Volume 6 Issue 4
March 2020

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND CULTURAL STUDIES ISSN 2356-5926

The Intercultural Dimension in the Tunisian Higher Education EFL Context: Teacher and Student Perceptions and Practices

Anouar Smaoui[a,b]

a. English Language Unit, Faculty of Science of Sfax, University of Sfax, Tunisia.
b. Faculty of Applied Studies, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, KSA

Abstract

Despite the growing flow of data on the intercultural dimension in EFL education worldwide, relatively little attention has been paid to the EFL teacher and student perceptions and practices of this dimension in the Tunisian higher education context. The present study explores these issues using a mixed-method exploratory design. The data were obtained through informal group discussions, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with student and teacher participants from a Tunisian higher education EFL setting. The results revealed a significant awareness among the teachers of the relevance of the intercultural dimension in EFL but little to ambivalent understanding of the notion among the student population. Overall, the data indicated that both groups of participants were predisposed to the introduction of the intercultural dimension to EFL education. The results also demonstrated that various approaches to culture teaching and learning were at work in the EFL context under investigation, suggesting that important steps have been made towards the intercultural orientation of EFL education, but further efforts are still needed to fully develop this orientation. It seems imperative to accurately define intercultural competence (IC) and refer to it explicitly in the EFL curriculum. This study contributes to an understanding of the current status of the intercultural dimension in the Tunisian HE context and could form a critical foundation for further research and development. Further studies are needed to replicate the results of this work with larger samples, and additional experimental and quasi-experimental studies are required to further explore actual learning experiences involved in the iEFL teaching process.

Keywords: **Culture; IC; iCLT; Intercultural; IaH; Student cognition; Teacher cognition.**

1. Introduction

During the last few decades, there has been increasing conviction among experts in the field of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) that the time is ripe to discuss the linguistic consequences of globalization, particularly for the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Enright, 2011; Olneck, 2000). Higher education institutes (HEIs) have particularly been involved in this debate, considering their central mission to prepare graduates to function effectively in increasingly diverse and multicultural environments. The fundamental question revolved around how to best meet the newly emerging needs of a contemporary "*intercultural speaker*" operating in an interconnected plurilingual and multicultural world (Kramsch, 1993). Multiple theories have emerged, all calling for the urgent need to incorporate an intercultural dimension into higher education (HE). There has been increasing consensus in FLT research circles that modern time conceptions of Communicative Competence (CC) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) need to be redefined to tone with the newly emerging intercultural concerns, thus bringing the concepts of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), Intercultural Competence (IC), and intercultural Communicative Language Teaching (iCLT) to the center of educational research. With the rise of English as an international language (EIL), the discussion was further brought into the EFL debate, leading to the emergence of the so-called intercultural Foreign Language Teaching (iFLT) approach (Liddicoat, 2004).

Increasing attention has been given to the ways HEIs can become active drivers of IC development. In this perspective, internationalization has brought about new challenges to HEIs to adopt a 'glocal' approach to equip students with the intercultural competencies needed for the proper functioning across local and global contexts (Joyce & Cartwright, 2019; Tierney & Kan, 2016). The literature presents various approaches to the internationalization of HE, including "internationalization at home" (IaH), particularly in contexts where it can provide learners with valuable opportunities for optimal intercultural learning (Kumar & Lauermann, 2018; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Although by no means new to the linguistic situation in Tunisia, the issue of 'interculturality' has surfaced in the Tunisian educational discourse only in recent decades. Much of the research so far performed in Tunisia has tackled this area of research from the perspective of interlanguage approaches colored by various research tendencies, including sociolinguistics (Jabeur 2000; 2010; Daoud, 2001), interlanguage pragmatics (Smaoui C., 2015), systemic functional linguistics (Sellami-Baklouti & Fontaine, 2018) and pragmatics and discourse analysis (Triki & Sellami-Baklouti, 2002). Only a few research studies have, however, investigated the issue from an intercultural perspective focusing on EFL teaching and pedagogy (Derbel and Richards, 2007; Mason, 2010). The few research studies currently available on the intercultural dimension in Tunisian education have been conducted on the elementary and secondary education context and focused attention on the views and practices of the teachers (Hermessi, 2016), the place of culture in curricular documents and teaching materials (Hermessi, 2017), and impacts of cultural content and EFL textbooks and training on IC development (Mason 2010; Horchani-Elmadssia & Hosni, 2012; Ata Allah, 2016; Rahal 2017). Few studies have also explored the impacts of culture content and teaching practice on IC development in the HE context (Arfi & Hannachi, 2016). To the author's knowledge, no work is currently available on teacher and student views and practices about

intercultural education in the Tunisian higher education EFL context. Accordingly, the present study was undertaken to shed light on the current status of the intercultural dimension in the higher education EFL context of Tunisia.

2. Theoretical Background

This section presents the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study, mainly (1) the intercultural speaker and cultural turn in the EFL context, (2) the intercultural dimension in EFL education, and (3) teacher and student cognition of the intercultural dimension in EFL education.

2.1. The intercultural speaker and cultural turn in the EFL context

Culture is a highly complex and elusive construct whose definition has stirred up continued debates. The formulation of a comprehensive definition of the concept has proven challenging partly because it elicits as many first-thought responses as to whom the question might be posed. As Holliday (2009) put it, the literature presents a substantial number of different, but sometimes overlapping, definitions of culture. The latter range from surface-level definitions that refer to observable or so-called Big C cultural elements, such as those reflected in the products and practices of entire groups of people and nations, to deep-level definitions that refer to invisible or so-called small c cultural aspects, such as those reflected in the underlying values, norms, and beliefs shared by a particular community.

Though defined in multiple ways, culture has always been closely linked to its language. Language principally communicates the values and meanings of culture, reflects cultural products and expresses people's socio-cultural identities (Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat, 2004). The socio-cultural aspects of language use have long been recognized in the literature, particularly in constructivist writings, such as those of Hymes (1964, 1971) who shook the longstanding asocial view of language and infused it in the wider socio-cultural context. Although widely recognized in EFL education, the cultural dimension remained incidental peripheral displays of native speaker norms (Byram, 1997, p. 26). Several researchers have, therefore, highlighted the need to restore the missed links that hold between language and culture in EFL teaching and learning (Kramsch, 1993).

The CLT approach has recently been criticized for imposing an unrealistic and undesirable one-size-fits-all perspective of language and culture based on NS standards (Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Crozet, 1997). Critiques revolved around the validity of the NS as a goal in the EIL context (Kramsch, 1993; Holliday, 2009; Canagarajah, 1999) and gathered momentum within recent developments in the fields of interlanguage and intercultural pragmatics (Kasper, & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Researchers working from the EIL perspective argue that the NS ideal proved useless particularly because EFL learners do not need to painstakingly yearn for an approximation of the so-called NS competence when they are more likely to communicate with other non-native speakers (NNS) of English. This school of thought holds that it is neither realistic nor justifiable to ignore and suppress learners' own linguistic and cultural identities to meet the standards and norms of the NS myth (Kramsch, 1993; Canagarajah, 1999). Scholars have recently proposed the "*intercultural speaker*" (IS) as more realistic reference point for FLT (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Paige et al., 1999; Liddicoat, 2004). They argue that the modern times' interconnected world involves interaction between people from different cultures, which aligns with the growing recognition of a "*cultural turn*"

(Byram et al., 2017; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) that calls for fundamental changes in FLT teaching. Liddicoat & Scarino (2013) maintain that the "*cultural turn*" has gradually evolved into an "*intercultural turn*" in EFL teaching and helped to shape the intercultural dimension in foreign language teaching. In this respect, Byram et al., (2017) suggest that EFL education should have as a mission the equipment of learners with the skills they need to function effectively in this global world. They define the IS as someone who can mediate between two or more cultures and seeks to occupy a "*third space*", a metaphor for a dialogic space that Kramsch (1993) calls "*interculture*" or "*sphere of interculturality*".

2.2. The intercultural dimension in EFL education

During the last few decades, several researchers have recognized the need to reconstruct and expand the scope of CC to include an intercultural dimension, and hence the emergence of IC. The literature indicates that IC has been defined from different perspectives and under different names. Researchers use a range of more or less comparable terms to discuss and describe intercultural competence, including, "*multicultural competence*", "*trans-cultural competence*", "*transnational competence*", "*cross-cultural effectiveness*", "*global competency*" and "*intercultural sensitivity*" (Sercu, 2005). Other authors, such as Byram (1997) and Paige et al., (1999), use IC to designate a lower-level constituent within a higher-level construct termed ICC. From this perspective, Byram (1997) defines ICC as the interplay between four components. The first three components are based on a slight reformulation of CC (namely linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence); the fourth component is IC (a complex set of five savoirs). Although IC has been defined in various ways, Byram (1997, pp. 33-53) concludes that three key domains appear to be often included and generally agreed upon. He identifies IC as consisting of a complex set of cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes), and behavioral (skills) abilities that are needed "*to negotiate and mediate between multiple identities and cultures*" (1997, p. 33). The latter are organized in a conceptual framework comprising five interrelated components defined as know-hows (or in French "*savoirs*"). These are knowledge (*savoirs*), attitudes (*savoir être*/knowing how to be), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*/knowing how to learn), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre-faire*/knowing how to learn-to do), and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*/knowing how to commit oneself). Byram's (1997) IC model has been widely adopted, modified and expanded to suit the purposes of different EFL teaching and learning settings (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). It has provided the cornerstones for iCLT teaching and learning, a composite term used to describe the recently emerging approaches for the introduction of the intercultural dimension to language teaching and learning (Liddicoat, et al., 2003; Byram & Risager, 1999).

Liddicoat et al. (2003) reviewed traditional approaches to culture teaching and grouped them into four classes in an attempt to provide a critical foundation for intercultural education. The four approaches are (1) "*high culture*" (viewing culture as the high art and literary artifacts of the target country), (2) "*area studies*" (viewing culture as background knowledge, including the history, famous figures, popular events and geography of the target country), (3) "*societal norms*"(viewing culture as patterns of socio-cultural behavior governed by a set of social values and beliefs), and (4) "*culture as practice*" (viewing culture as the lived practices and experiences of individuals). Liddicoat (2004) argues that the first three approaches are primarily content-based (where the primary focus is on culture) and treat culture as a static and codified system perceived from an "*outsider*" perspective and transmitted in isolation

from its language. The fourth approach, on the other hand, is language-based (where the emphasis is on language) but restores the links between language and culture and treats language as a dynamic socio-cultural phenomenon experienced from an "*insider*" perspective. This approach reflects the dynamic view of culture advocated by contemporary work on the intercultural dimension in language teaching.

Several criteria have been suggested for the selection of cultural topics (CT), and various checklists have been proposed for the analysis of teaching content (TC) and the development of teaching materials (TM). Tomlinson (2012), Sercu (2002b) and Byram (1997), to cite only a few, have all provided practical guidance on TC and TM selection and design. Byram (1997) admits that the factors involved in the selection of the cultural content in TM are complex. He postulates that the cultural content should not be "incidental" in language teaching, explaining that the choice of cultural topics, activities, and tasks should depend on the educational context in which the FL is taught, the learners, and the teacher. He also suggests that the selection of cultural content be related to the particular view of cultural studies characterizing the FL teaching context and adds that the aims of the teaching content should be relevant to the students' needs and goals and be congruent with students' age, gender, background, and current level of learning. He also insists that the cultural topics presented in the TM and FL syllabi be sequenced and contextualized for pedagogical purposes. Last but not least, he recommends that the cultural content of TM be culturally diverse, include a reference to the learners' own culture, offer representations and images of the foreign culture, and lead to discussions of stereotypes that students might hold about their home and target cultures.

A good TC, according to Sercu (2002a, p. 68) is one that presents knowledge of the home and target cultures to allow comparison and reflection. What is particularly relevant in this respect is not only the topic itself but also the perspective from which it is analyzed. Kramsch (1993, p. 223) describes this as the "*double perspective of the respective societies*", that is, the home and the target cultures, to make learners reflect upon their own and the foreign cultures and become aware of their culture-bound views. In this respect, she suggests integrating an "*insider*" and "*outsider*" approach to the presentation of foreign cultures, which helps learners to see the difference and similarities between cultures and equips them with the ability to gain critical cultural awareness.

2.3. Teacher and student cognition of the intercultural dimension in EFL

Learning is a complex, multidimensional process that involves the interaction of several variables, including teacher and student cognition. Teacher cognition refers to a complex set of knowledge, assumptions, and beliefs that teachers draw on in their profession and have significant effects on their instructional practices, including the learning experiences they use to leverage student learning outcomes (Phipps & Borg, 2007; Pajares, 1992). Student cognition, on the other hand, designates a complex network of interrelated beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that they employ to attend to instructional input and acquire meaning in the learning process (Ellis, 1996). Mismatches between teacher and student perceptions and perspectives can have adverse effects on students' learning and achievement (Phipps & Borg, 2007; Borg, 2011).

The body of research currently available on student cognition in various FLT contexts revealed that FL students are basically unaware of the notion of IC learning and often fail to

find links between the FL language and culture. Chavez (2005) conducted a 33-item questionnaire with 206 students from first through third-year German courses at a US university. She found that participants believed that the culture presented in their classes was narrow in scope and focused on products rather than perspectives. Her results also showed that learners had superficial definitions of culture and ambivalent attitudes as to the place of culture in their FL courses, with some participants viewing language and culture as completely separated. Drewelow (2012) interviewed 22 students enrolled in four first-semester French courses about their views on culture in their classes and found that most participants displayed an incomplete understanding of culture, viewed language and culture as separate entities, and failed to make links between language and culture, and prioritized the study of language over culture as a focus of foreign language classes. Kubota et al. (2003) also surveyed 244 beginner learners of Spanish, Swahili, and Japanese and advanced learners of Spanish particularly on whether FL learning incites them to reflect on several socio-cultural and political issues. They reported that advanced students were more readily open to discussions on those topics and that beginner students either considered those issues as irrelevant to FL classes or resisted engaging in conversations involving socio-political issues. Cavanagh (2011) interviewed third-year students of French on the advantages of active and cooperative learning activities in lectures. He reported on various links between active learning and student motivation and enhanced critical thinking skills. The results also demonstrated the advantages of active learning activities, including improved attitudes towards the target culture and better critical cultural awareness.

The literature also presents a variety of studies on teacher cognition. Byram & Risager (1999) used questionnaires amongst 212 English teachers in Britain and 653 Danish teachers in Denmark and interviews with 18 British teachers and 42 Danish teachers. Their results revealed that though the British showed a deeper and more flexible understanding of culture, very few teachers thought that the cultural dimension was more important than the linguistic one in FLT. They also found that both the Danish and British teachers believe that their students hold ethnocentric stereotypes and attitudes that gradually disappear with subsequent experiences abroad. Sercu (2002a) also collected questionnaire data on Belgian teachers of French (45), English (78), and German (27) and reported that the teachers supported the introduction of intercultural dimension to FLT and were strongly predisposed to develop IC in their students. In practice, however, participants were noted to give high priority to the target culture with little representations of students' native culture. Sercu (2005) conducted a large scale study on European and Mexican teachers' conceptions and perceptions on IC teaching and found that the teachers did not believe that IC teaching positively affects students' attitudes towards other cultures but rather reinforced stereotypes. In another large-scale study, Sercu et al., (2005) investigated the perceptions and practices of a large international group of FLT teachers concerning IC teaching. The results revealed two tendencies; some were favorably predisposed to IC teaching and supported it in their teaching practice, and some were unfavorably predisposed to IC teaching and resisted it in their teaching practice. The literature presents several other studies wherein teachers were reported to try, with various degrees of success, to incorporate culture teaching into their teaching (Fernandez-Aguero & Garrote, 2019).

Of particular relevance to the Tunisian context, Hermessi (2016) conducted a questionnaire to collect data on the beliefs and attitudes of 70 Tunisian secondary education EFL teachers on

the place of culture in the English curriculum and found that such cognition was governed by EFL teachers' professional "*co-culture*". Rahal (2017) used questionnaires with 80 Tunisian EFL teachers and students and found that lack of authentic materials, poor textbooks and limited exposure to the authentic cultural environment and native culture interference were major problems. Little research has so far been performed on how Tunisian EFL teachers and students in the HE context envisage and position themselves in relation to the intercultural dimension in EFL teaching. Accordingly, this study aimed to shed light on this issue by providing insights into the current EFL situation in the Tunisian HE context.

3. The Study

This exploratory study was driven by an overarching research question that addressed the views and practices related to the intercultural dimension in EFL learning and teaching within the Tunisian HE context. The search for answers to this question involved the use of a mixed-method approach to collect data on how participants, defined as Tunisian higher education EFL learners and teachers, (i) value culture and its relationship with language in EFL teaching, (ii) engage with culture in the EFL teaching process, and (iii) identify with the challenges and constraints to culture learning. Data were obtained through group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires amongst higher education EFL students and teachers.

3.1. Setting and participants

The setting of the present study is Tunisia, a small North African Arab-Muslim country on the Mediterranean Sea. It is characterized by a complex and diverse socio-cultural and linguistic heritage originating from the successive waves of peoples and civilizations passing through its lands across the centuries (Daoud, 2001). The educational system in Tunisia includes three main stages, namely basic education (from the age of 6 to 14), elementary and secondary education (from 15 to 18), and higher education (from 19 onward). The EFL learning journey in Tunisia starts at an early stage of primary education, at the age of 9. Students continue to do so throughout the secondary education level and, during higher education, students learn English as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) depending on their HEIs and areas of specialties (Daoud, 2001). The study programmes offered by the various departments at the Tunisian HEIs include language studies, cultural studies, and literature studies.

The participants of the present study were students and teachers from a prominent HE institute in Tunisia. Participants in the group discussions were 24 (N=24), distributed as 12 teachers and 12 students. Teacher participants (N=12) consisted of 5 males and 7 females, 1 of whom was a senior teacher with more than 30 years of teaching experience, 3 with 20-30; 5 with 10-20, and 3 with 1-10. Three of the teachers had their Ph.D. degrees in Applied Linguistics, civilization, and literature; 4 had Master's degrees, and 5 were Bachelor degree holders. Two teachers taught fourth-year classes; 3 taught third; 3 taught second, and 4 first. Seven teachers taught language-based classes; 5 taught content-based classes. All teachers had previous stay-abroad experiences in English-speaking countries. Their stays abroad were reported to be visits to the UK (10) and the United States (2). Student participants (N=12) consisted of 5 males and 7 females equally distributed (3) between the 4 levels of study at the research site. All participants have been learning English for several years since elementary school. None of the students had a stay-abroad experience in an English-speaking country.

Participants in the semi-structured interviews were 24 distributed as 12 teachers and 12 students. Teacher participants (N=12) consisted of 5 males and 7 females, 2 of whom were senior teachers with more than 30 years of teaching experience; 3 with 20-30; 4 with 10-20, and 3 with 1-10. Three teachers had their Ph.D. degrees in Applied Linguistics, civilization, or literature; 2 had Master degrees, 4 Bachelor degrees, and 2 from other categories (doctoral contracts). All teachers had previous stay-abroad experiences in English-speaking countries, namely the UK (9) and the USA (3). Student participants (N=12) consisted of 5 males and 7 females, equally distributed (3) between the 4 levels of study at the research site. All students have been learning English for several years since elementary school. None of the participants has ever been to an English-speaking country.

Participants in the questionnaire were 152 respondents, distributed as 14 teachers and 128 students. Teacher respondents (N=14) included 9 males and 5 females, 2 of whom were senior teachers with more than 30 years of teaching experience; 4 had 20-30; 3 had 10-20, and 5 had less than 10. Four teachers had their Ph.D. degrees in Applied Linguistics, civilization, or literature; 3 had Master degrees; 5 had Bachelor degrees, and 2 belonged to other categories (doctoral contracts). Four teachers taught fourth-year classes, 2 taught third; 5 taught second; and 3 taught first-year classes. Seven teachers taught language-based classes; 5 taught content-based classes. All teachers had previous stay-abroad experiences in English-speaking countries, particularly the UK (11) and the USA (3). Student respondents (N=128) included 51 males and 77 females, of whom 48 were in the first year of their Bachelor's degree program, 42 in the second, 27 in the third, and 11 in the fourth. All students have been learning English for several years since elementary school. None of the participants has ever been to an English-speaking country.

3.2. Instrumentation and data collection

This study used a mixed design, and the data were collected and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The data were obtained through three instruments, namely interviews, group discussions, and questionnaires.

Group discussions were informal 30-45 minute face-to-face chats with student or teacher participants. There were 3 group discussions for each participant population, each involving 4 participants. The researcher constructed an informal loose agenda that aimed to guide, but not direct, the discussions. This included questions that elicited information on participants' (i) perceptions of the significance of internationalization to Tunisian higher education EFL context, namely (a) perceptions of the relevance of internationalization to the Tunisian HEIs, and (b) perceptions of the implications of internationalization for the Tunisian HE context; (ii) attitudes towards the current treatments of culture and interculturality in the Tunisian higher education EFL context, namely (a) opinions on the place of culture and interculturality across the Tunisian higher education EFL curriculum, and (b) views on the current approaches to introduce the intercultural dimension to the Tunisian higher education EFL teaching context; and (iii) valuation of experiences with the cultural dimension in EFL education, namely (a) valuing potential personal experiences with the intercultural dimension in the EFL classroom, and (b) sharing ideas and suggestions for good practice in culture teaching and learning.

The interviews consisted of 20-30 minute, individual face-to-face semi-structured sessions eliciting information on participants' perceptions, impressions, and experiences about the

intercultural dimension in EFL education. There were 5 questions, which were classified into 5 categories, namely participants' (i) definitions of culture, (ii) perceptions on the integration of culture along with and/or within language teaching in the EFL context (iii) views on the place of culture across the curriculum, (iv) attitudes on the prospects for culture teaching and learning in the EFL context, and (v) awareness of, and if so, likelihood to adopt the intercultural approach to EFL teaching, learning, and assessment.

Two questionnaires were designed, one for the students and one for the teachers. They were developed based on the theoretical background presented above (see section 2). The questionnaires aimed to elicit four major types of information, namely how respondents identify with (i) culture and approaches to culture teaching, learning, and assessment, (ii) pedagogical practices about culture teaching, learning, and assessment, (iii) constraints and challenges of culture teaching, learning, and assessment, and (iv) profiling of current learners in terms of several language and culture competencies. Accordingly, the two questionnaires contained a central core but differed slightly in terms of bibliographical information and wording. The introductory biographical parts sought demographic information that might constitute viable variables with significant effects on participant responses. The introductory biographical part in the students' questionnaire elicited information on 4 variables, namely (a) gender, (b) current year of study, (c) potential previous visits to English speaking countries, and (d) the names of countries visited. The introductory biographical part in the teachers' questionnaire elicited information on 7 variables, namely (a) gender, (b) teaching experience, (c) qualifications, (d) current levels of teaching, (e) current courses of teaching, (f) potential previous visits to English speaking countries, and (g) the names of countries visited. Respondents to this part of the questionnaire showed equal distribution on those scales, thus ensuring that a valid comparison in terms of those variables would be achieved.

The body of the questionnaire elicited the same data but differed slightly in wording. The aim was to help obtain data that are amenable to correlational and comparative analyses. It included 16 structured and semi-structured items distributed into 4 sections. Respondents were asked to tick the appropriate box to identify their views and attitudes on various aspects of culture and culture learning on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from '1' being the least useful/important to '4' the most useful/important. Section 1 consisted of 4 items eliciting information on respondents' perceptions of culture and culture learning, particularly the ways they identify with (a) the relationship between language and culture in language teaching and learning, (b) integration of culture in language teaching and learning, (c) isolation of culture from language teaching and learning, and (d) reference to native culture in culture teaching and learning. Sections 2 contained 7 items seeking information on respondents' stance in relation to a set of pedagogical culture teaching aspects, including (a) considering the intercultural speaker as a learning goal, (b) aims of culture learning, (c) objectives and outcomes of culture learning, (d) preferences of cultural content, (e) preferences of cultural topics, (f) preferences of culture teaching and learning resources, and (g) preferences of culture teaching and learning techniques and activities. Section 3 included 2 items eliciting information on respondents' attitudes on (a) constraints, and (b) challenges to culture learning. Section 4 included 3 items aiming to gauge broadly the current IC levels of EFL students at the research site to produce a tentative profile of their competencies in terms of the (a) knowledge, (b) skills, and (d) attitudes components of IC. This section invited participants to indicate their perception of students' current levels concerning specific

competences in key IC components on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 'basic' to 'advanced' levels.

3.3. Procedure and data analysis

Extensive handwritten notes were taken during or immediately after group discussions. The interviews, on the other hand, were audio-taped and then transcribed. The handwritten notes and audio transcripts were then submitted to coding and thematic content analysis. The quantitative data obtained through the questionnaires were submitted to quantitative data analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows software (trial version 22.0; SPSS Inc., Chicago).

4. Results and discussion

The results were tied to the research questions (see section 1) and analyzed based on the theoretical framework described above (see section 2). The results are presented in two sets corresponding to the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study.

4.1. Qualitative Phase

This section presents and discusses the results from the informal group discussions and semi-structured interviews.

4.1.1. Results from informal group discussions

Three major themes emerged from informal group discussions, corresponding to participants' (i) perceptions of the relevance of internationalization and interculturality to the Tunisian HE context, (ii) attitudes towards the implications of internationalization and interculturality to EFL education in Tunisia, and (iii) views on the approaches of introducing the intercultural dimension to the Tunisian EFL context.

4.1.1.1. Perceptions of the relevance of interculturality to the Tunisian HE context

The thematic analysis of participant responses during group discussions allowed for the assignment of participant statements to several categories that captured their awareness of the relevance of the cultural dimension to the Tunisian HE context. In particular, the latter included references to the contributions of interculturality and internationalization of HE to (a) equip learners with a rich transferrable repertoire of knowledge, skills, and strategies they need to operate effectively in diverse multilingual settings, (b) assist learners in developing the personal and global traits needed for successful interactions in diverse multicultural contexts, and (c) enhance learners' plurilingual and pluricultural competencies to function appropriately in various international and global environments. When asked to expand on these aspects, 7 teachers were noted to reiterate statements that echoed the cognitive (knowledge), behavioral (skills) and affective (attitudes) skills described in the literature (Byram, 1997, Paige et.al, 1999). Student participants were, however, noted to prioritize multilingualism over multiculturalism, reflecting a tendency to prioritize language learning over culture learning. Similar results were, in fact, previously reported in the literature (Chavez, 2005; Drewelow, 2012).

4.1.1.2. Attitudes towards the implications of interculturality to the EFL

During group discussions participants displayed marked disagreement on the implications of internationalization and interculturality on the EFL context in Tunisia, referring particularly

to concerns over the (a) competition between French and English for status in Tunisia and its repercussions on language and culture learning dynamics, (b) essentialist versus non-essentialist perspectives of culture in EFL education, and (c) ideology-free versus ideology-laden presentations of culture in EFL education. The discussions revealed that there was a marked ambivalence among the teachers regarding the contested foreign/second language status between French and English in Tunisia, particularly its repercussions on the unsettled cultural orientations associated with the issue. Four teachers voiced concerns over the complexity associated with the introduction of IC to EFL in tune with the ever-changing language orientations in the Tunisian education system. Other teachers, as well as some student participants, expressed a conviction that this rivalry has become meaningless in light of the decline of French and the rise of English as a global language. Concerns over this issue were also coupled with anxieties over the perception of educational systems as channels for the transmission and reinforcement of a simplistic understanding of a culture that equates national cultures with national languages and reduces people to national languages and cultures. In short, it was interesting to note that discussions with the teacher and student participants echoed some of the highly controversial issues in the literature, namely the politics of EFL education (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 2009) and the EFL classroom as a natural ground for the development of a 'third space' (Byram et al., 2001, 2006; Kramsch, 1993; Paige et al., 1999).

4.1.1.3. Views on the treatment of the intercultural dimension in EFL

The results revealed that participants exhibited markedly different views on the appropriate approach to adopt for the introduction of the intercultural dimension in EFL education. Participants were divided on the (a) place of native culture in EFL teaching and learning, (b) significance of the intercultural speaker to the EFL context, (c) process of teaching culture along or within EFL courses, and (d) treatment of cultural input during the EFL teaching and learning process. The overall results indicated that teachers having language-based classes (skills, grammar, translation, syntax, general and applied linguistics, etc.) tended to relegate culture to a secondary position and give priority to language learning, while those having content-based (literature, culture studies, etc.) classes tended to give relatively more important status to culture. Eight teachers emphasized that although the link between language and culture is unquestionable in most EFL courses, it is less salient in particular language-based courses, such as phonetics and grammar, which, according to them, supports the view that language and culture can be taught separately. The results from student discussions revealed that although the students were aware of the values of culture learning in EFL learning, they tended to prioritize language learning over culture learning, equate culture learning with the development of cultural knowledge, and consider the behavioral and affective dimensions as incidental. These results are similar to several results previously reported in the literature (Kubota et al., 2003; Cavanagh, 2011; Chavez, 2005).

Moreover, 7 teachers mentioned on several occasions that cultural input should increase gradually with the progression of students' level of language proficiency, with low cultural input for beginners and gradual increase to high cultural input for advanced students. This is in line with the developmental nature of IC learning described in the literature (Liddicoat & Crozet, 1997; Byram & Risager, 1999). Three teachers believed, however, that culture learning should occur only after students have attained an intermediate level of language proficiency. Student participants shared similar views, arguing that they need to attain a

reasonable level of language proficiency before being able to engage in learning the cultural underpinning of language use. This stands in contrast with the literature, where interculturalists emphasize that culture learning should occur at all stages of EFL learning (Byram, 1997; Liddicoat & Crozet, 1997).

4.1.2. Results from the interviews

The results from the interviews with the teachers and students revealed a rich array of perspectives on (i) definitions of culture, (ii) beliefs on the integration of culture along with and/or within language teaching in the EFL context (iii) perceptions on the place of culture across the curriculum, and (iv) opinions on the opportunities and challenges surrounding intercultural education in Tunisia.

4.1.2.1. Definitions of culture

The results from the interviews revealed that most of the Tunisian students exhibited a (a) narrow 'surface-level' understanding of culture, as opposed to the (b) broad 'deep-level' understanding exhibited by participants from the teacher population. Most of the students showed a surface-level understanding of culture; that is, referring essentially to observable 'Big C' elements, such as family life, customs, famous people and popular events. A few students seemed, however, to have developed a relatively deep-level understanding of culture, voicing the less observable 'small c' aspects of culture, including the norms, beliefs, and values, lying beneath its more observable aspects. It was possible to infer that students' responses broadly reflected a surface level and reductionist perspective that equates culture with nations, which is similar to the findings reported by several studies in the literature (Chavez, 2005; Drewelow, 2012). The interviewed EFL teachers, on the other hand, were noted to exhibit a marked deep-level understanding of culture. Broadly speaking, the definitions formulated by the teachers reflected both 'Big C' and 'small c' aspects of culture. Eight out of the twelve interviewed teachers defined culture in terms of 'small c' culture, mentioning invisible deep aspects such as the values, norms, and beliefs shared by a particular community. Only four teachers defined culture in terms of 'big C' culture, referring to visible surface elements such as the daily practices of a particular people or state, the customs and habits of a particular country, and, daily lifestyles typical to a specific cultural group. In general, the results informed that the teachers were cognizant of the complex and multifaceted aspects of the culture necessary for EFL teaching. This is in line with several previous studies in the literature (Byram & Risager, 1999; Sercu et al., 2005).

4.1.2.2. Beliefs on the integration of culture in EFL teaching and learning

Further results indicated that both students and teachers traced several elements linked to the intercultural dimension of language teaching in the EFL context of the study. Ten students referred to the rich socio-cultural and pragmatic aspects of discourse included in their EFL courses at the HE context, including literature, poetry, rhetoric, pragmatics, discourse analysis, comparative linguistics, cultural studies, and history or civilization subjects. Student participants highlighted that they usually follow a curricular sequence that begins with language skills-oriented courses and gradually introduces content-based courses until reaching advanced levels. Culture-rich content-based courses include civilization and literature. The problem, according to 5 participants, is that those two types of courses rarely intersect, which makes it difficult for the students to create links between them. On several

occasions, 3 students expressed discontent with the inclusion of culture in EFL classes, reiterating that language could be learned separately from culture. In fact, similar results were previously described by Chavez (2005) and Drewelow (2012) who reported that student participants during interviews expressed difficulties in finding links between language and culture in EFL courses.

4.1.2.3. Perceptions on the place of culture in the Tunisian EFL context

Teacher participants pointed out that teaching about culture is omnipresent in the EFL context. They repeatedly mentioned that culture is ubiquitous in their teaching materials and classroom activities. Cultural content was reported to pervade almost all language, culture, and literature subjects. These included lecturing, text analysis, video discussions, individual and group projects, as well as group presentations and debates. Four teachers indicated, however, that in some language-oriented subjects, including grammar, syntax, and phonetics, culture is often relegated to a secondary or mute position with a pure focus on the language itself, and if any, the amounts of time and content allotted to the target culture would generally outweigh those given to the native culture. They attributed this to time, syllabus and assessment constraints. Some of the EFL teachers attributed the lack of emphasis on the language-culture relationship to teachers' beliefs that culture and language are related but could be taught separately. Overall, the results from the interview with the teachers revealed that the range of the cultural input increases with participants who teach 'content-based' courses and decreases with participants who teach 'language-based' courses. There was, therefore, less cultural input used by language-based teachers dealing with the linguistic aspects of the English language than by content-based teachers dealing with content aspects relevant to their subject areas. These results indicate that various approaches to culture teaching and learning were at work in the research context under investigation, namely 'culture as high culture', 'culture as area studies', 'culture as societal norms', and 'culture as practice' described in the literature (Liddicoat et al., 2003) and are also in line with the findings of several previous works (Byram & Risager, 1999; Sercu et al., 2005).

4.1.2.4. Opinions on the opportunities and challenges to iEFL in Tunisia

The results from the interviews with both groups of participants revealed different perspectives on the opportunities and challenges surrounding intercultural education in Tunisia. Several references were made to the (a) outstanding contrast between the rich intercultural learning experiences presented to the students inside the classroom and the little resources for interculturality available for them outside the classroom. In particular, both groups of participants mentioned that students were exposed to much cultural input in the EFL classroom but had limited chances to 'experience interculturality' or 'act interculturally' beyond the classroom. In a group discussion that involved student participants, the latter mentioned on several occasions that the content they were exposed to contains primarily (b) mono-cultural presentations of the target culture, basically UK and USA, with little focus on or comparisons with their native culture. This result is in line with the findings described in the study of Fernandez-Aguero & Garrote (2019) who investigated the reported teaching practice of Ecuadorian university EFL teachers and found that the latter focus on the culture of certain English-speaking countries, but give little attention to other foreign cultures and the students' local culture as well as to comparisons between cultures. Student participants also mentioned that they used to have access to limited short-term visits to English-speaking

countries during their studies, but these have recently been substituted by local 'English villages' meant to provide them with opportunities to interact with native English speakers visiting the country. This issue was also tapped on by teacher participants who referred to what they called (c) opportunities to compensate for the 'lack of real intercultural encounters'. Overall, it was interesting to note that both groups of participants reiterated aspects relating to alternative solutions conducive to IaH (Knight, 2006; Sercu, 2005).

Overall, the findings from the qualitative phase of the study informed that the higher education EFL context in Tunisia has made significant steps in dealing with interculturality, with the majority of teacher and student participants showing awareness of the cultural dimension of EFL education, interest in the promotion of IC, openness to cultural diversity, and engagement with local and global cultures across the curriculum, particularly in terms of language and culture skills. Despite these indicators, the results informed that various approaches to the treatment of the cultural dimension were at work in the EFL context under investigation, and that apparent discrepancies between teacher and student understandings of culture and the relationship between language and culture need to be addressed.

4.2. Quantitative Phase

This section presents the results from the questionnaires in light of the research questions (see section 1) and the theoretical background (see section 2) described above.

4.2.1. Perceptions on the place of culture in EFL teaching and learning

Section 1 of the questionnaire invited participants to indicate their opinions on 4 items (see section 3.2) related to the place of culture in EFL teaching and learning on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 'not important at all' to 'very important' and from 'Totally disagree' to 'Totally agree'. The results displayed no significant differences in terms of teacher and student responses to the four items of section 1 of the questionnaire (see appendices C and D, respectively). The mean values recorded for teacher and student responses (see appendices E and F, respectively) informed that both groups were aware of the importance of culture in EFL teaching and perceived it as an integral part of the language learning experience, with mean values ranging between M= 2.23 and M= 3.71. The frequencies of teacher and student responses for each item are presented in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. The answers to item 1 informed that the teacher respondents perceived culture as a central part of the language learning experience, with 71.4% ranking it as 'very important' and 28.6 % as 'important'. Further crosstabulation analysis showed that 50% of the 'very important' ratings emanated from teachers whose courses belonged to the 'language-based' category and 21.43% from the 'content-based' category.

Table 1: Frequencies for teacher responses to the first 4 items of the questionnaire

Items	Teacher Responses				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1) Do you think it is important to	Important	4	28.6	28.6	28.6

teach/learn about aspects culture(s) as part of English language teaching/learning?	Very important	10	71.4	71.4	100.0
2) Do you think it is important to integrate aspects of the target culture(s) as part of English language courses?	Not important at all	2	14.3	14.3	14.3
	Somewhat important	3	21.4	21.4	35.7
	Important	6	42.9	42.9	78.6
	Very important	3	21.4	21.4	100.0
3) Do you think that the teaching/learning of cultural aspects of the target culture(s) should be taught only in separate courses, such as “civilization” and "literature"?	Totally disagree	2	14.3	14.3	14.3
	Disagree	6	42.9	42.9	57.1
	Agree	3	21.4	21.4	78.6
	Totally agree	3	21.4	21.4	100.0
4) Do you think it is important to include references to aspects of students' native culture(s) in English language teaching?	Not important at all	2	14.3	14.3	14.3
	Somewhat important	5	35.7	35.7	50.0
	Important	5	35.7	35.7	85.7
	Very important	2	14.3	14.3	100.0

The responses to the same item showed, however, that participating students had different rankings, ranging between 21.9% ‘not important at all’, 28.1% ‘somewhat important’, 27.3% ‘important’, and 22.7% ‘very important’. Further analysis indicated that 21% of the student respondents ranking culture as ‘not important at all’ in language teaching consisted of first (60.7%) and second (39.3%) year students; no third and fourth-year students ranked culture on the ‘not important’ side of the scale.

Table 2: Frequencies for student responses to the first four items of the questionnaire

Items	Teacher Responses				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1) Do you think it is important to teach/learn about aspects culture(s) as part of English language teaching/learning?	Not important at all	28	21.9	21.9	21.9
	Somewhat important	36	28.1	28.1	50.0
	important	35	27.3	27.3	77.3
	Very important	29	22.7	22.7	100.0
2) Do you think it is important to integrate aspects of the target culture(s) as part of English language courses?	Not important at all	2	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Somewhat important	48	37.5	37.5	39.1
	important	39	30.5	30.5	69.5
	Very important	39	30.5	30.5	100.0
3) Do you think that the teaching/learning of cultural aspects of the target culture(s) should be taught only in separate courses, such as “civilization” and "literature"?	Totally disagree	35	27.3	27.3	27.3
	disagree	45	35.2	35.2	62.5
	agree	32	25.0	25.0	87.5
	Totally agree	16	12.5	12.5	100.0
4) Do you think it is important to include references to aspects of students' native culture(s) in English language teaching?	Not important at all	16	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Somewhat important	61	47.7	47.7	60.2
	important	50	39.1	39.1	99.2
	Very important	1	.8	.8	100.0

In short, the responses to the first item of Section 1 revealed that both groups of participants were cognizant of the importance of culture, acknowledging its significance to EFL education.

4.2.2. Beliefs about approaches to culture teaching and learning

The responses to item 2 indicated that 14.3, 21.4, 42.9, and 21.4% of the teacher participants viewed the integration of culture as 'not important', 'somewhat important', 'important', and 'very important', respectively. This was crosschecked with responses to item 3, which elicited teachers' views on the teaching of culture in separate courses, and the results informed that 14.3, 42.9, 21.4, and 214.4% of the teacher respondents 'totally disagreed', 'disagreed', 'agreed', and 'totally disagreed' with the teaching of culture in separate courses. Similar tendencies were recorded for student responses, with 1.6, 37.5, 30.5, and 30.5% of participants opting for the 'not important', 'somewhat important', 'important', and 'very important' ranks of cultural integration in languages courses, respectively. This was crosschecked with responses to item 3, and the results indicated that 27.3, 35.2, 25, and 12.5% of the students 'totally disagreed', 'disagreed', 'agreed', and 'totally disagreed' with the separation of culture in distinct courses. Furthermore, the results recorded for item 4 indicated that 14.3, 35,7, 35.7, and 14.3% of considered the incorporation of students' native culture in EFL teaching as 'very important', 'important', 'somewhat important', and 'not important at all', respectively. The results revealed that the students had different rankings, viewing the inclusion of students' local culture in EFL teaching as 'very important' (8%), 'important' (39.1%), 'somewhat important' (47.7%), and 'not important at all' (12.5%).

It could be concluded from the responses to the first 4 items of the questionnaire that both groups of respondents valued the relationship between language and culture in language learning. This might be attributed to the centrality of the socio-cultural and pragmatic aspects of language teaching and learning in the EFL curriculum at the research site, especially that it had a long tradition in teaching beyond linguistic competence. By extension, the latter had a large student population majoring in English, for whom the socio-cultural and pragmatic aspects of language are equally central, which explains the high percentages of students ranking culture learning as a 'very important' aspect of language learning. The variation observed in students' views on the integration or separation of culture in EFL teaching might be accounted for by evolutionary variations in students' growth and maturation stages, which was reflected both during the interviews and group discussions (see section above 4.1 above) and agrees with the developmental nature of IC learning emphasized in the literature (see section 2.2 above). The slight percentages recorded for students' disagreement with the inclusion of culture in EFL courses reflects the ambivalent attitudes towards the links between language and culture observed during the group discussions and interviews amongst the students (see section 4.1 above) and is comparable to previous reports in the literature (Chavez, 2005; Drewelow, 2012). The relatively slight mismatches observed among the first and second-year students on the one hand and the third and fourth-year students on the other hand suggest that while the two former approaches might be emphasized in the initial years of the EFL program, the two latter approaches were highlighted in the final years of study. This tendency to introduce low culture input for beginners and increase it gradually for advanced students was also echoed during the group discussions and interviews (see section 4.1 above).

4.2.3. Perceptions of pedagogical aspects of culture teaching and learning

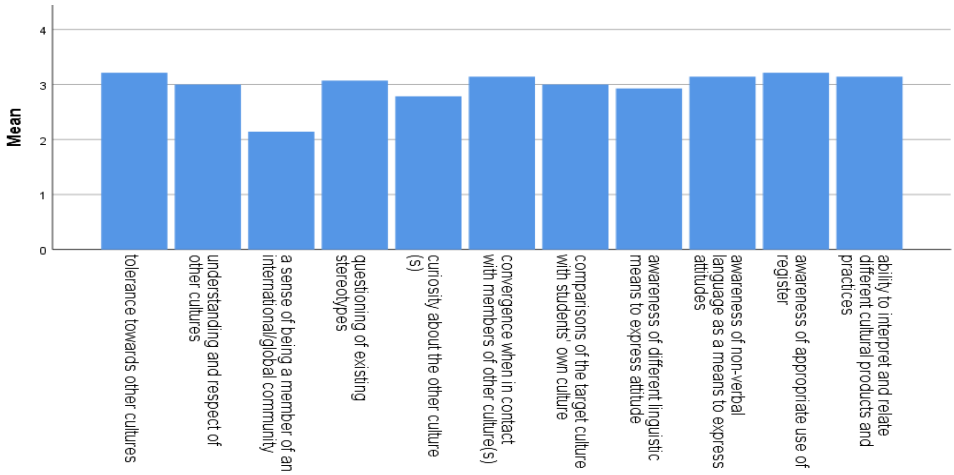
Section 2 of the questionnaire included 7 items (see section 3.2) eliciting information on respondents' views and practices on various aspects of iFLT pedagogy, namely, goals, aims, outcomes, content, materials, methods, techniques, and activities of culture-in-language teaching and learning. The results revealed no significant differences between teacher responses, but some significant differences between student responses (see appendix G).

4.2.3.1. Goals, aims, and objectives of iEFL learning and teaching

Item 1 of section 2 asked respondents to indicate the extent up to which they value IC as a goal in EFL teaching on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 'not important at all' to 'very important'. The results informed that the teachers considered IC as a significant goal in EFL teaching (M= 2.29). It was noted that 21.4, 42.9, 21.4, and 14.3% of the teacher respondents ranked intercultural speaker competence as 'not important at all', 'somewhat important', 'important', and 'very important', respectively. A similar mean value was recorded for the student participants (M= 2.39). Further analysis revealed that student participants ranked IC competence as 'not important at all' (18%), 'somewhat important' (23.5%), 'important' (26.5%), and 'very important' (32%).

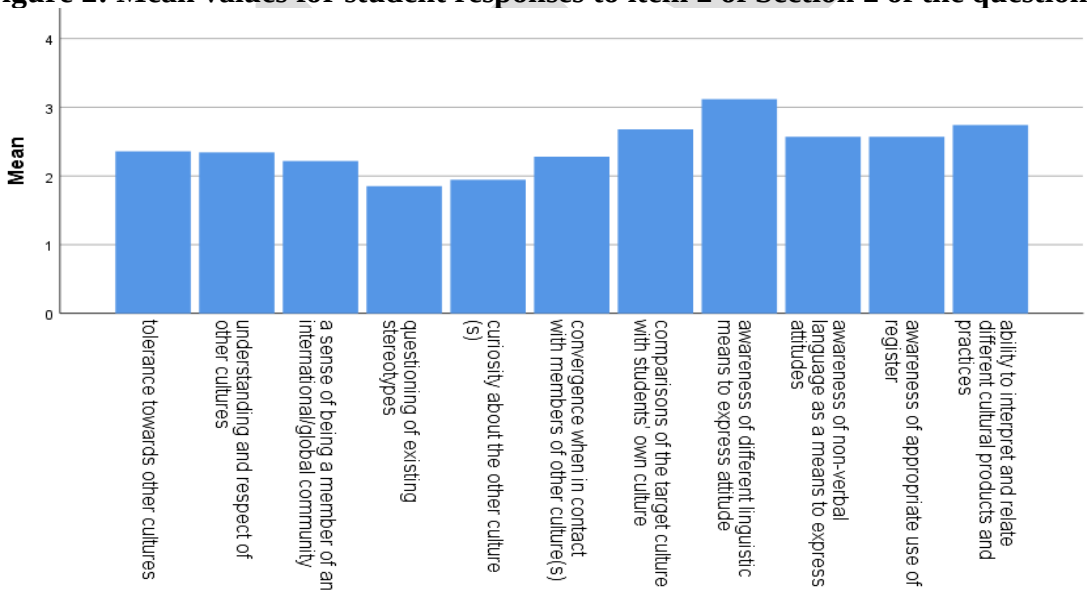
Item 2 of section 2 invited participants to specify their opinions about different aims and objectives of iEFL teaching for 11 statements on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 'not important at all' to 'very important'. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the mean values obtained for the teacher and student participants, with mean values ranging from 2.14 to 3.21 and from 1.85 to 3.12, respectively. Figure 1 informed that the teachers valued the three types of objectives with relatively slight differences at the scale of importance, except for some items about the affective dimension. The objectives belonging to the 'knowledge dimension of IC' had the highest percentage mean values (3.21), followed by the skills (2.79) and affective (2.14) objectives, respectively. Further analyses showed that none of the knowledge and skills objectives were rated as 'not important at all'; some of the affective objectives were, however, considered as 'not important at all'. For instance, 28.6% of the teachers rated 'a sense of being a member of an international/global community' as 'not important at all', 28.6% as 'somewhat important', and 42.9% as 'important'.

Figure 1: Mean values for teacher responses to item 2 of Section 2 of the questionnaire



The results illustrated in Figure 2 indicate that the participating students also valued the three types of objectives, though with varying orders of importance. Unlike the teachers, the students rated the three types of objectives along with the four orders of importance, ranging from 'not important at all' to 'very important'. The objectives belonging to the knowledge dimension of IC had the highest mean values (M=3.12), followed by the skills (M=2.74) and affective (M=1.85) objectives, respectively. For instance, 21.1% of the students rated 'a sense of being a member of an international/global community' as 'not important at all', 37.5% as 'somewhat important', 39.8 as 'important', and 1.6 as 'very important'.

Figure 2: Mean values for student responses to item 2 of Section 2 of the questionnaire



The results obtained through one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences across the four year-of-study subgroups of students concerning ranking objectives of intercultural education. Further cross-tabulation analyses (see appendices H and I) revealed that, while responses from first and second-year students were distributed across the four orders of importance, the responses of third and fourth-year students were mostly distributed

along the important side of the scale. It was, for instance, found that when students were asked to indicate their opinions on 'awareness of non-verbal language as a means to express attitudes' as an aim in EFL teaching and learning, 12.5% and 31.5% of first and second-year students rated it as 'not important at all' whereas none of the third and fourth-year students did, with 48.1, 33.3, and 18.5% of third-year students and 18.2, 36.4, and 45.5% of fourth-year students rating it as 'somewhat important', 'important', and 'very important', respectively.

Item 3 of section 2 asked participants to indicate their opinions about different objectives of iEFL teaching for 11 statements referring to the 3 components of IC competencies, namely openness (attitudes), knowledge, and adaptability (skills) on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 'not important at all' to 'very important'. Figures 3 and 4 display the mean values obtained for each statement ranked by the participating teachers and students, respectively. The mean values recorded for the teachers ranged from M=1.85 to M=3.23, and those observed for the students ranged between M=0.57 and M=1.94.

Figure 3: Mean values recorded for teacher responses to item 3 of Section 3

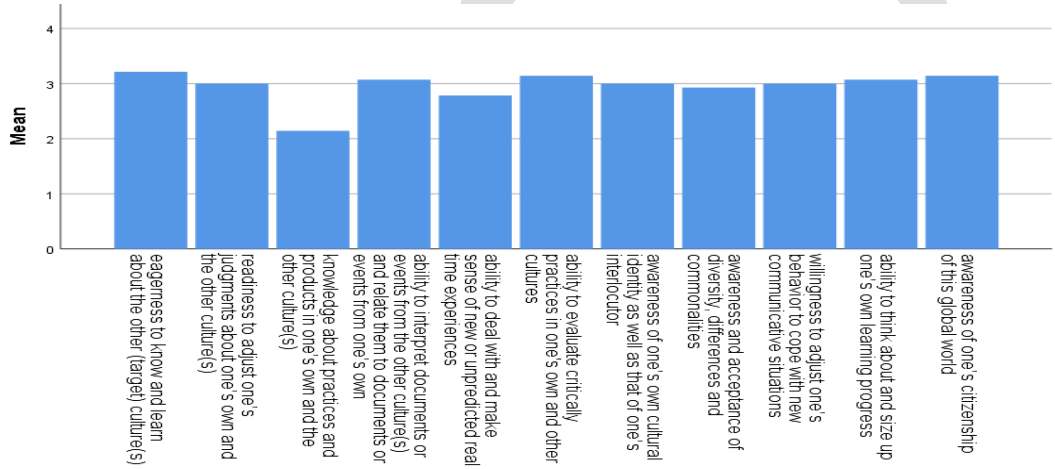
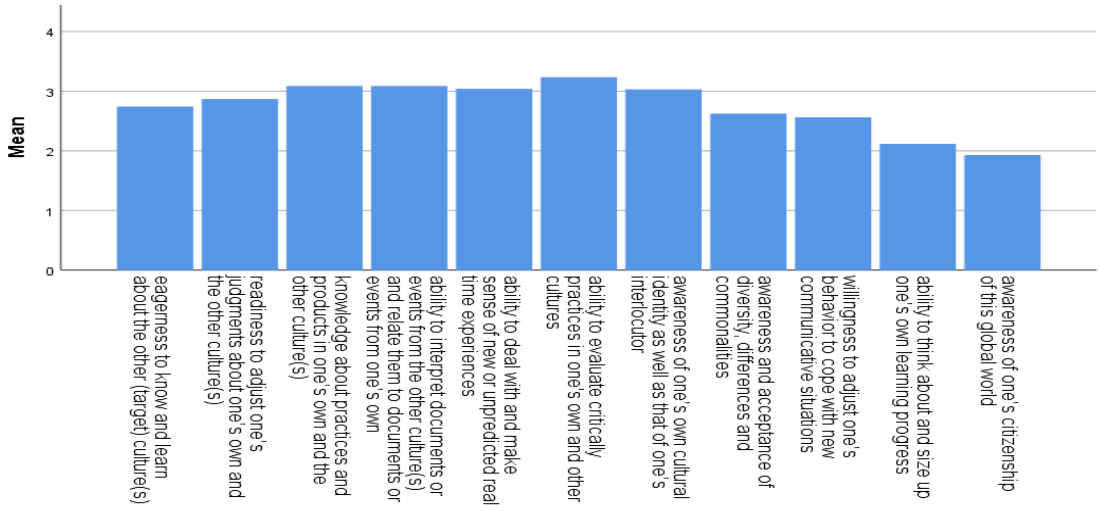


Figure 3 inform that for the participating teachers the most important aim of foreign language teaching was to help students show 'eagerness to know and learn about the other (target) culture(s)' (21.4, 35.7, and 42.9% rating it as 'somewhat important', 'important', and 'very important', respectively). This was followed by 'ability to interpret documents or events from the other culture(s) and relate them to documents or events from one's own' and 'ability to evaluate critically practices in one's own and other cultures'. The lowest mean value (M=2.14) was obtained for 'knowledge about practices and products in one's own and the other culture(s)' (28.6, 28.6, and 42.9% rating it as 'somewhat important', 'important', and 'very important', respectively). Interestingly, Figure 4 indicate that for the student respondents, the most important aim of foreign language teaching is to help students exhibit the 'ability to evaluate critically practices in one's own and other cultures', with a mean value of 3.23 (5.5, 16.4, 35.2, and 50.8% rating it as 'not important at all', 'somewhat important', 'important', and 'very important', respectively). This was followed by 'ability to interpret documents or events from the other culture(s)' and 'knowledge about practices and products in one's own and the other culture(s)'. The lowest mean values were, however, obtained for

'awareness of one's citizenship of this global world' (M= 1.93) and 'ability to think about and size up one's own learning progress' (M= 2.12).

Figure 4: Mean values recorded for student responses to item 3 of Section 3



Participant responses to the first three items of section 2 demonstrated that both groups of respondents believed that 'intercultural speaker' competence is a realistic and attainable goal, which is in line with several studies in the literature highlighting the teachability of IC within formal EFL educational settings (Byram, 1997). The results also showed that participants considered IC teaching and assessment involves cognitive, behavioral and affective objectives, though the latter was slightly deemphasized in the ratings. The results indicated, however, the presence of several mismatches between student and teacher perceptions of the role of IC teaching in the EFL context. Similar mismatches between students' and teachers' beliefs have previously been reported in the literature even though several researchers have cautioned that such discrepancies can have adverse effects on instructional outcomes (Sercu, 2005, Fernandez-Aguero & Garrote, 2019).

4.2.3.2. Preferences for cultural content

Tables 3 and 4 display the mean values obtained for the teacher and student responses to item 4 of section 2 of the questionnaire, respectively. Table 3 shows that the participating teachers prioritized Britain (3.71) as the cultural representative of the English language, followed by American cultures (2.71), international (2.36), Tunisian (2.21), and to a lesser extent other communities (2.00), with the latter including 'European', 'Commonwealth', 'African', and 'Arab-Muslim' cultures. In fact, the highest percentage rates were noted to occur on the "often" category, with priorities given to 'British culture(s)' (71.4%), followed by 'American culture(s)' (64.2%), and 'Tunisian culture(s)' (35.7%).

Table 3: Mean values obtained for teacher responses to item 4 of section 2

		British	American	Tunisian	International	Other
N	Valid	14	14	14	14	14
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.71	2.71	2.21	2.36	2.00
Std. Deviation		.469	.469	.699	.842	.877

Unlike the teacher participants, however, Table 4 indicates that student respondents prioritized 'other communities (3.16) as the representative cultures of the English language, followed by British (3.10), American (2.70), Tunisian (2.57), and international (2.34) cultures. In the other category student responses included 'European' and 'Arab- Arab-Muslim' cultures. The highest percentage rates were observed to occur on the 'often' category, namely 'other' (83.6%), 'British', (46.1%), 'American' (43.0%), 'Tunisian' 42.2%, and 'international/global' (39.1%) cultures.

Table 4: Mean values obtained for student responses to item 4 of section 2

		British	American	Tunisian	International	Other
N	Valid	128	128	128	128	128
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.10	2.70	2.34	2.57	3.16
Std. Deviation		.792	.789	.620	.986	.372

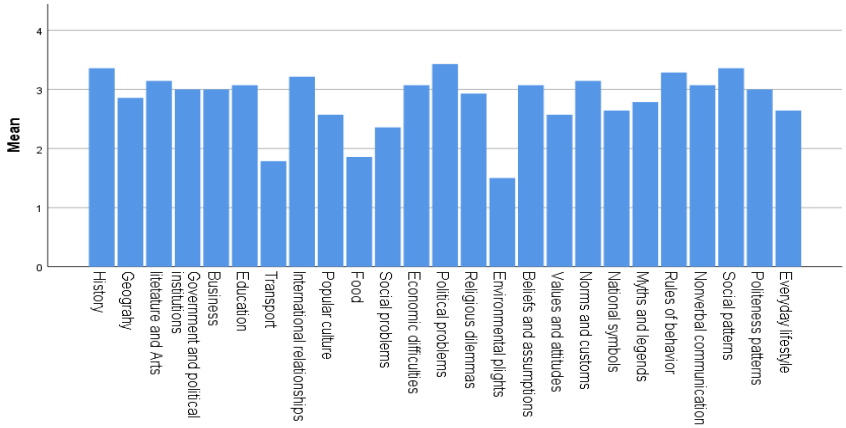
It was possible to conclude from the results displayed above that both groups of participants did not essentialize a particular culture as an exclusive representative of the English language. The prioritization of British culture might be attributed to the fact that Tunisian graduating majors were more likely to attend linguistic training courses in Britain than in any other English-speaking country. Participant responses reflected a broad multidirectional perspective of culture learning, except for a few student responses revealing bi-directional and even mono-directional perspectives. This multicultural perspective is, in fact, a reflection of the diverse linguistic situation of Tunisia (see section 3.1 above). It was, however, possible to conclude from participant responses that though diverse, the culture teaching and learning situation in the EFL context was characterized by marked imbalances in the amount of native, target and global cultural representations. This is in disagreement with recent literature where the need to maintain a balance between native and foreign cultures has often been emphasized (Byram, 1997; Sercu et al., 2005) and comparable to the results reported by Fernandez-Aguero & Garrote (2019).

4.2.3.3. Preferences for cultural topics

Item 5 of section 2 invited participants to rank various (25) components of cultural content in terms of importance. The latter consisted of positive and negative elements from both "big C" and "small c" culture to elicit information on the major tendencies within both groups of participants. Figures 5 and 6 display the mean values obtained for the teacher and student responses to item 5 of section 2 of the questionnaire, respectively. The results displayed in Figure 5 showed that the teachers valued a variety of features related to both aspects of culture, reflecting their multifaceted definition of the concept. The most important cultural elements according to the teachers were political problems (3.43), social patterns (3.36), rules of behavior (3.29), international relationships (3.21) and literature and arts (3.14). The least important cultural elements were food (1.86), transport (1.79), and environmental plights (1.50). Further analysis indicated that the factual knowledge elements were rated mostly on the 'important' side of the scale. History was, for instance, considered as 'very important' (57.1%) and 'important' (21.4%); literature as 'very important' (35.7%) and 'important' (42.9%). Only a few factual knowledge elements were rated on the 'not important at all' side of the scale. These included 'food' (42.9%), 'transport' (42.9%) and 'environmental plights' (50%). This indicated that the teacher respondents considered the knowledge components as defining features of culture. The results indicated that the teacher respondents also considered

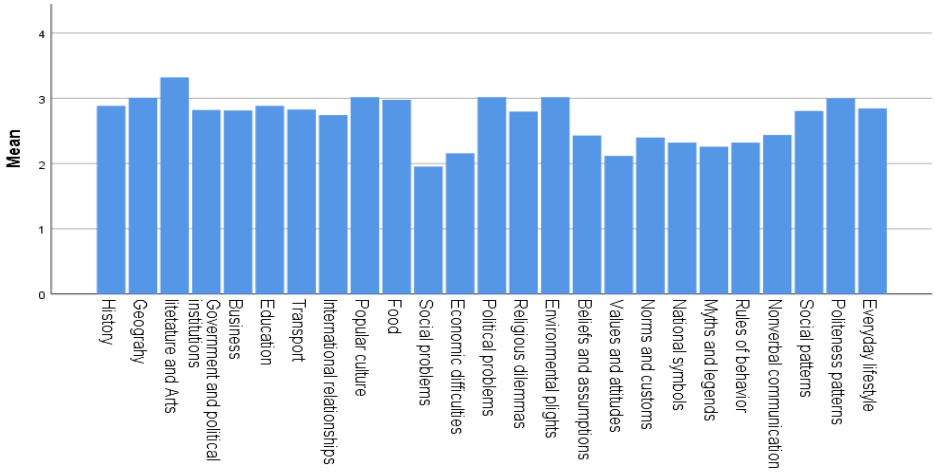
most of the attitudinal and behavioral components as relatively equally important defining features of culture. For example, rules of behavior were rated as 'very important' (57.1%) and 'important' (14.3%); and values and attitudes as 'important' (57.1%) and 'somewhat important' (42.9%). Figure 5 also indicates that the teachers tended to emphasize both 'positive' and 'negative' representations of culture. They were, for instance, noted to rate political problems as 'very important' (57.1) and 'important' (28.6%); and religious dilemmas as 'very important' (42.9) and 'important' (28.6%).

Figure 5: Mean values for teacher responses to item 5 of section 2



The results displayed in Figure 6 indicated that the student respondents valued both culture-specific and culture-general aspects of culture focusing on 'big C' and 'small c' cultural content. The most important cultural elements according to the students were literature and arts (3.32), popular culture patterns (3.02), political problems (3.02), geography (3.01) and politeness patterns (3.00). The least important cultural elements were rules of behavior (2.32), economic difficulties (2.16), values and attitudes (2.12) and social problems (1.95). Further analysis indicated that the factual knowledge elements were rated mostly on the 'important' side of the scale. History was, for instance, considered as 'very important' (57.1%) and 'important' (21.4%); literature as 'very important' (35.7%) and 'important' (42.9%). This indicated that the student respondents considered the knowledge components as the most important defining features of culture. The results indicated that the students did not consider most of the attitudinal and behavioral components as important defining features of culture, rating most of them on the 'not important' side of the scale. For example, rules of behavior were rated as 'somewhat important' (51.6%) and 'not important at all' (14.1%); norms and customs as 'somewhat important' (46.9%) and 'not important at all' (13.3%); and values and attitudes as 'somewhat important' (28.1%) and 'not important at all' (35.9%). Figure 6 also indicates that the students tended to emphasize 'positive' representations of culture and to deemphasize the 'negative' ones. They, for instance, rated social problems as 'somewhat important' (51.6) and 'not important at all' (26.6%); religious dilemmas as and religious dilemmas as 'somewhat important' (42.2) and 'not important at all' (3.1%); and economic difficulties as 'somewhat important' (43.8) and 'not important at all' (24.2%).

Figure 6: Mean values for student responses to item 5 of section 2



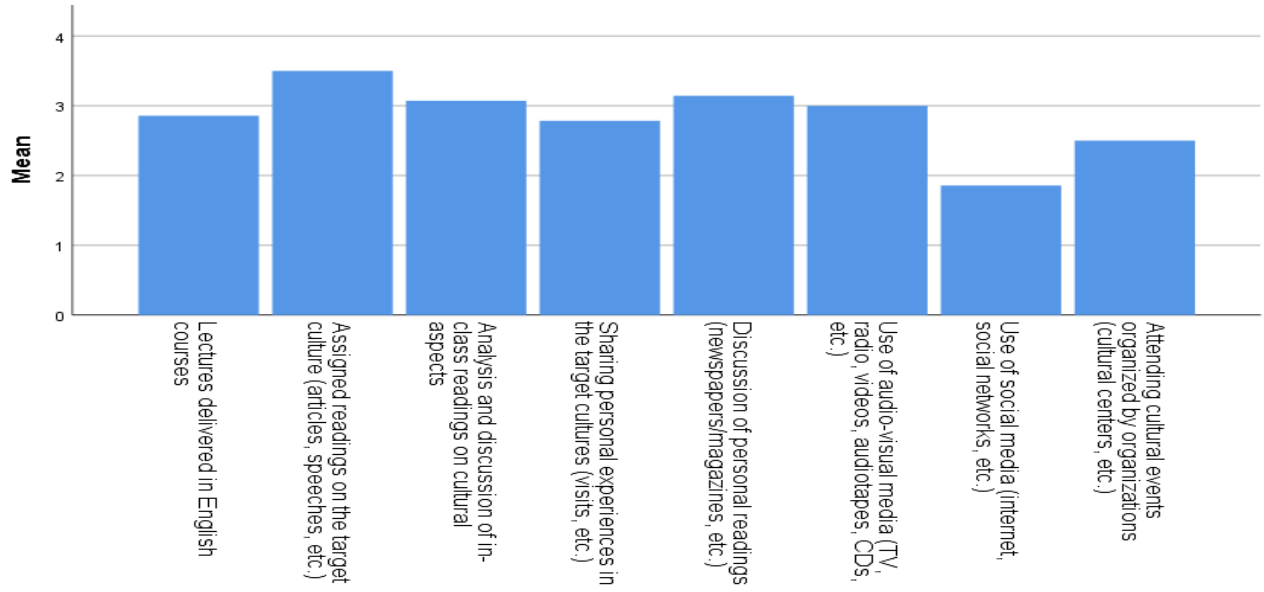
The discordances recorded within teacher responses could be indicative of divides among participants in terms of considering IC as an explicit or implicit aim in the EFL curriculum, and, more importantly, whether the focus was on linguistic competence or intercultural competence. This was evidenced from the results showing that a quite significant proportion of the teacher respondents rated (1) big C aspects of culture as 'very important' elements, but (2) small c aspects of culture as 'somehow important' of their IC teaching. This seemed also apparent in the results indicating that another substantial fraction scored (3) knowledge aspects of culture as 'very important', but (4) behavioral and attitudinal aspects as 'somehow important'. For many of the teacher participants, it seems that their stance of IC was preventing them from engaging with concepts of iEFL. Similar mismatches were, in fact, previously described in the literature (Fernandez-Aguero & Garrote, 2019; Sercu et al., 2005). Sercu et al., (2005) have attributed similar discrepancies to a lack of explicit references to IC in EFL curricula.

4.2.3.4. Preferences for culture teaching techniques and activities

Item 6 of section 2 of the questionnaire invited participants to indicate their opinions as to the adequacy of several teaching techniques for the development of cultural skills and competencies using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not useful at all) to 4 (very useful). Figures 7 and 8 display the mean values obtained for the teacher and student responses, respectively. The findings revealed no significant differences between teacher responses. The results illustrated in Figure 7 informed that the most useful culture teaching techniques according to the teachers included the 'use of assigned readings on the target culture (articles, speeches, etc.)' (M=3.50), 'analysis and discussion of in-class readings on cultural aspects' (M=3.04), and 'use of audio-visual media (TV, radio, videos, audiotapes, CDs, etc.)' (M=3.01). The least important culture teaching techniques included 'sharing personal experiences in the target cultures (visits, etc.)' (M=2.79), 'attending cultural events organized by organizations (cultural centers, etc.) (M=2.50), and 'use of social media (internet, social networks, etc.)' (M=1.86). It was interesting to note that 40.0% of the teacher respondents who rated 'lectures delivered in English courses' as 'important' belonged to the content-based category of teachers while only 22.2% belonged to the 'language-based' category. Still, 40.0% of the teacher respondents who rated 'assigned readings on the target culture (articles,

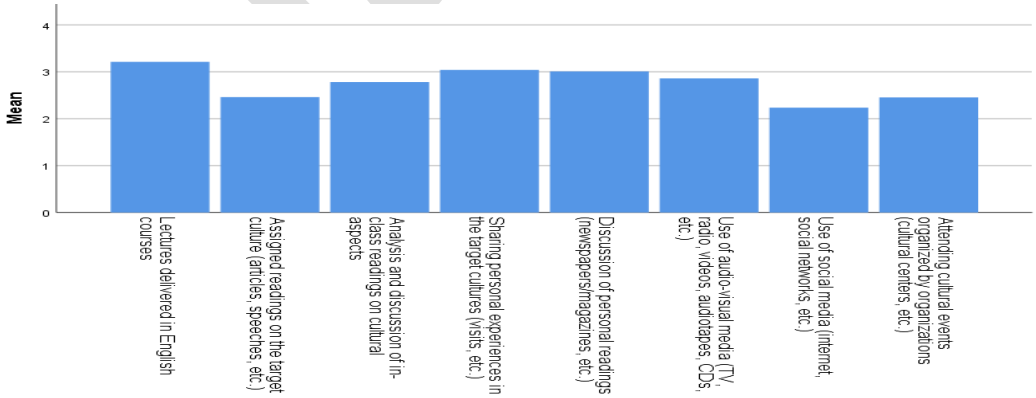
speeches, etc.)' as 'important' belonged to the content-based category of teachers while 55.6% belonged to the 'language-based' category.

Figure 7: Mean values for teacher responses to item 6 of section 2



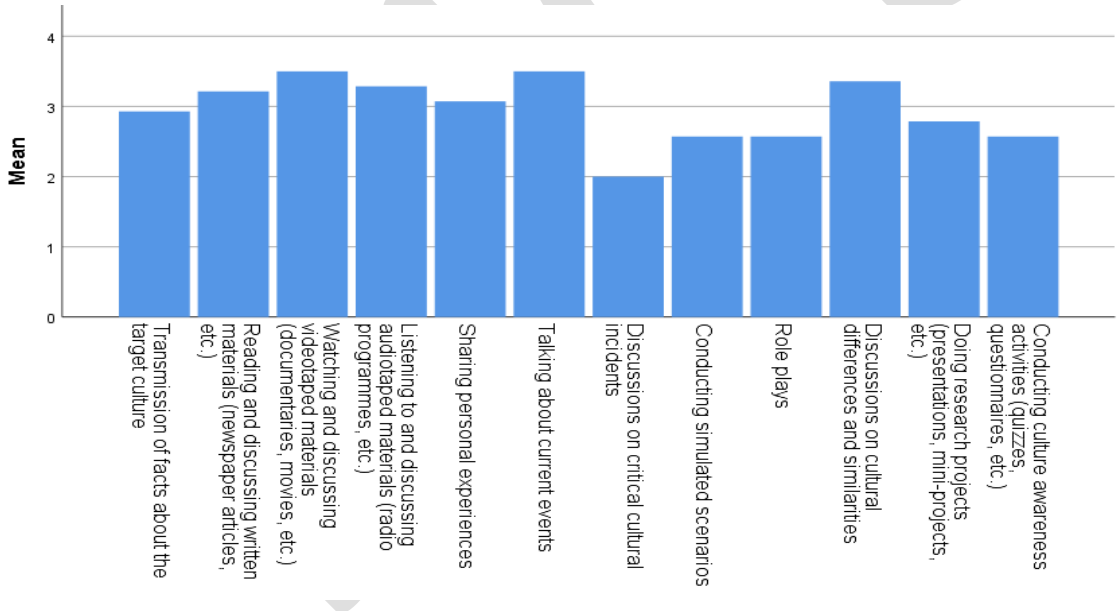
As far as the student group of participants were concerned, figure 8 inform that the most useful culture teaching techniques were 'lectures delivered in English courses' (M=3.21), 'sharing personal experiences in the target cultures (visits, etc.)' (M=3.04), and 'discussion of personal readings (newspapers/magazines, etc.)' (M=3.01). The least important culture teaching techniques were 'assigned readings on the target culture (articles, speeches, etc.)' (M=2.46), 'attending cultural events organized by organizations (cultural centers, etc.) (M=2.45), and 'use of social media (internet, social networks, etc.)' (M=2.23). Further analysis indicated a slight variation in responses across students' levels of study. It was, for instance, interesting to note that the responses rating 'lectures delivered in English courses' as 'not important at all' emanated from first-year students (4.2%), second-year (2.4%), third-year (7.4%) and fourth-year (9.1%).

Figure 8: Mean values for student responses to item 6 of section 2



Item 7 of section 2 asked participants to rank their opinions as to the usefulness of several teaching activities for the development of cultural skills and competencies on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not useful at all) to 4 (very useful). Figures 9 and 10 display the mean values obtained for cultural activities as rated by the teacher and student participants, respectively. Figure 9 indicates that 'watching and discussing videotaped materials (documentaries, movies, etc.)', 'talking about current events', and 'discussions on cultural differences and similarities' were rated as the most useful culture teaching activities by the teachers with the mean values of M= 3.50, 3.50, and 3.36, respectively. The least useful culture teaching techniques according to the teachers were 'transmission of facts about the target culture' (M=2.93), 'conducting simulated scenarios' (M=2.57), and 'discussions on critical cultural incidents.' (M=2.0). Further descriptive analysis showed that most activities were rated on the 'useful' to 'very useful' side of the scale, with significant differences in between responses in terms of subject areas of study. For instance, 40.0% of the teacher respondents who rated 'lectures delivered in English courses' as 'important' belonged to the content-based category of teachers while only 22.2% belonged to the 'language-based' category. Still, 40.0% of the teacher respondents who rated 'assigned readings on the target culture (articles, speeches, etc.)' as 'important' belonged to the content-based category of teachers while 55.6% belonged to the 'language-based' category.

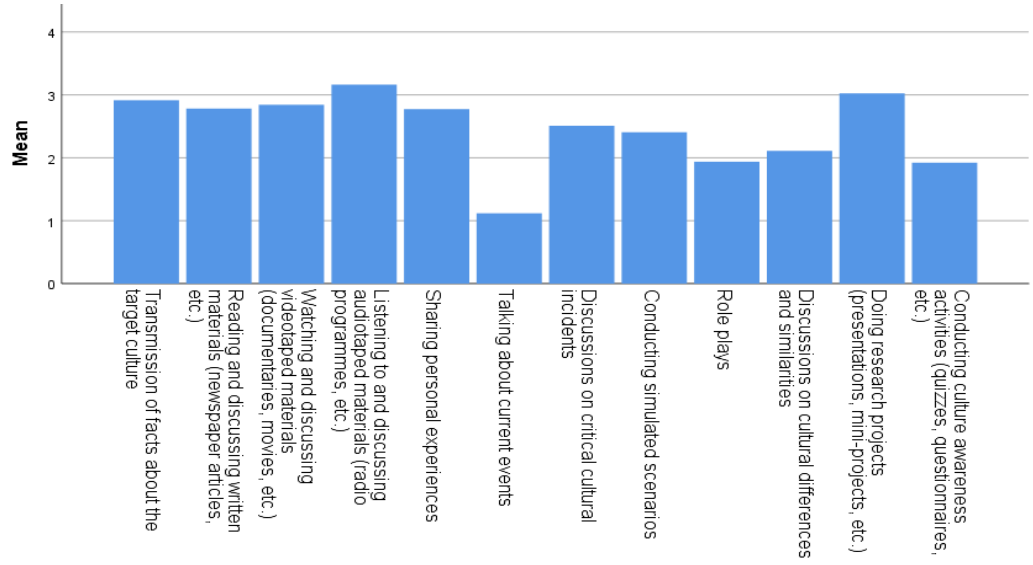
Figure 9: Mean values for teacher responses to item 7 of section 2



As far as the student group of participants was concerned, the results revealed that the most useful culture teaching techniques were 'lectures delivered in English courses' (M=3.21), 'sharing personal experiences in the target cultures (visits, etc.)' (M=3.04), and 'discussion of personal readings (newspapers/magazines, etc.)' (M=3.01). The least important culture teaching techniques were 'assigned readings on the target culture (articles, speeches, etc.)' (M=2.46), 'attending cultural events organized by organizations (cultural centers, etc.) (M=2.45), and 'use of social media (internet, social networks, etc.)' (M=2.23). Further analysis indicated a slight variation in responses with a weak correlation between student responses and their level of studies. It was, for instance, interesting to note that the responses

rating 'lectures delivered in English courses' as 'not important at all' emanated from first-year students (4.2%), second-year (2.4%), third-year (7.4%) and fourth-year (9.1%).

Figure 10: Mean values for student responses to item 7 of section 2



In summary, the responses of both groups of participants to the 7 items of section 2 of the questionnaire indicated that the basic aims and objectives of IC teaching and learning were streamlined towards the acquisition of Big C and small c aspects of culture, understanding of one's own culture and that of the target cultures, as well as of global culture, cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and critical cultural awareness. Most of the teachers also indicated that their teaching materials had culturally-sensitive orientations focusing on mutual representations about the students' own culture and the foreign culture, thus emphasizing the intercultural perspective. The results also informed that most of the students emphasized a multi-cultural perspective on culture learning focusing on the perspectives of the native and target cultures as well as one's own culture.

4.2.4. Views on constraints and challenges of culture teaching and learning

The results revealed no significant differences in teacher and student responses to the elements included in both items of Section 3. Tables 5 and 6 illustrate the percentages obtained for item 1, which invited participants to tick from a list of six options the constraints they would consider as possible reasons behind the marginalization of culture in the Tunisian EFL curriculum.

Table 5 informs that the most important reasons for marginalizing culture according to the teacher respondents were 'difficulties in keeping up with cultural changes' (71.4%), 'fear of uncontrolled tension and disturbances in the classroom' (64.3%), and 'difficulties of testing some aspects of culture learning' (64.32%). It was interesting to note that none of the teachers considered the 'lack of native speaker teachers' as a constraint to IC teaching. Table 6 reveals that the most important reasons for deemphasizing culture in EFL curricula, according to the student participants, were 'difficulties in keep up with cultural changes' (68.8%), 'difficulties of testing some aspects of culture learning' (63.3%), and 'lack of native speaker teachers' (57.0%). The least three important constraints for teaching culture were,

'lack of time and curriculum overload' (50.8%), 'lack of materials and resources for learning culture' (48.4%), 'fear of uncontrolled tension and disturbances in the classroom' (44.5%).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for teacher responses to section 3 items

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lack of time and curriculum overload					
	yes	7	50.0	50.0	50.0
	no	7	50.0	50.0	100.0
Lack of materials and resources for teaching culture.					
	yes	9	64.3	64.3	64.3
	no	5	35.7	35.7	100.0
Fear of uncontrolled tension and disturbances in the classroom.					
	yes	9	64.3	64.3	64.3
	no	5	35.7	35.7	100.0
Difficulties in testing some aspects of culture learning.					
	yes	9	64.3	64.3	64.3
	no	5	35.7	35.7	100.0
Difficulties in keep up with cultural changes.					
	yes	10	71.4	71.4	71.4
	no	4	28.6	28.6	100.0
Lack of native speaker teachers.					
	yes	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	no	14	100.0	100.0	100.0
Resistance on the part of teachers					
	yes	14	100.0	100.0	100.0
Resistance on the part of students					
	yes	11	78.6	78.6	78.6
	no	3	21.4	21.4	100.0
Confusion about whose culture to teach					
	yes	7	50.0	50.0	50.0
	no	7	50.0	50.0	100.0
Confusion about what cultural aspects to teach					
	yes	7	50.0	50.0	50.0
	no	7	50.0	50.0	100.0
Confusion about how much culture to teach					
	yes	10	71.4	71.4	71.4
	no	4	28.6	28.6	100.0

Table 5 also informs that the most important challenges to the incorporation of culture in the EFL curriculum according to the teacher respondents were 'resistance on the part of the teachers' (100%), 'resistance on the part of the students' (78.6%), and 'confusion about how much culture to teach' (71.4%). Table 6 shows that, according to the students, the most important challenges to the inclusion of culture in the EFL curriculum were 'confusion about how much culture to teach' (61.7%), 'confusion about how what cultural aspects to learn' (57%), and 'resistance on the part of the students' (54.7%).

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for student responses to section 3 items

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lack of time and curriculum overload					
Valid	yes	65	50.8	50.8	50.8
	no	63	49.2	49.2	100.0
Lack of materials and resources for learning culture.					
Valid	yes	62	48.4	48.4	48.4
	no	66	51.6	51.6	100.0
Fear of uncontrolled tension and disturbances in the classroom.					
Valid	yes	57	44.5	44.5	44.5
	no	71	55.5	55.5	100.0
Difficulties in testing some aspects of culture learning.					
Valid	yes	81	63.3	63.3	63.3
	no	47	36.7	36.7	100.0
Difficulties in keep up with cultural changes.					
Valid	yes	88	68.8	68.8	68.8
	no	40	31.3	31.3	100.0
Lack of native speaker teachers.					
Valid	yes	73	57.0	57.0	57.0
	no	55	43.0	43.0	100.0
Resistance on the part of teachers					
Valid	yes	62	48.4	48.4	48.4
	no	66	51.6	51.6	100.0
Resistance on the part of students					
Valid	yes	70	54.7	54.7	54.7
	no	58	45.3	45.3	100.0
Confusion about whose culture to learn					
Valid	yes	79	61.7	61.7	61.7
	no	49	38.3	38.3	100.0
Confusion about what cultural aspects to learn					
Valid	yes	73	57.0	57.0	57.0
	no	55	43.0	43.0	100.0
Confusion about how much culture to learn					
Valid	yes	55	43.0	43.0	43.0
	no	73	57.0	57.0	100.0

The fact that both groups of informants agreed that resistances on the parts of the teachers and students constitute some of the major barriers to the incorporation of culture in EFL classes was in line with the results obtained in the qualitative phase of the study. In fact, on several occasions during the group discussions, teacher participants highlighted the potential expressed worries that comparisons between local and foreign cultures might produce moments of tension in the classroom attributing this to students' feelings their local culture and cultural identities could be attacked by the foreign cultures. The literature highlights that moments of tension and resistance to certain cultural content should be expected and considered as valuable moments for learning, providing students with intercultural encounters, experiences with the other, and chances to experience negotiation, transformation, and creation of a 'third space' where 'leaps of insights' and 'shifts in perspectives' can be accommodated (Paige et al, 1999).

4.2.5. Views on students' current IC levels

Section 4 included 3 items that aimed to gauge broadly the current IC levels of EFL students at the research site. It invited participants to indicate their perceptions of students' current IC levels concerning key (a) knowledge, (b) skills, and (d) attitudes components on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 4, corresponding to 'basic', 'intermediate', 'upper-intermediate', and 'advanced', respectively. The results from one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in the mean values recorded for teacher responses across the levels of teaching variable, but no significant differences across the other variables. No significant differences were recorded in student responses across the research variables (tables and figures are displayed in appendices J-O).

Item 1 of section 4 asked participants to indicate their views on students' levels about 5 statements on major IC competences. The results displayed in Table 15 informed that the highest mean values recorded for the responses of teacher participants went to 'pronunciation' (M=2.93), 'cultural information' (M=2.57), and 'non-verbal language (facial expressions, body movements, etc.)' (M=2.29). Table 16 shows that the student participants did not share the same views, with the highest mean values going to 'pronunciation' (M= 2.70), 'vocabulary and grammar' (M=2.66), and 'idioms and proverbs' (M=2.48). Further descriptive analysis indicated that the majority of the teacher and student responses ranked students' current IC within the intermediate/upper-intermediate levels. The results informed, for instance, that most of the teachers rated the students as having upper-intermediate levels in 'non-verbal language' (50%), 'vocabulary and grammar' (35.7%), 'cultural information' (42.9%), 'pronunciation' (64.3%), and 'idioms and proverbs' (28.6%). The crosstabulation of teacher responses with the levels they taught revealed that the higher the levels of teaching were, the higher the ratings on the scale became. The results also informed that the students shared similar attitudes, mostly rating themselves as having upper-intermediate levels in 'non-verbal language' (38.3%), 'vocabulary and grammar' (46.1%), 'cultural information' (39.1%), 'pronunciation' (61.7%), and 'idioms and proverbs' (36.7%).

Item 2 of section 4 asked participants to rate students' current levels in terms of 5 key IC competences. The results revealed that the highest mean values recorded for the responses of teacher participants went to 'writing effectively' (M=2.79), 'saying what they want to say' (M=2.50), and 'understanding native speakers of English' (M=2.36). The results informed that the students did not share similar views, with the highest mean values being given to 'understanding other non-native speakers of English' (M= 2.76), 'understanding native speakers of English' (M=2.66), and 'reading proficiently' (M=2.53). Further descriptive analysis indicated that the majority of the teacher and student responses ranked students' current IC within the intermediate/upper-intermediate levels. The results showed, for instance, that the highest percentages of teacher ratings were recorded for the upper-intermediate levels, including 'understanding native speakers of English' (50%), 'reading proficiently' (50%), and 'writing effectively' (35.7%). They rated students' IC as mostly belonging to the intermediate level for 'understanding other non-native speakers of English' (50%) and 'saying what they want to say' (50%). The results also informed that the students shared similar attitudes, mostly rating themselves as having upper-intermediate levels in 'understanding native speakers of English' (63.6%), 'understanding other non-native speakers of English' (58.6%), 'saying what they want to say' (50.8%), 'reading proficiently' (43%), and 'writing effectively' (58.6%).

Item 3 of section 4 asked participants to rate students' current levels in terms of 7 key IC competences. The results revealed that the highest mean values recorded for the responses of teacher participants went to 'taking the initiative in own learning' (M=2.36), 'interest in interacting with foreign people' (M=2.21), 'self-confidence when it comes to academic work' (M=2.14), and 'willingness to discuss own progress with teachers' (M=2.14). The results informed that the students did not share similar views, with the highest mean values being given to 'ability to be objective in self-evaluation' (M= 2.65), 'willingness to establish learning goals' (M=2.48), 'ability to spot own weaknesses and work on them' (M=2.47), and 'willingness to discuss own progress with teachers' (M=2.47). Further descriptive analysis indicated that the majority of the teacher and student responses ranked students' current IC within the intermediate/upper-intermediate levels. The results showed, for instance, that the highest percentages of teacher ratings were recorded for the intermediate levels, including 'taking the initiative in own learning' (42.9%), 'self-confidence when it comes to academic work' (71.4%), 'interest in interacting with foreign people' (50%), 'willingness to discuss own progress with teachers' (50%), 'willingness to establish learning goals' (50%), 'ability to spot own weaknesses and work on them' (50%), and 'ability to be objective in self-evaluation' (42.9%). The results also informed that the students almost shared similar attitudes, mostly rating themselves as having intermediate levels in 'self-confidence when it comes to academic work' (50%), and 'interest in interacting with foreign people' (44.5%). Most of the students, on the other hand, rated themselves as having upper-intermediate levels in 'taking the initiative in own learning' (43%), 'willingness to establish learning goals' (56.3%), 'ability to spot own weaknesses and work on them' (55.5%), and 'ability to be objective in self-evaluation' (62.5%).

It could be concluded from the results mentioned above that the students broadly exhibited upper-intermediate levels of competence in knowledge or cognitive components of IC (e.g. cultural information; M=2.57 and M=2.46 for teachers and students, respectively), intermediate levels of competence in behavioral or skills components of IC (e.g. saying what they want to say; M=2.50 and 2.45, for teachers and students, respectively), and basic levels of competence in attitudinal or affective components of IC (e.g. interest in interacting with foreign people; M=2.21 and 2.43, for teachers and students, respectively). Furthermore, it could be possible to infer from the results that although the student participants had previous experience with IC learning, they were not positively disposed to and critical thinking, which was evidenced by the low ratings observed for items such as 'willingness to discuss own progress with teachers' (M=2.14 and 2.47 for teachers and students, respectively).

5. Conclusion and perspectives for future research

The triangulation of data from group discussions, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires did not indicate significant mismatches between teacher and student perspectives and perceptions of the issues under investigation. The results provided strong evidence that, at present, the intercultural dimension is well appreciated by both groups of participants. The potential marginalization of culture in EFL curricula was generally ascribed to 'difficulties of testing some aspects of culture learning', 'fear of uncontrolled tension and disturbances in the classroom', and 'difficulties in keeping up with cultural changes', which is in line with several previous studies in the literature (Cavanagh, 2011; Chavez, 2005; Sercu, 2002a). Moreover, the findings suggest that EFL teachers' perceptions of what and how they teach about culture were quite in accordance with their actual teaching. The results

demonstrated, however, that various approaches to culture teaching and learning were at work in the EFL context under investigation, suggesting that further efforts are needed to fully develop the cultural dimension in the Tunisian higher education EFL context.

Building on the findings of the present study, HE institutions need to develop clear definitions of IC, keeping in mind its complex and evolving nature, and plan specific criteria, indicators, and levels of IC across its constituent components and across time. It seems also imperative to explicitly refer to IC in EFL syllabi and curricula and to offer maximum opportunities for optimal intercultural learning. It is recommended that researchers examine the advantages of in-and-off-campus intercultural activities within the IaH framework. This line of research can reveal valuable insights into students' IC development. It is also recommended that further research be undertaken to replicate the results of the present study with larger samples of teachers and students.

Acknowledgments

The present study is in part a partial rework and analysis of the data presented in my master's thesis and in part a reproduction and extension of this previous work into further doctoral studies and publishable research articles. The author would like to sincerely thank all those who helped me to conduct this research, my colleagues in the higher education institutes and all students who participated in the study.

References

Arfi, I. & Hannachi. A. (2016). Towards intercultural communicative competence in EFL Teaching at the Tunisian University. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, IV (V), pp. 400-414.

Ata Allah, T. (2016). Social-affective strategy instruction in EFL materials: The case of English textbooks and official programs in Tunisia. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 2(4), pp. 169-195.

Borg, S. (2011). *Language teacher education*. In J. Simpson. (Ed.), The Routledge handbook of applied linguistics (pp. 215-227). London: Routledge.

Byram, M., Golubeva, I. Han, H., & Wagner, M. (Eds.) (2017). *From principles to practice in education for intercultural citizenship*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2008). *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship: Essays and Reflections*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M., Nichols, A., & Stevens, D. (2001). *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M., & Risager, K. (1999). *Language teachers, politics and cultures*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Canagarajah, S. (1999). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cavanagh, M. (2011). Students' experiences of active engagement through cooperative learning activities in lectures. Active Learning in Higher Education, 12, 1, pp. 23-33.

Chavez, M. (2005). Variation in the beliefs of college students of German about the teaching of culture. Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German, 38(1), pp. 31-43.

Daoud, M. (2011). The sociolinguistic situation in Tunisia: language rivalry or accommodation? *The Sociology of Language*, Vol. 2011, Nr 211, pp. 9-33.

Daoud, M. (2001). The Linguistic Situation in Tunisia. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 2 (1), pp. 1-52.

Derbel, F. & Richards, A. R. (2007). Infusing a Postcolonial Component into English Language Teaching Curricula for a Global Century. *Radical Pedagogy*, 9 (1).

Drewelow, I. (2012). Learners' Perceptions of Culture in a First-Semester Foreign Language Course. *L2 Journal*, 4 (2), pp. 283-302.

Ellis, G. (1996). How culturally appropriate is the communicative approach? *ELT Journal*, 50/3, pp. 213-218.

Enright, K. A. (2011). Language and Literacy for a New Mainstream. *AERJ*, 48 (1), pp. 80-118.

Fernandez-Aguero M & Garrote M (2019). 'It's not my intercultural competence, it's me.' *The intercultural identity of prospective foreign language teachers.* Educar 2019, vol. 55 (1), pp. 159-182

Hermessi, T. (2016). Teacher cognition on the place of culture in English education in Tunisia. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 4 (2), pp. 105-118.

Hermessi, T. (2017). The place of culture in English education in Tunisia. In C, Coombe, & Sahbi, H. (Eds), *Perspectives on evaluation in the Arab world* (pp. 203-220). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Holliday, A. (2009). The role of culture in English language education: Key challenges. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 9 (3), pp. 144–155.

Horchani-Elmadssia, T., Hosni, M, (2012). Impact of intercultural training on the development of intercultural competences. In *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences* 1 (2), 35-47

Jabeur, M. (2000). Attitudes towards English, French, and Arabic among Tunisian teenagers. In Adel Manai (ed.), *American and British interactions, perspectives and images of North Africa*, pp. 189 –207. Tunis: Publici.T.

Joyce K. E. & Cartwright N. (2019). Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice: Predicting What Will Work Locally. AERJ, XX(X), pp. 1-38

Kasper, G. & Blum-Kulka, S. (1993). *Interlanguage Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.

Knight, J. (2006). Internationalization of higher education: New directions, new challenges. Paris: IAU.

Kramsch, C. (1997). *The privilege of the non-native speaker*. *PMLA,* 112 (3), pp. 359–69.

Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kubota, R., Austin, T., & Saito-Abbott, Y. (2003). Diversity and inclusion of sociopolitical issues in foreign language classrooms: An exploratory survey. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36 (1), pp. 12-24.

Kumar, R. & Lauermann, F. (2018). Cultural Beliefs and Instructional Intentions: Do Experiences in Teacher Education Institutions Matter? *AERJ*, 55 (3), pp. 419–452.

Liddicoat, A., & Scarino, A. (2013). Intercultural language teaching and learning. Chichester: Wiley.

Liddicoat, A. J. (2004). The conceptualisation of the cultural component of language teaching in Australian language-in-education policy. Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development, 25 (4), pp. 297- 317.

Liddicoat, A., Papademetre, L., Scarino, A. & Kohler, M. (2003). Report on intercultural language learning. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Education, Science, and Technology.

Liddicoat, A. J. & Crozet, C. (eds.) (1997). Teaching Language, Teaching Culture. Canberra: Applied Linguistics Association of Australia.

Mason, J. (2010). The effects of different types of materials on the intercultural competence of Tunisian university students. In Tomlinson B. & Masuhara H. (eds.). *Research for materials development in language learning: Evidence for good practice*. (pp. 67–82). London: Continuum.

Olneck, M. (2000). Can Multicultural Education Change What Counts as Cultural Capital? *AERJ*, 3Z(2), 31, pp. 7-348.

Paige, M, R., Jorstad, H., Siaya, L., Klein, F., & Colby, J. (1999). Culture learning in language education: A review of the literature. In Paige, R. M., Lange, D.L, & Yeshova Y.A. (eds.). *Culture as the Core: Integrating Culture into the Language Curriculum* (pp. 47-113). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. Review of Educational Research, 62 (3), pp. 307-332.

Phipps, A., & Borg, S. (2007). Exploring the relationship between teacher's beliefs and their classroom practices. The Teacher Trainer, 21 (3), pp. 17-19.

Rahal, A. (2017). Cultural Problems in Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language in Tunisia. In, Ambreen S., and Syed, G. K, (eds.). *Student Culture and Identity in Higher Education*. Ch15, pp. 257-274. IGI Global.

Sercu, L. (2005). Foreign language teachers and the implementation of intercultural education: A comparative investigation of the professional self- concepts and teaching practices of Belgian teachers of English, French, and German. European Journal of Teacher Education, 28 (1), pp. 87-105.

Sercu, L., Bandura, E., Castro, P., Davcheva, L., Laskaridou, C., Lundgren, U., Mendez Garcia, M., & Ryan, P. (2005). Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence: An international investigation. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Sercu, L. (2002a). Autonomous Learning and the Acquisition of Intercultural Communicative Competence: Some Implications for Course Development. Language, Culture and Curriculum, 15 (1), pp. 61-74.

Sercu, L. (2002b). Implementing intercultural foreign language education. Belgian, Danish and British teachers' professional self-concepts and teaching practices. Evaluation and Research in Education, 16 (3), pp. 150-165.

Smaoui, C. (2015). Strategies of Interlanguage Communication: the Story So Far. Sfax: University of Sfax.

Tierney, R. J. & Kan, W. (2016). Knowledge Globalization Within and Across the People's Republic of China and the United States: A Cross-National Study of Internationalization of Educational Research in the Early 21st Century. *AERJ*, 53 (6), pp. 1759–1791.

Tomlinson, B. (2012). Materials development for language learning and teaching. *Language Teaching*, 45 (2), pp. 143–179.

Triki, M. & Sallemi-Baklouti, A. (2002). *Fundamentals for a Course on the Pragmatics of Discourse*. Imprimerie Reliure d'Or, Sfax.