation, pointing out in particular the lack of sufficient cross-cultural training.

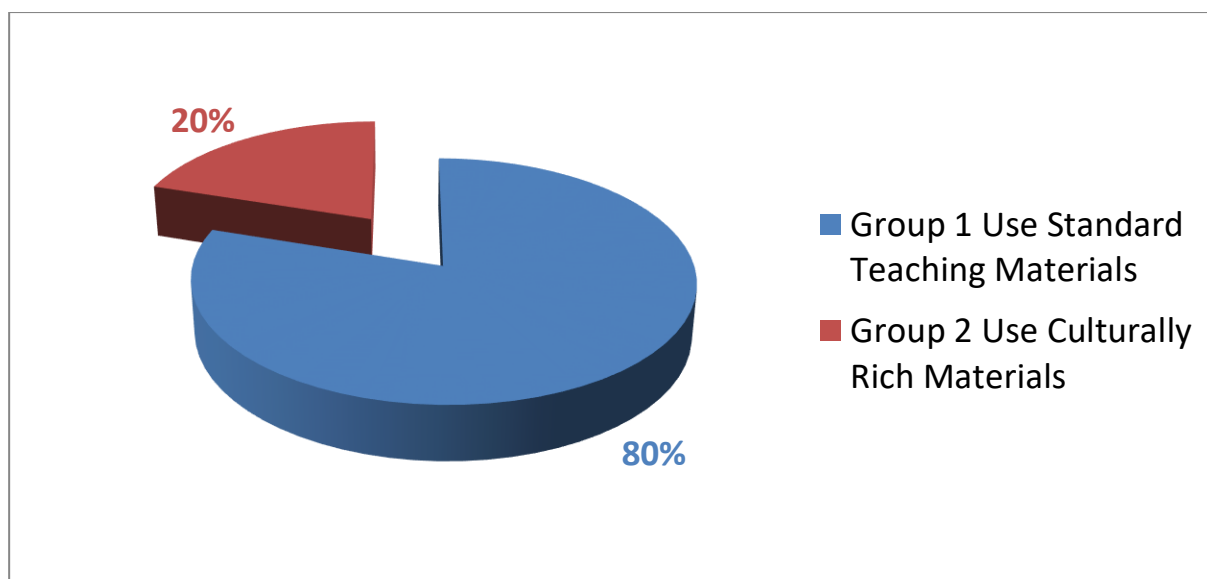
**Question 6: How do your students generally respond to critical cultural topics ?**



**Figure 24 : A pie chart showing Teachers’ Observations of Students’ Attitudes Toward Critical Cultural Topics**

Concerning this question, teachers' views were varied, but most of them (80%) noticed positive attitudes when talking about critical cultural topics. Those teachers reveal that students generally respond to critical cultural topics with curiosity and interest; most of them enjoy learning about different cultural topics which boost their motivation and participation, and even they offer insightful perspectives, especially during comparative discussions. However, other teachers (20%) noticed that some students are hesitant, especially if the topic challenges their assumptions or touches sensitive issues. Other teachers declare that some students' responses are not really critical because they face what is so-called self-underestimating or have wrong perceptions about western societies.

**Question 7: What Kind of materials or support would help you teach critical cultural issues more effectively?**



**Figure 25 : A pie chart showing Teachers' Use of Materials for Teaching ICC**

Concerning this question, it can be observed that most of the teachers (80%) used the same materials that assist them during the process of teaching ICC. From these materials, we include reading dialogues, role plays, guided discussions for some works and collaborative projects. However, a few teachers (20%) used culturally rich materials (e.g. films, podcasts, international news...) to stimulate discussion, but these efforts were personal, not program-wide.

**Question 8: How could curricula be improved to better support ICC and critical cultural awareness ?**

Most teachers propose practical strategies to enhance EFL curricula in ways that more effectively develop Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA). Which is represented in the integration of authentic and diverse materials—such as videos, podcasts, and films—and the embedding of ICC across all

language skills: using culturally rich texts for reading, reflective essays and cross-cultural comparisons for writing, exposure to varied accents and narratives for listening, and role plays or debates for speaking. Teachers also stress the importance of including culture as a core component of the curriculum, going beyond traditional focuses like history and literature to embrace music, arts, and multiple cultural perspectives. To prevent cultural shock and foster genuine intercultural engagement, teachers further highlight the need for professional development that equips them to create inclusive, critically reflective classroom environments.

### **5-3 Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, no personal identifiers were disclosed . All information was securely stored and managed in line with institutional ethical guidelines.

### **5-4 Trustworthiness and Validity**

Content validity of the questionnaire was ensured through careful design and review by the supervisor. The items were reformulated to reflect participants' perspectives and respect cultural diversity. Interview credibility was supported through consistent procedures, and researcher bias was minimized through objective questioning, neutral language, and systematic analysis.

## **6- Conclusion**

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data from student questionnaires with qualitative insights from teachers' interviews. This methodological design was instrumental in addressing the study's research questions concerning the integration of Byram's concept of Critical Intercultural Awareness (CIA) in

university-level EFL curricula. The questionnaire facilitated the systematic collection of data on students' perceptions and experiences, while the interviews provided a deeper understanding of both teachers' and students' views on the significance of CIA in language education. Furthermore, the triangulation of data sources enhanced the credibility of the findings and enabled the identification of pedagogical strategies for more effective integration of CIA into EFL instruction. Overall, the adopted methodology ensured a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the research objectives.

*Chapter III*

*Interpretation of*

*Findings*

## **1- Introduction**

This chapter critically interprets data from student questionnaires and teacher interviews in relation to the research questions, theoretical framework, and relevant literature. It focuses on Byram's (1997) model of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA), alongside concepts of intercultural competence and global education. The analysis examines how CCA is understood, implemented, and perceived in university-level EFL instruction, highlighting its current integration and identifying both strengths and gaps in fostering intercultural understanding.

## **2- Interpretation of Student Questionnaire Results**

**1-Finding :** The questionnaire data reveal that a majority of students (59.6%) support the recognition of culture as a fifth language skill, and 78.7% affirm the importance of learning a foreign language within its cultural context. Additionally, 78.7% agree that class discussions enhance their understanding of cultural similarities and differences. Over half also report exposure to cultural content and opportunities for intercultural comparison in class. However, neutral responses ranging from 17% to 39.1% across items suggest a lack of consistent or clearly perceived cultural instruction.

### **Interpretation**

The findings indicate that while students acknowledge the relevance of cultural dimensions in EFL learning, their classroom experiences reflect a fragmented and insufficiently articulated approach to cultural instruction. This suggests that cultural content is often incidental rather than systematically embedded. In accordance with Byram's (1997) model of Critical Cultural Awareness, there is a pressing need to move beyond superficial inclusion of culture toward structured pedagogical practices that integrate critical reflection on

cultural values, norms, and perspectives. Students' positive attitudes toward cultural integration signal readiness for a more coherent and purposeful implementation of intercultural objectives within EFL curricula.

**2-Finding :** The analysis of students' responses reveals a high level of engagement with the principles of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) as conceptualized by Byram (1997). A substantial majority (87.2%) affirm that English language instruction should involve critical thinking about cultures, and 82.6% value reflecting on their own cultural assumptions during intercultural learning. Similarly, 74.4% emphasize the importance of expressing cultural opinions in class, 71.7% appreciate being encouraged to critically assess cultural values in course content, and 63.8% report that their English lessons prompt them to question stereotypes. These findings collectively demonstrate that learners recognize the relevance of reflective, ethical, and dialogic engagement with culture as integral to the language learning process.

### **Interpretation**

The data suggest a strong learner orientation toward CCA, indicating readiness for pedagogical approaches that integrate intercultural reflection, critical evaluation, and cultural comparison. Nonetheless, the presence of a notable minority (ranging from 10.6% to 25.5%) who expressed ambivalence or low importance signals inconsistent implementation across instructional contexts. This underscores the need for systematic and intentional incorporation of CCA into EFL curricula through explicit pedagogical strategies—such as structured reflection, guided discussion, and ethical critique—to ensure equitable development of intercultural communicative competence for all learners, in alignment with Byram's (1997) theoretical model.

**21 : "Can you give an example of a time you questioned or rethought a cultural value (yours or others') in an English class?"**

**Findings :** Students pointed out several main problems that make it hard to develop intercultural skills in their English classes. The biggest challenges were not having enough chances to interact with other cultures (48.9%), classes focusing too much on grammar and vocabulary (46.8%), and not enough time in the schedule for cultural learning (40.4%). Other problems included some students not being very interested (36.2%), fear of saying something wrong or offending others, and shallow or surface-level cultural lessons (34%). Fewer students mentioned that teachers avoid sensitive topics (25.5%) or that there aren't enough real, authentic materials (21.3%).

### **Interpretation**

These results show that there are both practical problems and attitudes that get in the way of learning about culture in English classes. Because classes focus mostly on language rules and don't offer enough real cultural experiences, students don't get to develop a deep understanding of culture. To fix this, schools need to include more lessons that welcome different cultures, give students more chances to talk about cultural differences, and create a safe space where students feel comfortable sharing and thinking critically about culture.

**22. Academic Analysis of Responses to the Question: "What topics would you like to discuss more in EFL classes to improve your cultural awareness?"**

**Finding:** Most students showed a clear and thoughtful interest in talking about important cultural topics in their English classes. They wanted to learn about traditions, festivals, food, daily life, beliefs, school systems, and values from different countries. Many also wanted to discuss deeper issues like racism, religious tolerance, gender roles, and

stereotypes, especially about Algerian identity abroad. Some mentioned globalization, youth culture, and how technology and social media affect culture. While a few answers were unclear or showed little interest, most students were eager to learn about culture and ready to think deeply about it.

For example, one student said they wanted to learn “how to speak like a native speaker, and how to use culture in this context,” showing they understand that language and culture go hand in hand. Others said they were interested in topics like traditions, school systems, global festivals, family customs, food, and everyday beliefs.

Some also wanted to talk about how people communicate in different cultures, including social norms, values, and ways of thinking. A few students were curious about bigger topics too, like the history and well-known cultures of different countries, as well as geography.

### **Interpretation:**

The students’ answers show they are ready for lessons that include critical cultural awareness. They want to go beyond just facts about culture and explore important social issues. This fits with Byram’s idea of intercultural competence, especially the part about thinking carefully and fairly about cultural differences. Their interest in topics like racism and stereotypes means they are open to learning about other cultures and reflecting on their own beliefs. This means EFL teachers should include real-life cultural topics in their lessons and help students become more aware, thoughtful, and open-minded about different cultures around the world.

**Q 23 - "According to you, what helped in increasing intercultural communication skills?"**

**Finding:** Students surprisingly expressed clear ideas about what helps improve intercultural communication skills. Their answers generated two main views:

Some said that traveling is the best way because it lets you meet people, see new places, and experience culture directly. As one student said, “International travel is always a better option to live the real history and get attached to people, events, and historical moments.”

Others said that technology is very useful. They explained that the Internet, social media, and apps help them connect with people from other cultures quickly and easily. One student said, “Technology and modern telecommunications helped the most. The Internet and social media make it easy to connect with people from different cultures and learn from them quickly.”

Some students believed both are important. One of them said, “Both of them actually, especially international travel, because meeting people and living with them shows more things than the online contact.” In short, students understood that both traveling and using technology are good ways to learn about other cultures and talk with people from around the world.

**Interpretation:**

These answers generated an interesting and thoughtful view. Students expressed that both visiting other countries and using technology are important for learning how to communicate with people from different cultures. This shows they understand that real-life experience and online tools both help build intercultural skills. It also means teachers can use both travel-related ideas and technology in class to help students learn better about culture and communication.

### **3- Interpretation of Teacher Interview Results**

**Finding :** Teachers acknowledge the importance of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) in EFL teaching but identify curricular limitations as a major barrier. The current curriculum lacks structured integration of cultural content and allocates insufficient time for raising students' cultural awareness. Although some teachers use culturally relevant materials, these practices are isolated and not formally embedded in the program. As a result, the curriculum fails to provide consistent support for CCA development, underscoring the need for comprehensive curricular reform to better prepare students for intercultural competence and global citizenship.

#### **Interpretation**

Teachers acknowledge the importance of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) but face institutional constraints such as exam-focused curricula, limited time, and lack of training. This supports Byram's (1997) view that institutional commitment is essential for effective CCA integration. The findings reveal that curricular limitations—namely, the absence of formal cultural content and insufficient instructional time—restrict students' development of intercultural awareness. Reliance on individual teachers' efforts rather than a coordinated program-wide approach reflects structural gaps that hinder consistent CCA implementation. Therefore, comprehensive curricular reform is necessary to embed CCA systematically and better prepare students for global citizenship.

**Finding :** A limited number of teachers at M'sila University employ culturally rich materials—including films, case studies, and international news—to facilitate intercultural discussion in the classroom. However, these practices are individual initiatives and lack systematic integration within the broader curriculum or institutional framework.

**Interpretation :**

The sporadic use of culturally rich materials by individual teachers reflects a lack of institutional support and formal curricular integration of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA). While these personal efforts demonstrate teacher motivation and awareness of CCA's value, their limited scope undermines consistency and sustainability in developing students' intercultural competence. This highlights the need for program-wide strategies and curriculum reforms that formally embed cultural content, ensuring equitable and systematic opportunities for all learners to engage critically with diverse cultural perspectives.

**Question 3: Do you include cultural elements in your English lessons? If yes, how?**

**Finding:** The results show that the majority of teachers (86%) include cultural elements in their English lessons, such as social topics, values, arts, traditions, concepts, and practices. Cultural elements help students understand how language is used in real-life contexts and enhance their intercultural communicative competence. Teachers reveal that they use different ways to incorporate cultural elements, including authentic materials, role-plays, and simulations to practise language in culturally appropriate ways, such as greeting, polite requests, etc., in addition to talking about celebrations and traditions through projects or discussions. One of the responses that caught my attention, a teacher who revealed that he included cultural elements especially in grammar and he gave an example of British people who prefer forms of modal verbs which highlight politeness and the Americans who do but not much appreciated like British. However, a low rate (14%) of teachers declare that they do not include cultural elements in their English lessons.

**Interpretation:**

As an outcome of the teachers' responses, most of the teachers identify the significance of integrating cultural elements into their English lessons as a way of fostering students' critical cultural awareness. However, there are other teachers who do not include cultural elements in their lessons, which may reflect a need for further institutional support or professional development. In this context, Byram (1997) argued that effective language teaching must incorporate cultural content.

**Question 8: How could curricula be improved to better support ICC and critical cultural awareness?**

**Finding:** Most teachers (80%) suggest several practical strategies to improve curricula in order to better foster intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and critical cultural awareness. These include the integration of authentic and diverse materials, such as videos, podcasts, and films, and embedding ICC across language skills:

Reading: diverse cultural texts

Writing: reflective essays and cultural comparisons

Listening: listening to different accents and cultural narratives

Speaking: role plays and debates

Surprisingly one of the teachers added a valuable suggestion as he said "in order to avoid cultural shock, curricula need to integrate culture as a core module and include diverse perspectives, such as music and arts, not just history or literature. Moreover, teachers emphasize that they need professional training to create a supportive classroom environment.

**Interpretation:**

Teachers' suggestions concerning improving CCA highlight a lack of integration of intercultural content into the curriculum. This supports previous studies (e.g. Sercu, 2005; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), which found that despite globalization, higher education often overlooks the development of intercultural competence.

#### **4- Cross-Data Interpretation (Triangulation)**

Both student and teacher data reveal a significant gap between the recognized importance of Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA) and its limited formal integration in the curriculum. While students are open and receptive to intercultural engagement, they lack structured opportunities and sufficient exposure to intercultural content. Teachers acknowledge the value of CCA and demonstrate willingness to incorporate it, but face institutional barriers such as exam-focused curricula, limited time, and inadequate training. The sporadic use of culturally rich materials by teachers remains isolated and does not compensate for the absence of systematic, program-wide implementation. This triangulation highlights a shared need for comprehensive curricular reform and targeted professional development to embed CCA consistently, fostering intercultural competence and better preparing students for global citizenship.

#### **5- Implications for Teaching and Curriculum**

Universities should integrate intercultural objectives into course design to enhance learners' intercultural communicative competence. Teacher education programs must include modules on pedagogical strategies for developing Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA), providing educators with the tools for culturally responsive teaching. Effective classroom practices include case studies, simulations, intercultural dialogues, and reflective writing on global and culturally sensitive issues to foster critical reflection and ethical engagement.

## **6- Summary of Key Interpretations**

To sum up, students are open to Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA), they lack structured opportunities to engage with it. Teachers value CCA, but face institutional barriers such as limited time, exam-focused curricula, and insufficient training. As a result, CCA is more present in teacher beliefs than in actual classroom practice. These challenges point to a clear need for curriculum reform and teacher development to support the effective integration of CCA.

# *General Conclusion*

## General Conclusion

At the core of effective intercultural communication lies Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA)—a pivotal component of Michael Byram’s (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). As global mobility, multicultural interaction, and digital connectivity redefine communication norms, language education must respond by cultivating not only linguistic proficiency but also learners' capacity for critical engagement with cultural values, beliefs, and practices. Within the domain of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, CCA assumes an indispensable role in preparing students to navigate the socio-cultural complexities of today’s globalized world with discernment, empathy, and ethical awareness.

This research examined the extent to which CCA is recognized, understood, and integrated into EFL pedagogy at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M’Sila, with a particular focus on second-year English students. Anchored in Byram’s ICC framework, the study sought to investigate the pedagogical presence of CCA and its implications for fostering intercultural competence. It adopted a qualitative descriptive case study design, utilizing student questionnaires and teacher interviews to triangulate perspectives and explore both attitudes toward and experiences with critical cultural content in the EFL classroom.

The study was organized into three principal chapters. The first chapter outlined the theoretical underpinnings of intercultural education, emphasizing Byram’s model as a foundation for integrating CCA into language instruction. The second chapter detailed the research methodology, highlighting the tools, participants, and analytical procedures employed. The third chapter presented a synthesis of the empirical findings, mapped against the research hypotheses and conceptual framework.

Findings provided substantial support for all three hypotheses. Firstly, the analysis revealed that CCA is insufficiently embedded in the current EFL curriculum, which remains predominantly focused on linguistic structures, grammar, and vocabulary (H1). Opportunities for students to critically engage with culture are sporadic, superficial, and often framed through essentialist or stereotypical representations. Secondly, both students and instructors expressed favorable attitudes toward the integration of CCA, yet reported encountering systemic obstacles that hinder its implementation (H2). These included curricular rigidity, inadequate teacher training in intercultural pedagogy, limited access to authentic and diverse materials, and a general reluctance to address sensitive or controversial cultural issues. Thirdly, the findings affirmed that intentional pedagogical interventions—including curriculum reform, sustained professional development, and the incorporation of rich, authentic cultural content—could significantly enhance learners' intercultural communicative competence and foster deeper engagement with global perspectives (H3).

Taken together, these findings underscore the urgent need to reconceptualize language education through a culturally responsive and critically informed lens. CCA transcends the mere acquisition of cultural facts; it entails a reflective, dialogic, and evaluative engagement with one's own culture and that of others. It encourages learners to question dominant narratives, interrogate power dynamics, and consider the ethical dimensions of cross-cultural interaction. As such, its integration into EFL pedagogy is not a peripheral concern but a core educational imperative—particularly in higher education contexts that aim to produce globally competent, critically literate graduates.

In the context of Algerian higher education, where EFL instruction is often constrained by rigid curricula and exam-oriented pedagogies, the incorporation of CCA presents both a challenge and an opportunity. While structural limitations persist, the study highlights

significant pedagogical potential. Through targeted reforms—such as embedding CCA into course objectives, enriching textbooks with culturally diverse content, and equipping educators with intercultural teaching methodologies—language classrooms can become spaces of critical inquiry and intercultural learning. This transformation would not only enhance the communicative competence of students but also contribute to the broader goals of democratic education, global citizenship, and social cohesion.

In conclusion, this research affirms that fostering Critical Cultural Awareness within EFL instruction is not only beneficial but essential in preparing learners to participate effectively and ethically in intercultural contexts. By integrating CCA as a foundational element of the curriculum, Algerian universities can contribute to the formation of culturally reflective, critically engaged, and globally responsible individuals. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the mission of language education must extend beyond grammar and vocabulary to include the cultivation of intercultural understanding, critical reflection, and respectful dialogue across cultural boundaries.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This study faced several limitations that impacted its development and execution. One of the primary challenges was the novelty of the research topic, which limited the availability of relevant academic resources and prior studies to build upon. Additionally, balancing the demands of research with ongoing professional and personal responsibilities proved difficult, particularly given the **time** constraints associated with teaching duties and other obligations. Despite these obstacles, the research was successfully completed through careful planning, sustained effort, and a strong commitment to the topic, which ensured the study's coherence and academic contribution.

## **Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations**

"Without culture, language would be dead; without language, culture would have no shape ". (Jiang, 2000, citing Byram 1995). In fact, cultural awareness enables learners to use the English language both appropriately and accurately. Accordingly, we propose some pedagogical recommendations that may contribute to solving the problems related to learners' cultural awareness:

EFL teachers should be aware that culture can be introduced in all courses, explicitly or implicitly. Courses such as literature, culture of the language, oral expression, written expression, themes, and various special content can all introduce learners to English culture.

Teachers should introduce concrete elements of English culture in the classroom by using authentic materials such as English-language films, videos, and textbooks.

Learners should be aware of the differences between their own culture and the cultures of English-speaking countries, and should respect these differences even if they contradict their own beliefs, traditions, or rituals.

EFL teachers should motivate their students to learn more about English culture by designing suitable activities that fit the learners' needs.

Teachers should encourage learners to develop their cultural background of the foreign language in the classroom. This can be achieved through reading books, magazines, and newspapers that reflect the real context of the target language.

EFL curricula and syllabuses should give equal importance to both culture and linguistic competence.

The allocation of time and resources to teaching the target culture should be significantly increased.

## **Curriculum Design Suggestions**

Integrating intercultural competence into curriculum design is essential in preparing students for effective communication in a globalized world. Through these lines we present some key strategies for embedding intercultural learning objectives and practices throughout language education.

## **Setting Clear Intercultural Learning Objectives**

Curricula should specify clear goals such as understanding and respecting cultural differences, fostering curiosity about other cultures, recognizing and avoiding stereotypes and ethnocentrism, and developing effective communication in diverse cultural contexts. These objectives ensure that learners develop not only linguistic skills but also the attitudes necessary for meaningful intercultural interactions.

## **Embedding Intercultural Themes Across Language Skills**

It is crucial to integrate intercultural themes across all four language skills rather than treating them as separate modules. Firstly, in reading, diverse cultural texts such as folk tales, articles, and stories about customs or festivals should be used. This exposure broadens students' cultural perspectives and enhances comprehension. Next, in writing, students can be assigned reflective essays and comparative analyses of cultural practices, which promote deeper cultural understanding and critical thinking. Then, in listening, authentic materials like interviews, podcasts, and videos featuring speakers from different cultures and accents should be incorporated. This helps learners develop auditory skills while becoming aware of cultural nuances and potential misunderstandings. Finally, in speaking, activities such as intercultural discussions, debates, and role plays simulating real-life cultural scenarios encourage active use of language and intercultural problem-solving skills.

This sequential integration ensures learners develop cultural sensitivity alongside language proficiency, enhancing their overall communicative competence.

## **Incorporating Global Englishes and Local Cultures**

Teaching English as a global language with many varieties helps students appreciate how culture influences language use. Moreover, encouraging students to explore their own cultural identities in English fosters pride and intercultural awareness, thereby broadening their global perspective.

## **Project-Based Learning**

In addition, collaborative, inquiry-based projects such as cultural comparisons, pen-pal exchanges, and digital storytelling engage students actively. These projects provide meaningful contexts for applying intercultural skills and promote intercultural dialogue.

## **Cultural Reflection Tasks**

Subsequently, regular reflection activities like culture journals, post-task reflections, and intercultural dilemma scenarios enable students to internalize cultural insights and develop empathy. Reflection supports deeper cognitive and affective engagement with cultural diversity.

## **Use of Authentic Materials**

Moreover, incorporating authentic materials such as advertisements, social media content, and news articles from various cultures exposes students to multiple societal norms and values, enriching their intercultural understanding.

## **Assessment of Intercultural Competence**

Finally, formative assessments including reflective writing, peer feedback, and self-assessment should be employed. Rubrics must evaluate empathy, openness, cultural understanding, and respect to capture the complexity of intercultural competence beyond linguistic accuracy.

## **Critical Cultural Awareness in Practice: A suggested Lesson Plans**

In this part we provide a practical demonstration of how to design a lesson plan that can develop learners' IC in response to EFL teachers' need for guidance.

The first Example of a lesson plan according to Byram's model of intercultural Communicative Competence: **Topic:** Festivals in Algeria and England

**Main Task:** students will watch two short videos (one about Eid al-Fitr in Algeria, and one about Christmas in England), then answer the following questions:

- What is the historical or religious origin of each festival?
- What are the typical foods and drinks served during these festivals?
- What activities are usually performed (e.g. prayer, gift-giving, family visits)?
- What kind of music, if any, is associated with each festival?
- What is the general mood or atmosphere during the festival?

In terms of the differences in festivals in Algeria and England, students can mention the following aspects in the two countries.

Aspects	Eid al-Fitr in Algeria	Christmas in England
Origin	Islamic - marks the end of Ramadan	Christian - celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ
Food	couscous, sweets like makrout and baklava, meat	Roast turkey, Christmas pudding, mince pies
Drinks	Tea, juice	Wine, tea, mulled wine, soft drinks.
Activities	Eid prayer - visiting relatives - giving zakat	Gift giving - decorating Christmas trees, family meals.
Music	Traditional Arabic or Andalusian songs	Christmas carols
Clothing	traditional attire (e.g. white djellabas, kaftans)	Formal wear or themed jumpers.
Atmosphere	spiritual, joyful, family-oriented.	Festive, cozy, generous.

**Table 04 : Festivals in Algeria and England**

## **Intercultural communicative task**

### **Group discussion**

Students work in groups to compare the two festivals in Algeria and England.

### **Task 2 - Solve problems.**

Problems-solving tasks that learners undertake in small groups can facilitate language acquisition and cross-cultural awareness. For example, in order to achieve the above-mentioned purpose, we propose an intercultural task to develop learners' intercultural competence:

### **Intercultural task**

Answer the questions based on the situation below:

[Ahmed is an Algerian Muslim student who was invited to an English family's home during Christmas. But he was treated with beer and grilled pork. So, he was in a dilemma on what to do.]

If you were Ahmed, what would you do and what would you say in this embarrassing situation?

How to communicate with people from another culture?

Write an essay based on Ahmed's story.

### **Feedbacks for the intercultural task**

**S1** - If I were the man, I would give the beer and the grilled pork to another person and I would take some potatoes and water for myself.

**S2** - It's very kind of you to treat me so well. But I don't eat pork or drink beer. I am a Muslim you know. Maybe you can give me some vegetables instead. And thank you all the same.

**S3** - Thank you very much. I would appreciate it very much if you give me some vegetables because I'm Muslim I can't eat pork or drink beer.

### **The second example of a lesson plan according to Byram's model**

**Topic:** Exploring superstitions in Algerian and American society through literature.

**Main Objective:** Develop intercultural awareness through comparative literary analysis.

#### **1/ (Warm up / Savoir-être)**

**Objective:** Openness to different belief systems

**Activity:** Ask students if they know or believe in superstitions.

- Are these superstitions still practiced today?
- Why or why not?

#### **2/ Input / Savoirs**

**Objective:** Provide literary context and cultural background

**Activity:** Ask students to read a short excerpt from Kate Chopin's "The Fortune Teller" (representing American superstitions and fate) and then read another excerpt from an Algerian short story by Assia Djebar (representing Algerian superstitions).

- The teacher provides a brief explanation on how superstitions are culturally embedded in the texts.

### **3/ Interpretation and discussion / Savoir - Comprendre**

**Objective:** Students interpret meanings and relate them to their context.

**Activity:** Students work in groups to identify the superstitions in each text and how the characters respond to superstition and would this reaction be the same in their country?

### **4/ Application / Savoir-faire**

**Objective:** Encourage students to simulate intercultural interaction and analysis.

**Activity:** Ask students to do a role-play, the first student plays a character from the American story, and the other one from the Algerian story and explains their cultural belief about a superstition, (e.g. black cats vs. The Evil Eye)

### **5/ Reflection / Savoir s'engager**

**Objective:** Critical reflection on cultural values, bias, and perspectives.

**Activity:** Students work in groups to discuss the following points:

- What do these superstitions reveal about values, fears, or history of each culture?
- How might outsiders misinterpret these beliefs?

**By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:**

- Identify and compare cultural themes of superstition in literary texts.
- Show openness to different belief systems and practices.
- Interpret meaning and cultural significance from context.
- Engage critically with literature as a cultural product.
- Reflect on how literary texts can bridge or reinforce cultural misunderstandings.

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## Appendices : Appendix A

### Questionnaire for University Students

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of a research study aiming to explore the implementation and challenges of integrating one component of Byram's model \_\_Critical Cultural Awareness\_\_into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction for second-year English students at the Department of English, M'Sila University. Your responses are essential to deepening the understanding of cultural integration in language education and may help inform future pedagogical practices. All information provided will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic research purposes.

<b>Section A: Background Information</b>
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Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:

Female     Male

UniversityYear:

Major:107

Have you studied English for more than 6 years?

Yes             No

Have you ever participated in a course or activity related to intercultural communication? Yes

No

**Section B: Perceptions of Culture in EFL Classes**

<b>Select the appropriate answer :</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutra l</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>
7. Culture should be regarded as a fifth language skill alongside reading, writing, listening, and speaking.					
8. My English classes include information about other cultures.					
9. My English teacher encourages us to compare our culture with others.					
10. I have learned about cultural values, norms, or worldviews in EFL lessons.					
11. Discussions in class help me understand cultural similarities and differences.					
12. It is important to learn a foreign language within its cultural context.					

<b>Section C: Engagement with Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA)</b>
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13. How important do you believe the following elements are for engaging with Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Slightly Important</b>	<b>Not Important</b>
14. I reflect on my own cultural values when I learn about others.				
15. I feel comfortable expressing my opinions on cultural issues in English class.				
16. I can critically evaluate cultural practices from an ethical point of view.				
17. My English lessons encourage me to question stereotypes.				
18. I am encouraged to express agreement or disagreement with cultural values presented in course materials.				
19 I believe learning English should include learning how to think critically about cultures.				

## Section D : Challenges of Learning ICC and Cultural Awareness

20. What do you think are the main challenges to learning about other cultures and developing intercultural competence in your English classes? (You may choose more than one)

- Lack of time in the curriculum
- Focus on grammar and vocabulary, not culture
- Not enough real-life or authentic cultural materials
- Cultural topics are presented in a shallow or stereotypical way
- Fear of offending others when discussing sensitive topics
- Teachers avoid controversial or global issues
- Students are not interested in cultural topics
- Limited opportunities for interaction with people from other cultures
- I don't see the value of learning about other cultures in English class

Other (please specify): .....

**Section D: Open-ended Questions**

21. Can you give an example of a time you questioned or rethought a cultural value (yours or others') in an English class?

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.....  
.....

22. What topics would you like to discuss more in EFL classes to improve your cultural awareness?

.....  
.....  
.....

23. According to you, what helped in increasing intercultural communication skills?

- international travel
- Technology and medium of modern telecommunications\_\_ Internet, teleconferencing, etc.

.....  
.....

Thankyou for your collaboration

**Appendix B:**

**Interview for University Teachers**

Dear teacher,

This interview is part of a research study aiming to explore the implementation and challenges of integrating one component of Byram’s model \_\_Critical Cultural Awareness\_\_ into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction for second-year English students at the Department of English, M’Sila University. Your responses are essential to deepening the understanding of cultural integration in language education and may help inform future pedagogical practices. All information provided will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic research purposes.

1. Have you received any training related to intercultural communication or critical pedagogy? .

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.....

2. How do you perceive the concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC)?

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3. Do you include cultural elements in your English lessons? If so, how?

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4. How do you promote critical thinking about cultural content (i.e., not just presenting facts, but inviting students to reflect and evaluate)?

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5. What challenges do you face in integrating intercultural awareness into EFL teaching ?

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6. How do your students generally respond to critical cultural topics?

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7. What kinds of materials or support would help you teach critical cultural issues more effectively?

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8. How could curricula be improved to better support ICC and critical cultural awareness?.

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*Thank you for your collaboration.*

## المخلص :

يُعد الوعي الثقافي النقدي عنصرًا أساسيًا في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، لما له من دور في تمكين المتعلمين من تحليل وتقييم القيم والممارسات الثقافية بوعي واحترام. ويساهم في تعزيز التفاهم بين الثقافات، والحد من الصور النمطية والنزعة المركزية الثقافية، مما يُهيئ الطلاب للتفاعل بفعالية في بيئات متعددة الثقافات. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف تطبيق مفهوم الوعي الثقافي النقدي كما طوره مايكل بايرام (M. Byram) ضمن قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة المسيلة، مع التركيز على طلبة السنة الثانية. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجًا وصفيًا لدراسة الحالة، وجمعت البيانات عبر استبانات ومقابلات كشفية مع أساتذة وطلبة. كشفت النتائج عن وعي محدود نسبيًا بهذا المفهوم، يرافقه اهتمام متزايد، في ظل وجود عدة تحديات أبرزها ضيق المناهج التعليميه، نقص التكوين التربوي، وحساسية المواضيع الثقافية. وتوصي الدراسة بإدماج الوعي الثقافي النقدي بوضوح في مناهج التعليم العالي وبرامج تكوين المعلمين، لتعزيز الكفاءة الثقافية والنقدية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الوعي الثقافي النقدي، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الكفاءة بين الثقافات، نموذج بايرام (M. Byram)

## **Résumé :**

La Conscience Culturelle Critique (CCC) joue un rôle essentiel dans l'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère (ALE), car elle dote les apprenants de la capacité à évaluer de manière critique et respectueuse les pratiques, croyances et valeurs culturelles — les leurs comme celles des autres. En favorisant la compréhension interculturelle et en contribuant à réduire les stéréotypes et l'ethnocentrisme, la CCC prépare les étudiants à s'engager efficacement dans des contextes mondiaux diversifiés. Son intégration dans l'enseignement de l'anglais encourage l'ouverture d'esprit, la pensée critique et la citoyenneté mondiale, renforçant ainsi la pertinence sociale et éducative de l'apprentissage des langues. Cette étude examine l'application du concept de Conscience Culturelle Critique de Michael Byram dans les classes d'anglais langue étrangère à l'Université de M'Sila. Ciblant spécifiquement les étudiants de deuxième année universitaire, la recherche adopte une approche descriptive par étude de cas pour analyser la perception, le traitement et la mise en œuvre de la CCC dans les pratiques pédagogiques. Les données ont été recueillies via des questionnaires et des entretiens auprès des étudiants et des enseignants. Les résultats révèlent une conscience limitée mais croissante de la CCC chez les participants. Cependant, plusieurs défis entravent son intégration effective, notamment les limites des programmes, l'insuffisance de la formation des enseignants et la sensibilité des sujets culturels. Malgré ces obstacles, l'étude identifie des opportunités prometteuses pour promouvoir le dialogue interculturel et la réflexion critique grâce à des stratégies pédagogiques éclairées. Les résultats soulignent l'importance d'intégrer plus explicitement la CCC dans les programmes d'anglais et la formation des enseignants dans l'enseignement supérieur algérien afin de former des apprenants culturellement compétents et engagés de manière critique.

**Mots-clés en français :** conscience culturelle critique, anglais langue étrangère, compétence interculturelle, modèle de Byram