Examining the Role of Language, Emotion, and Culture as Three Basic Needs in Intercultural Communication Based on Iranian Language Teachers' Viewpoints

Vahid Ghorbani (Corresponding Author)
Englah Language and Literature Department, Arak University, Iran
s39611171003@phd.araku.ac.ir

Hamid-Reza Dowlatabadi
English Language and Literature Department, Arak University, Iran
H-dowlatabadi@araku.ac.ir

Abstract

Pinpointing the role of language, emotion, and culture in intercultural interactions as the three basic needs of intercultural interactions is one of the most important problems in the intercultural field. Therefore, this paper probed the role of language, emotion, and culture simultaneously in intercultural communication in Iran. By using convenience sampling, one hundred Iranian language teachers were chosen and their language proficiency and ICC levels were specified by using Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) questionnaire. Then, the researchers used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to classify ICC questions under language, emotion, and culture categories. After classifying the questions, the researchers used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), standard solution coefficient, standard path coefficient, T value, and Sobel formula to analyze the collected data from the ICC questionnaire based on participants' answers. The results revealed that language, culture, and emotion were the main macro-elements of intercultural communication. Also, it was shown that language was the most important need and macro-element in intercultural communication and then the second and third place went to culture and emotion respectively. It was found that emotion acted as a mediator variable between language and culture and there was a relationship among language, culture, and emotion, too. This study was of high importance for language teachers, curriculum designers, textbook writers, intercultural experts, and cultural psychologists

Introduction

Intercultural communicative competence or ICC is referred to one's ability in communicating effectively with individuals from miscellaneous cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it went beyond a monocultural stance to an intercultural position. (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2006, Jackson, 2014). Lloyd and Härtel (2010) recognized three subsets of ICC including cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Other scholars such as Byram (2000) asserted that ICC encompassed attitude, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. The relationship between language, culture, and intercultural communication is the focus of many scholars including Samovar et al. (2007), Malakloluntu and Selan (2011), Kramsh (2013), etc. All mentioned studies accentuated that it was impossible to separate language and culture or ignored their importance in intercultural communication. What seems important is that most of the previous studies examined the relationship between language and culture with each other most of the time and nearly none of them probed the effect of language and culture simultaneously in intercultural communications. In the meantime, few studies paid attention to the role of emotions in intercultural studies, name some of them, Tomkins (1962, 1963) examined various states of emotions such as happiness, anger, etc. Matsumoto et al. (2005, 2009) were among other scholars who did some research on the effect of emotions in intercultural studies. What has been obvious so far is that no study has tried to probe the role and effect of language, emotions, and culture in intercultural communication simultaneously and this can be a big gap in the history of intercultural studies. Therefore, the current paper is of high importance since it investigates the role of language, emotion, and culture simultaneously in intercultural communication in Iran. Thus, the current study, which is a purely quantitative one, is going to fill this gap in the field of intercultural studies by examining the role of language, emotion, and culture concurrently in intercultural communications. Also, this study is important because it shows which one of these three elements is more important respectively and which one has more effect on intercultural communications.

Review of literature

1. Intercultural Communication (ICC)

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is referred to one's capability to communicate appropriately and efficiently with people from various cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2006). Jackson (2014) also defined intercultural competence as a concept entailing transcendence from a monocultural standpoint to an intercultural standpoint. Bouchard (2017) defined IC as the ability to deal with differences in case of confronting differences with the own ones. Therefore, language teachers must not only enable learners with language skills but should foster ICC among them so they can develop the ability to interact successfully with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in cross-cultural contexts. Having ICC as a key objective of language teaching, language teachers must position themselves as "language and intercultural competence teachers" (Sercu, 2006, 56).

It was observed that language teachers generally gave ICC low priority in teaching, or simply regarded it as a natural side-effect of target culture education (Gu, 2016; Young & Sachdev, 2011). Although they prioritize the transmission of target cultural knowledge, teachers didn't necessarily promote students' intercultural attitudes or skills in their teaching (Gu, 2016; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008). In other words, language teachers often simplistically equated ICC to "a constant and steady body of cultural realities connected with the TL aspect" (Gu, 2016, 267). Lloyd and Härtel (2010) recognized three subsets of ICC, that is, cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The cognitive dimension described someone's capability to grasp and render information; the affective dimension explicated the feelings, attitudes, and personality traits; the behavioral dimension was related to conduct that people reveal when communicating with people from other cultures (Lloyd & Härtel, 2010).

Intercultural competence could be seen as an individual ability that could be used in a multicultural circumference to develop and expand cross-cultural instruction or even communicative language teaching. This intercultural competence, as an ability of a person, plays a serious role in applying the person's experiences which works as a means of a multicultural perimeter to create and establish cooperation among multicultural people (Lasonen, 2005). It is expressed that "intercultural communicative competence (ICC), i.e. the knowledge, motivation, and skills required to talk efficiently and suitably with members of different cultures was the highly preferred type of competence after the sequential dominance of grammatical (linguistic) competence and communicative competence" (Wiseman, 2002, 208).

Intercultural competence is not a new concept in education or language teaching anymore. Five elements are included in its definition (Byram, 2000) which encompass attitude, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Edelhoff (1987) believes that there exist three characteristics that a foreign language teacher must have to provide an intercultural education. These features included attitude, i.e., the tendency to learn, knowledge, i.e. tendency to know our country and language in depth, and skills which means mastery over communicative skills in negotiating with others.

Communication is a process-oriented phenomenon in which meaning between individuals or participants involved in a community is distributed (Holland, 2013). Society can include persons, a classroom, a country, or a virtual congregating circumference in which cultural agenda was employed as the outline dominating a person, community, or society's standpoint of the world (Holland, 2013). According to Gay (2000), Irvine (2003), Sleeter (2001), and Zeichner & Melnick (1996), Culture plays a fundamental role in the processes of teaching and learning. Nowadays, a universally growing interest emerges in intercultural communicative competence has stimulated a vast diversity of researchers to carefully and thoroughly look again at the concepts of "language", "culture", and "interculture" as the substantial senses in intercultural communication studies from diverse views (Sharifian & Jamarani, 2013).

Byram (1997) held this belief that non-native language learners, i.e. intercultural speakers, can connect the knowledge related to foreign language cultures to their linguistic competence to use language properly as the role of the English language has intensely changed into an international language or *lingua franca*. Garrido and Alvarez (2006) maintained that to have

intercultural speakers it is necessary to motivate language learners. Consequently, language is not distinct from cultures, communities, and societies (Garrido & Alvarez, 2006).

2. Language, culture and intercultural communication

Samovar et al. (2007) defined culture as "an extremely complex, abstract concept that exerts a pervasive influence on every aspect of your life" (p. 13). Language is the biggest challenge for international students. Students encounter language difficulties in skills such as speaking, listening, and writing because the medium of instruction in higher education institutes is English (Some countries use their mother tongue as the language of education). Most of the learners encounter expression and comprehension difficulties because English is not their mother tongue though they could talk English (Malakloluntu & Selan, 2011, 884).

Language allows individuals to nurture "human" features by learning from experiences; language enables an individual to systematize thoughts and transfer them to another individual (Fantini, 1997). Put simply; language acts as means of cultural development. Language is the primary means of preserving the culture and is the medium of transmitting culture to new generations" (Samovar et al., 2007, 166). The development of intercultural competence with language helps to leave prejudices and stereotypes. It results in bilingualism and biculturalism (Fantini, 2006). The matter of instructing culture in the area of foreign language classes has long been a matter of argument by researchers and educators. Most of them maintain the opinion that an L2 can rarely be taught without teaching the culture of the society in which the language is acquired (Kramsh, 2013).

Li et al. (2004) in his research accentuated that it is improbable for foreign language students to acquire the language without learning the cultural component and that culture teaching has a significant place in the foreign language classroom by asserting that "The integration of culture and language should be designated as the ultimate goal for EFL teaching and learning" (p. 226). Culture represents language (Liddicoat, 2008), and is reflected and transferred by language from one generation to the next. Language expresses cultural fact into words and, meanwhile, is formed by culture (Kramsch, 1998, as cited in Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013).

Knutson (2006) suggested that instead of teaching about another culture, our aim should be to develop cross-cultural awareness in learners. She argued that learners can gain better insights into the foreign language and its culture by reflecting on their own native culture and comparing it with that of a foreign society. Teachers are required to teach ICC along with communicative competence. Sercu (2005) explained the role of ICC in foreign language teaching as the person's willingness to get involved in the source community's culture and self-awareness and tried to develop the ability to view "him/herself and the world through the other's eyes, evaluate the other's world view" (p.2). Liddicoat and Scarino (2003) proposed interacting processes of intercultural learning. The process began with the teachers presenting the learners with activities that help them notice cultural similarities and differences. Then the teacher allowed the learners to compare their own culture and the target culture and between their current knowledge about the target culture and the new information they have noticed. The comparison resulted in reflection and interpretation of their experience. The learners thought about what has been experienced, and their reaction to it, and tried to understand them.

Apart from language, intercultural interactions concentrate on social features, patterns of thought, and different people's cultures. It also includes comprehending the various cultures, languages, and customs of people from other countries (Lauring, 2011). English language teaching could be described as a process of ICC between learners' L1/C1 and their L2/C2. To this aim, teachers and learners deal with negotiating definitions of establishing and reestablishing cultural identities between their language and culture and the language and culture of others. ELT offers unique opportunities for students to experience intercultural encounters and causes their personal growth to become intercultural persons (Zhang, 2015).

People may face different challenges in intercultural encounters. The knowledge of second language culture is an indispensable factor as the basics of the language like grammatical or lexical aspects. What is more pertinent was that a lack of intercultural awareness could work as a great hamper in the comprehension of a message which is right and understandable from a linguistic viewpoint. On aggregate, individuals are far less patient and tolerant of cultural bumps and cultural shocks compared to syntactical or lexical mistakes. (Jie, 2010).

3. Emotion and intercultural communication

Emotions are vital because they provoke conduct. Sadness and anger, for instance, forced us to perform something, just as happiness and joy strengthen conduct. Motivation is a kind of emotion, and if you wish to comprehend why people conduct the way they do, you should comprehend their emotions and feelings (Tomkins, 1962, 1963). Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) discovered that language obstacles could bring about negative feelings among agents in multinational teams. Both the connection between cultural history and language change and that between language change and emotional response are ignored elements in the process of intercultural communication (ICC). Emotion could be defined as "a mental state of action readiness that originated from the cognitive appraisal of events or thoughts; had a phenomenological tone; was accompanied by physiological processes; and was often expressed physically" (Bagozzi et al., 1999, 184).

Specific cultural variations cause negative emotions which are important in personal growth and also vital for both ICC's success and stagnation. Openness, flexibility, and critical thinking in the face of cultural differences help people to add cognitive schemas to their minds to symbolize the world. The addition of new schemas creates the ability to interact with diversity intricately and create fresh expectations and more awareness of similarities and differences. All of this is feasible only when we regulate emotions and negative emotions are hampered. Negative feelings and emotions surrounded individuals easily; they took over one's way of being. Negative emotions keep the most critically-minded people off from thinking or acting properly. If negative emotions dominate us and determine how we think, feel, and act, we couldn't deal with critical thinking about those variations. People returned to a prior way of thinking about those variations that were rooted in their ethnocentric and stereotypic ways of viewing the world and others. (Matsumoto et al., 2005)

Intercultural empathy has a vital role in helping individuals to establish good connections and achieve efficient intercultural interaction. Intercultural empathy ability is a reflection of someone's competence mirroring his comprehension of the emotional states of people in the

target culture, in order to reduce the psychological obstacles caused by the target culture. Stereotypes and prejudice are two important barriers to intercultural empathy (Zhu, 2011).

How much knowledge a person has about his own or target culture or his/her degree of language skills is not important if that person can't regulate his/her emotions and think critically about situations and people. To achieve intercultural adjustment, it is a must to engage in a personal growth process in which ways of thinking, personal perception, and worldview are continuously being updated through fresh and provocative cultural variations in our daily lives. The main agent for this engagement was the capability to regulate our emotions and reactions and also other types of psychological adjustments (Matsumoto, 2007). Cross-cultural communications may cause different negative emotions. For instance, new customs may cause anxiety; communication problems may end up in frustration; and misconceptions or prejudices may result in fear, anger, or contempt. Thus, the ability to down-regulate such negative emotional states should be significant in the development of cross-cultural competence (Matsumoto, 2009; Reid, 2010).

According to appraisal theory (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003), it was suggested that individuals produce emotions based on cultural tendencies in response to personal matters happening within IC. The main point of appraisal theory is that emotion happens when people appraise traits of an event concerning personal matters (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). Appraisal theory allows us to evaluate the effect of language standardization on emotional reactions that then influences the result of the communication process. It was theorized that the emotional effect of the ICC process could be positive or negative (Wang et al., 2018).

Successful intercultural interactions can limit the negative feelings of individuals and this can happen through using a common language of communication because this common language conveys a positive emotional response to fill the communication gap (Vaara et al., 2005). Hinds et al. (2014) ethnographic study of multilingual teams in a large global company noticed that language-produced emotions altered the communicative conduct of those who were more cognitively able to address language variation – such as the employee with a high or near-native mastery of English. Tenzer et al. (2014) elaborated that when emotions were increasing, individuals usually automatically changed to their first language in intercultural communication but provoked emotions of "irritation" "discomfort" and "suspicion" in their foreign colleagues.

Arasaratnam (2005) used an emic approach and semantic network analysis to extract the most important variables pertinent to ICC. Among them, empathy (the ability to relate to another at both cognitive and emotional levels), experience (prior knowledge of ICC), positive attitude to people of other cultures, and the ability to be an engaging listener were identified as the most important variables.

Hismanoglu (2011) examined how linguistic proficiency, target culture experience, and formal education could lead to mastery of intercultural communication by Turkish foreign language learners. The results revealed that participants with higher linguistic proficiency made more acceptable responses to communicative situations compared to those with lower linguistic proficiency. Sotoudehnama, et al. (2012) explored Iranian EFL University teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning the target culture in their classes; they also aimed to formulate a

definition of culture based on the teachers' insights. The results showed that the teachers supported the idea of teaching culture in the ELT context.

Many studies gauged emotion regulation and related concepts in various cultures and gave more points about cultural variability. Matsumoto and his colleagues (2003), for example, stated two studies in which they conducted the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003), a 10-question scale that generated marks on two subscales, Reappraisal, and Suppression. Americans had noticeably further marks than the Japanese on Reappraisal, while the Japanese had remarkably further marks on Suppression.

Li and Campbell (2006) in their studies found that Asian learners liked the interactive learning process and were greatly happy to be involved in the learning process by the lecturers. Moreover, learners expressed that they had encountered language problems and cultural variations as ICC obstacles. They expressed that they had problems, especially with unknown patterns of classroom interactions not knowing academic norms, and insufficient support during the learning process.

Erfani (2014) probed the Iranian teacher's perception about which cultures should be taught in foreign language classrooms. Though teaching sources and values of the target language was important, most teachers emphasized intercultural teaching and training to enable learners to comprehend some cultural concepts such as perception, thinking, feeling, and acting. Tafaroji, et al. (2014) attempted to shed light on the status of culture in secondary schools in Iran. The findings showed that teachers had positive attitudes to include culture in the content of teaching.

Jalali and Sa'd (2013) probed Iranian foreign language teachers' viewpoints towards culture teaching in the language classroom. They discovered that Iranian language teachers, regardless of their academic qualifications, were equally cognizant of the fruitful and motivating effect of culture on language learning. Rashidi and Soureshjani (2011) also discovered that teaching culturally-based texts had a noticeable impact on Iranian foreign language learners' motivation and performance on reading comprehension.

Ghorbani and Dowlatabadi (2023) selected one hundred Iranian language teachers for their study and they substantiated that culture-based instruction was an effective tool in improving the intercultural communication levels of Iranian teachers. That is, Ghorbani and Dowlatabadi (2023) showed that the skills, attitude, awareness, and knowledge dimensions of ICC improved after instruction.

Charles (2007) studied language and communication in multinational companies in countries in which English wasn't the official language and showed that language blended people and businesses, but it might separate them, too. Charles (2007) revealed that language was an important tool in multicultural companies. Moloney and Harbon (2010), Matveev and Nelson (2004), Mol et al. (2005), and Giles (1977) were among other scholars who accentuated the role of language in intercultural communication in their studies.

According to the above-mentioned points, the literature review section covered both theoretical and empirical foundations in the field of intercultural communications respectively

to shed more light on the relationship among language, emotion, and culture in intercultural studies. Thus, this study sought to answer the following research questions and hypothesis:

1. Is linguistic need a main macro-element in the intercultural communication process?
2. Is emotional need a main macro-element in the intercultural communication process?
3. Is cultural need a main macro-element in the intercultural communication process?
4. Is there any relationship between these three needs?

a. Research hypothesis

H01: Linguistic need is not a main macro-element in the intercultural communication process.

H02: Emotional need is not a main macro-element in the intercultural communication process.

H03: Cultural need is not a main macro-element in the intercultural communication process.

H04: there is no relationship between these needs.

Methodology

1. Participants and sampling

The population of this study is Iran's English language teachers and the target population was the English language teachers in Golestan province of Iran. To select the sample, the researchers took into account factors such as availability, accessibility, and willingness of the participants, and therefore, one hundred (100) English language teachers in Minoodasht City were selected through a convenience sampling procedure. The range of the participants' age was between 22 and 40. It should be mentioned that this study contained both experienced and novice teachers based on their teaching experience. All teachers had BA and MA in English language teaching and they were involved in teaching English in both language institutes and high schools.

2. Research design

Since the current study focused on using numbers and numerical analysis for collected data, it could be mentioned that the design of the current study was quantitative. Also, according to Surucu et al. (2022), exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis as multivariate statistical methods were frequently used measures in quantitative research designs. The researchers used descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to analyze the numerical data collected from the Oxford placement test (OPT) and ICC questionnaire respectively. Exploratory factor analysis along with standard solution coefficient, standard path coefficient, T-value, Sobel formula, and confirmatory factor analysis were other quantitative statistical procedures that were used by researchers to analyze the numerical data to find the role of language, emotion, and culture in intercultural communications.

3. Instrumentation

The instruments of the current study were the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) which included 60 items and an ICC questionnaire developed by Kazykhankyzy (2019) comprising 52 items. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was .958 which revealed the questionnaire had high reliability (Kazykhankyzy, 2019). It is worth mentioning that lots of correspondence

between the researchers of the study and the designer of the questionnaire, i.e., Kazykhankyzy (2019) is done to take the required permissions to use the questionnaire.

4. Data Collection Procedure

To collect the required data, the researchers put the participants in one group. Therefore, the group of participants contained both experienced and novice language teachers. To be on the safe side, the researchers decided to examine the English language level of teachers to see whether their language levels were the same or not. Therefore, the researchers utilized the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), which included 60 items, to discover the participants' English level and homogenize them. Then, the researchers used the ICC questionnaire to collect the requisite data about the intercultural communicative competence level of the participants. It should be noted that the ICC questionnaire was distributed among the participants two times, i.e., one time before instruction and one time after instruction and finally the difference between these two distributions was calculated. Therefore, the Kazykhankyzy (2019) ICC questionnaire was used which addressed the four dimensions, i.e., the attitude, skill, knowledge, and awareness components of ICC. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaire consisted of 52 items based on a five-point Likert scale. The options corresponding to the items and point responses were edited as follows 5 = totally agree; 4 = agree; 3 = undecided; 2 = disagree; 1 = totally disagree. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was .958 which revealed the questionnaire had high reliability (Kazykhankyzy, 2019).

5. Data analysis procedure

To analyze the data collected from the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), the researchers used descriptive and inferential statistics. The researchers used descriptive statistics to calculate the mean and standard deviation along with the minimum and maximum scores of OPT. it should be noted that the researchers checked the normality of the data by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and it was found that the data weren't normally distributed. It meant that the researchers had to use non-parametric tests to analyze the data. For inferential statistics, the researchers used the Mann-Whitney U test to find the language proficiency level of the participants. To analyze the data of the ICC questionnaire, the researchers used Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to check the ICC level of participants. It should be noted that researchers distributed the ICC questionnaire one time before instruction sessions and once after instruction sessions and thus the researchers used Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to check whether there was a significant difference between ICC levels of participants before and after instructions. After assessing the participants' level of ICC, exploratory factor analysis was used to explore and group questions of the questionnaire concerning language, emotion, and culture. Also, various statistical procedures such as standard solution coefficient, confirmatory factor analysis, standard path coefficient, and T-value were used to explore the role and effect of language, emotion, and culture in intercultural communications, and also to explore which variable acts as a moderator, the researchers used the Sobel formula.

Results

This section deals with the analysis of the results of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to find the English level of language teachers by using descriptive statistics. SPSS software 23 was used to analyze data. The following table shows the descriptive statistics of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). It should be mentioned that the result of inferential statistics is also explained below in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive Result for OPT*

Options	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Score	100	42.0	46.0	44.410	.8177
Valid N (listwise)	100				

According to Table 1, the teachers' scores ranged from 42 to 46. The mean of the scores was 44.41 (M=44.41) which meant that the teacher's English proficiency level was upper-intermediate. It should be mentioned that the result of inferential statistics also showed that there was no significant difference (Sig≥0/05) between the means of the novice and experienced teachers and they were all upper-intermediate level in their language proficiency. After determining the English proficiency level of language teachers and finding that they were all of the same levels, that is, upper-intermediate, the researchers tried to find the ICC level of language teachers by using ICC scale/questionnaire. ICC questionnaire was distributed among the participants to find their ICC level before and after instruction. The ICC scale consisted of four dimensions: skill, attitude, awareness, and knowledge. The results of the questionnaire showed that participants had a low level of ICC before instruction and the participants' ICC level improved after instruction. To examine whether there was a significant difference among the participants' ICC level before and after instruction sessions, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used. Table 2 shows the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

Table 2. *Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results*

	Skill	Attitude	Awareness	Knowledge
Z	-8.684[b]	-8.688[b]	-8.685[b]	-8.688[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
b. Based on positive ranks.

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results showed that there was a significant difference among the participants' ICC levels between before and after instruction sessions as the significance value was below 0.05. According to the values of the four dimensions of ICC after instruction, the researchers concluded that the participants' (language teachers) ICC levels increased dramatically after instruction. Therefore, instruction was an effective tool in improving the ICC level of language teachers.

After determining the proficiency level of language teachers and their ICC levels, the researchers used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to group ICC questionnaire questions under language, emotion, and culture variables. In other words, the researchers used exploratory factor analysis to determine which questions belonged to language, emotion, and culture respectively based on the nature of the questions. The component rotation matrix (Table 3) shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis and components of the rotation matrix.

Table3. *Component Rotation Matrix*

|	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Q01	.912	-.095	-.145	.121	.021
Q02	.903	-.096	-.111	.143	-.065
Q03	.899	-.080	-.142	-.129	.048
Q04	.844	-.099	-.125	.277	.254
Q06	.885	-.102	-.137	.026	.182
Q07	.859	-.107	-.159	-.104	.151
Q08	.911	-.092	-.104	.162	.158
Q10	.882	-.105	-.130	.113	-.150
Q11	.905	-.084	-.152	.063	-.051
Q17	.876	-.075	-.142	-.200	.103
Q18	.836	-.099	-.145	.041	-.314
Q19	.869	-.105	-.130	.150	-.040
Q21	.834	-.071	-.101	-.222	.084
Q36	.887	-.088	-.107	.054	.104
Q37	.878	-.099	-.134	-.119	-.189
Q39	.910	-.092	-.141	-.025	.013
Q43	.901	-.083	-.107	-.103	.001
Q44	.902	-.097	-.156	.142	-.188
Q47	.883	-.082	-.132	-.350	.003
Q51	.906	-.090	-.165	-.123	.054
Q22	.934	-.099	-.141	.070	-.148
Q05	.206	.025	.856	-.063	-.184
Q09	.191	.031	.845	.039	.036
Q12	.219	.037	.848	.105	.168
Q20	.217	.039	.882	-.110	-.165
Q23	.219	.055	.886	-.020	-.168
Q24	.209	.040	.889	-.134	.118
Q25	.219	.034	.856	.089	-.013
Q32	.191	.021	.830	.401	.062
Q35	.232	.051	.871	-.133	-.183
Q38	.222	.039	.862	-.003	.251
Q40	.227	.045	.838	-.088	.230
Q41	.213	.029	.834	-.056	-.171
Q42	.193	.042	.848	-.037	.281
Q49	.242	.042	.872	.032	-.258
Q13	.091	.881	-.028	-.002	.109
Q14	.087	.892	-.085	-.074	.027
Q15	.112	.872	-.096	.140	.007
Q16	.129	.872	-.045	.081	-.008
Q26	.119	.882	-.060	-.282	-.113
Q27	.084	.889	-.052	-.058	.005
Q28	.107	.874	-.036	.147	.193
Q29	.110	.886	-.042	.191	-.194
Q30	.093	.847	-.046	.012	.052
Q31	.116	.850	-.043	-.077	-.307
Q33	.108	.857	-.045	-.001	.045
Q34	.131	.921	-.047	-.019	-.019
Q45	.120	.901	-.045	.128	.153
Q46	.125	.885	-.015	-.058	-.023
Q48	.092	.869	-.029	-.368	.123
Q50	.111	.870	-.055	-.072	.073
Q52	.095	.850	-.048	.349	-.136

According to Table 3, ICC questionnaire questions (Kazykhankyzy, (2019) were classified into three groups. Given the nature of the questions, the first group was a language group (21 questions), the second group was an emotion group (14 questions) and the third group was a culture group (17 questions). It should be mentioned that about the nature of the questions, lots of correspondence has been carried on between researchers and the designer of the questionnaire, i.e., Kazykhankyzy (2019). After determining which questions were pertinent to language, emotion, and culture variables respectively, the researchers used confirmatory factor analysis along with other statistical measures such as standard solution coefficient, T value, standard path coefficient, and Sobel formula to explore the role and position of language, emotion, and culture in intercultural communications. In other words, the researchers used these statistical measures to substantiate that language, emotion, and culture were the main three needs of intercultural communication. The structural model of each construct and their role and position in the formation of ICC are shown below. Factor loadings in standard solution show the amount of correlation of observable variables with the latent variables. In other words, the power of correlation between the observable variable and latent variable is shown by factor loadings. The value of factor loading is between zero and one (0-1). If the value of factor loading is less than 0/3, the correlation is weak and it is waived. If the factor loading value is between 0/3 and 0/6, it is acceptable and if the factor loading value is higher than 0/6, it is very optimal.

Fig 1. *Standard Solution Coefficient in Structural Equation Modeling*
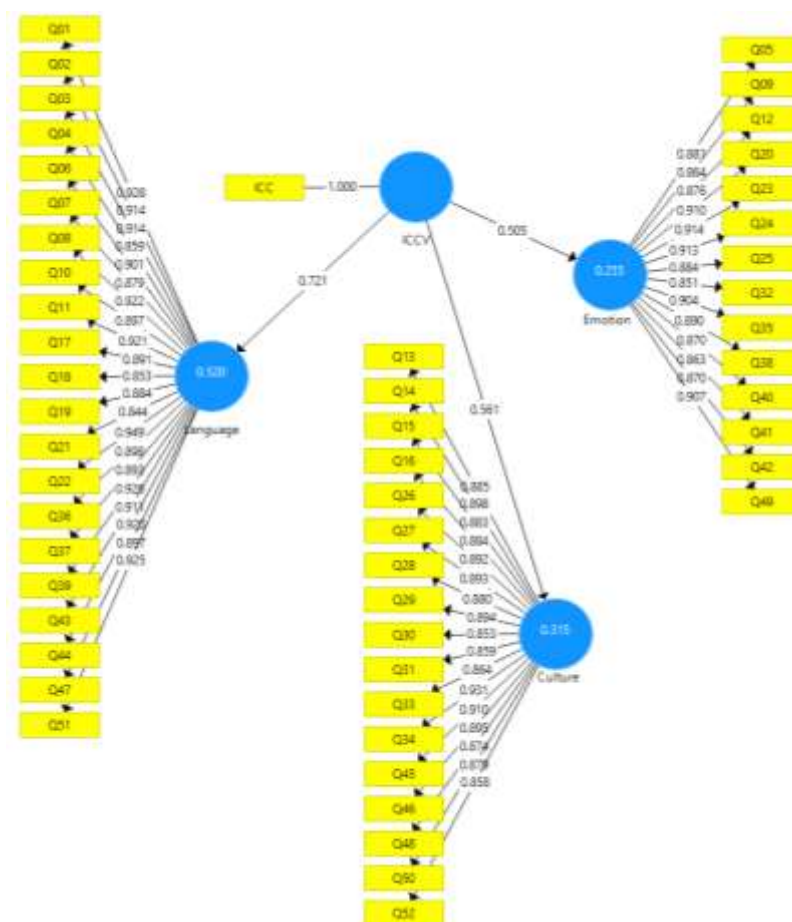
This figure (Fig.1) shows that the relation between language (0.520) and ICC is much higher than culture (0.315) and emotion (0.255), however, culture and emotion also have a relation with ICC. Therefore, language, emotion, and culture had an effect on ICC and they could be parts of ICC. T values were used to show the significance level of the relations among constructs. If the value of T was between 1/96 and -1/96, the coefficients were not significant and this led to the rejection of our hypothesis and if the value was not between 1/96 and -1/96, then the coefficients were significant. The value of factor loading and confirmatory factor analysis which showed the power of relationships between these three variables with observable variables (ICC questionnaire questions) was bigger than 0/5 and 1/96 respectively.

Fig 2. *T Value in Structural Equation Modeling*
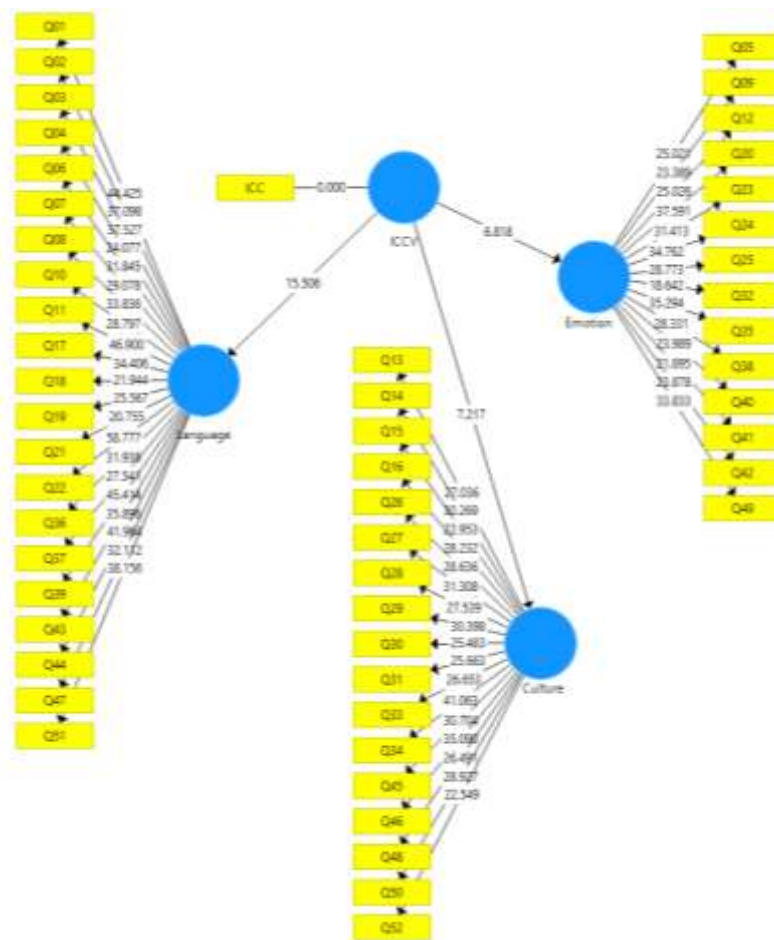
This figure (Fig. 2) reveals that language, emotion, and culture variables had a T value bigger than 1/96 which signified these variables are the main macro-elements in the formation of ICC and they are interrelated. According to this figure, language (15.506) is the most important macro-element of ICC, then culture (7.217), and finally emotion (6.818). Based on the findings of Fig1 and 2, the researchers can answer the first three research questions, i.e., language, culture, and emotions are the main macro-elements of intercultural communications or ICC. In other words, language, emotion, and culture are the main needs of intercultural communication. Thus, the first three research hypotheses are rejected as the results showed that language, emotion, and culture are the main macro-needs of ICC. Also, these figures showed that language, emotion, and culture are interrelated. To investigate whether a relationship

existed among these three variables, that is, language, emotion, and culture, the researchers used the Sobel formula and standard path coefficient. The path coefficient value showed the amount of effect which the independent variable had on the dependent variable. If the path coefficient was positive, there would be a direct relationship between the independent and dependent variable, that is, if the independent variable increased or decreased, the dependent variable did too. If the path coefficient was negative, there would be a reverse relationship between independent and dependent variables. The intensity and power of the relation would be stronger if the path coefficient value was closer to 1 and -1.

Fig 3. *Standard Path Coefficient in Structural Equation Modeling*
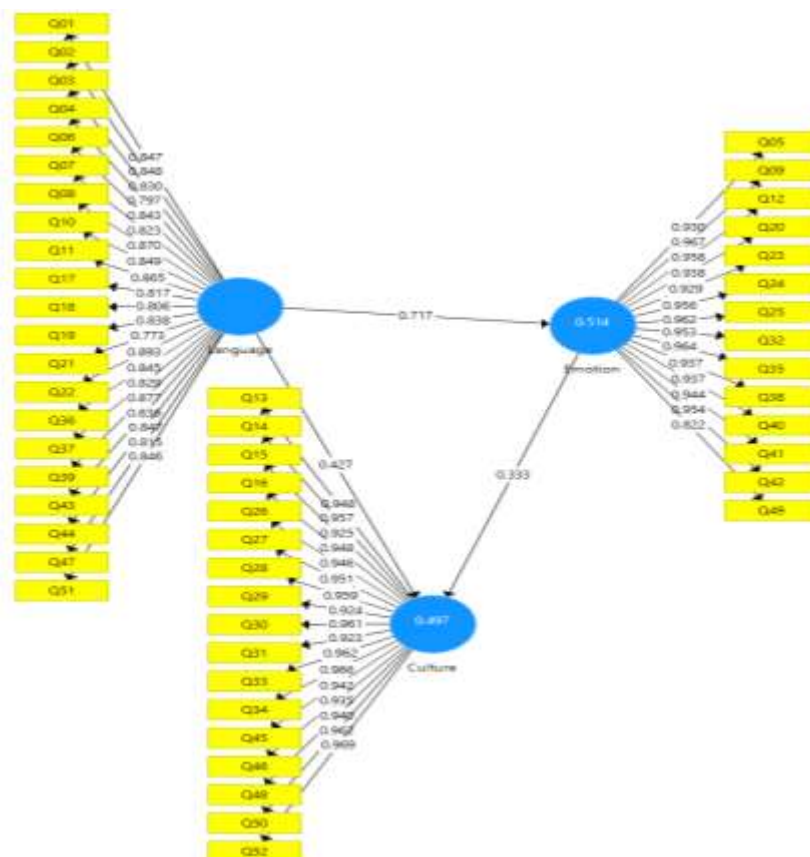
This figure (Fig.3) discloses that language has the utmost impact on emotion (0.717) and then on culture (0.427). This means that there exists a strong relationship between language and emotion. In other words, language influences emotions more than culture. Though there exists a relationship between language and culture, language has more effect on emotions than culture. T value was used to show the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable which led to the rejection or acceptance of this effect. If the absolute value was higher / bigger than 1/96, it would show the significant effect that the independent variable had on the dependent variable.

Fig 4. *T Value in Structural Equation Modeling*
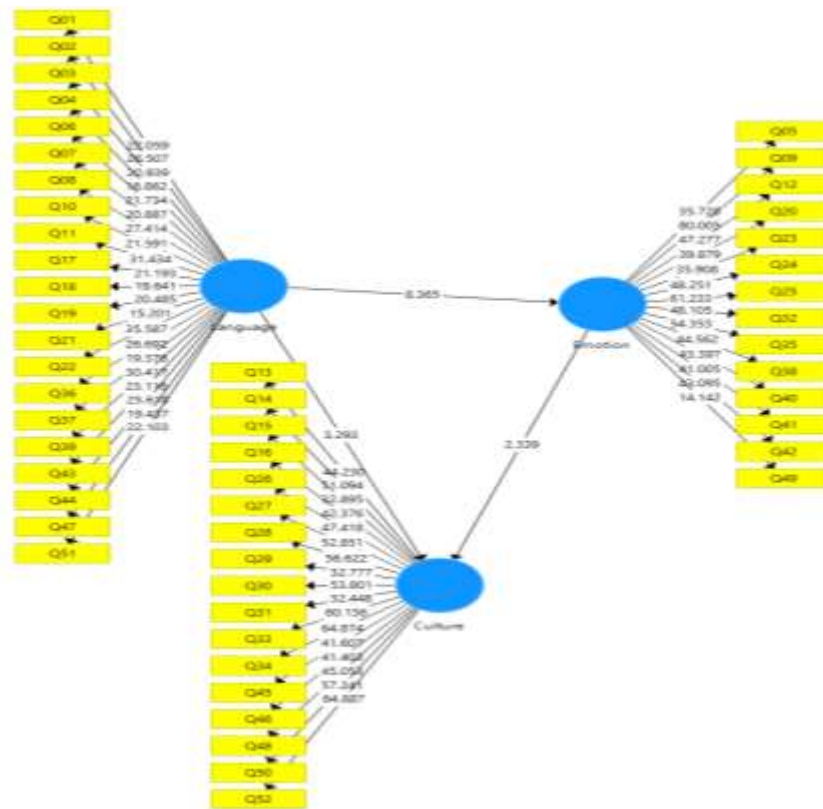
This figure (Fig. 4) evinces that language (8.365) had the utmost impact on emotion and then on culture (3.293). Based on Fig 3 and 4, the effect of language on culture and emotion was investigated and the findings showed that there was a relationship between them. Therefore, the researchers answer research question four by saying that there is a strong relationship between language, emotion, and culture. So, the fourth research hypothesis was rejected. The following table (Table 4) shows the number of relationships between language, emotion, and culture. Also, one of these macro-elements acts as a mediating variable which is shown in Table 4 and elaborated by the researchers.

Table 4. *Measuring the Relation of Variables*

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Path Coefficient	T Statistics
Language	Culture	0.427	3.293
Language	Emotion	0.717	8.365
Emotion	Culture	0.333	2.339

Based on the findings of Table 4, it is concluded that there is a relationship between language, emotion, and culture. Among these variables, one of them acted as a mediator, and Sobel statistics was used to find the mediator variable. Sobel statistics were calculated via the below formula:

$$Sobel = \frac{ab}{\sqrt{s_a^2 s_b^2 + a^2 s_b^2 + b^2 s_a^2}}$$

Statistically speaking, according to the Sobel formula, if the value was bigger than 1.96 or 1.64, it could be concluded with %95 or % 90 certainties that there existed a mediator variable.

Table 5. *Emotion as Mediator Variable*

Independent Variable	Mediator Variable	Dependent Variable	Path Coefficient	Sobel Statistics
Language	Emotion	Culture	0.238	2.237

The results of Table 5 showed that the Sobel value (2.237) was bigger than 1.96 which meant that emotion with %95 certainty acted as a mediating variable between culture and language. In other words, the Sobel formula was used to show that there was a mediator and this mediator helped the independent variable influence the dependent variable. Thus, emotion was the mediator, language was the independent, and culture was the dependent variable. So, the emotion variable assisted language variable to influence the culture variable.

Discussion

In the discussion section, the researchers review the main results and findings and then they compare and contrast the findings with previous studies. This paper explored the role and effect of language, emotion, and culture in intercultural communications from Iranian language teachers' viewpoint. One hundred language teachers were chosen based on their teaching experiences as novice and experienced teachers. Their language proficiency and ICC levels were determined by using the Oxford placement test and the ICC questionnaire respectively. The results showed that their English proficiency was upper-intermediate and their ICC level improved after instruction, that is, instruction was an effective tool in the improvement of their ICC levels. Then, the researchers used exploratory factor analysis to determine that each questionnaire's question was pertinent to which variable, that is, language, emotion, and culture. After grouping questions, the participants' answers to the questionnaire were analyzed and shown through figures and tables. Confirmatory factor analysis, Sobel formula, standard path coefficient, standard solution coefficient, and T values were the quantitative measures used by researchers to analyze the collected data. The results showed that language, emotion, and culture were the main macro-elements and needs of intercultural communications, and also there existed a strong relationship among them. Importantly, emotion acted as a mediator and it was a mediator variable. The standard solution coefficient (Fig.1) proved that language (0.520) was the most important macro-element of intercultural communication and then culture (0.315) and emotion (0.255) were placed in second and third places as the most important macro-elements. Also, the result of the T value (Fig. 2) substantiated language (15.506) was the most important macro-element of ICC, then culture (7.217), and finally emotion (6.818). The result of the Standard Path Coefficient (Fig.3) proved that language had the utmost impact on emotion (0.717) and then on culture (0.427) and also T Value (Fig.4) showed that language (8.365) had the utmost impact on emotion and then on culture (3.293) which signified that there was a strong relation among language, culture, and emotion. Finally, the result of the Sobel formula substantiated that emotion acted as a mediator variable. In other words, the results of Table 5 showed that the Sobel value (2.237) was bigger than 1.96 which meant that emotion with %95 certainty acted as a mediating variable between culture and language.

Many studies pointed out that instruction and language are important tools in improving the ICC level of individuals, for example, Hismanoglu (2011) and the current study both accentuated that language proficiency was an important factor in intercultural communication as the findings of the current study revealed that language was the most important macro-need in intercultural communications and in the meantime these studies proved that instruction was an effective device in improving the ICC level of participants for intercultural interactions.

Another comparison could be made between the finding of this study and Charles (2007). Both of these studies evinced that language was a must and prerequisite for having a successful intercultural interaction. Also, this study implied that instruction was an effective tool to improve the ICC level of participants which was in sync with the findings of Ghorbani and Dowlatabadi's (2023) study about the effect of instruction on intercultural communication.

Byram (1997) in his prestigious model substantiated that language was important for successful intercultural communication but he didn't pinpoint to what extent language could be effective. However, considering language as a must for intercultural communication was in sync with the findings of the current study.

Garrido and Alvarez (2006) and Moloney and Harbon (2010), Panocova (2020), Malakloluntu and Selan (2011), Matveev and Nelson (2004), Mol et al. (2005), and Giles (1977) were among other scholars who accentuated the role of language in intercultural communication as an important element which is in harmony with the findings of the current study because all these studies accentuated that language could be considered as a significant part of intercultural interactions.

The findings of the current study revealed that there existed a strong relationship between language, emotion, and culture in which emotion acted as a mediator between language and culture. Gudykunst (2004) also substantiated that there was a relationship between language, emotion, and culture which supports the finding of the current study.

Liddicoat et al. (2003) and Wei (2005) stated that language and culture were interdependent and language was the carrier of culture. The present study also proved that language and culture were the most important needs in intercultural relations and emotion acted as a mediator between language and culture. Thus, Liddicoat et al. (2003) and Wei (2005) support the findings of the current study.

Vaara et al. (2005) stated that using a common language could limit negative feelings and create a positive emotional response and this showed that language was an important tool in expressing our feelings. The current study also revealed that language had a positive effect on emotions and emotion acted as a mediator between language and culture. Therefore, the findings of both studies were the same and these studies supported each other.

Li et al. (2004) showed that language and culture are interrelated and it was impossible to separate them because they represented each other. This finding was in sync with the current study since both studies revealed that culture and language were interdependent and interrelated. This study also showed that culture and language were the most important macro-needs in intercultural communications.

Hinds et al. (2014), Wang et al. (2018) and Tenzer et al. (2014) revealed that language and emotions were interrelated and they influenced each other. The current study also found that language influenced emotions and emotion acted as a mediator between language and culture.

Conclusion and implication

This study, which was held in Iran, investigated the role of language, emotion, and culture in intercultural communication concurrently. The results and findings showed that language, emotion, and culture were the main macro-elements of intercultural communications. Language was the most important need for intercultural communication and then culture and emotion. Emotion acted as a mediating variable that helps the language influence culture. Also, it was discovered that all these three needs, that is, language, emotion, and culture were interrelated and there existed a strong relationship among them. Also, it was found that instruction was an efficient device for improving the ICC level of language teachers. This study is of high value and importance for language teachers, curriculum designers, and textbook writers since this study showed that instruction is an important tool in improving the ICC ability of individuals. Language teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum developers can develop courses, lesson plans, and books that focus on the importance of language, emotion, and culture in intercultural communications and also create practices and activities to reinforce the ICC level in their learners. Also, this study helps intercultural experts, cultural psychologists, politicians, and businessmen to pay specific attention to language, emotion, and culture at the same time in their jobs and formal meetings as all these needs are important for holding successful intercultural communication.

References

Arasaratnam, L. A. (2005). Sensation seeking and international students' satisfaction of experiences in the United States. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research,* 34, 184–194.

Bagozzi, R. P., Gopinath, M., & Nyer, P. U. (1999). The role of emotions in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 27,184-206.

Bouchard, J. (2017). *Ideology, Agency, and Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Stratified Look into EFL Education in Japan*. Springer.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence.* Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2000). Assessing intercultural competence in language teaching. *Sprog forum*, 18(6), 8-13

Charles, M. (2007). Language Matters in Global Communication: Article Based on ORA Lecture, October 2006. *The Journal of Business Communication (1973)*, 44(3), 260–282. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943607302477

Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (1996). Intercultural communication competence: A synthesis. *Communication Yearbook,* 19, 353-384.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241-266.

Ellsworth, P. C., & Scherer, K. R. (2003). Appraisal processes in emotion. In R. J. Davidson, K. R. Scherer, & H. H., Goldsmith (Eds), *Handbook of affective science*. Oxford University Press: 572-595.

Erfani, S. M. (2014). Source Culture, Target Culture, or International Culture? Iranian English Language Teachers' Perception of Culture. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW)* 6(1), 317–337

Fantini, E. A. (1997). *New Ways in Teaching Culture,* TESOL Inc.

Fantini (2006). Exploring and assessing intercultural competence. http://www.sit.edu/SITOccasionalPapers/feil_research _report.pdf.

Garrido, C., & Álvarez, I. (2006). Language teacher education for intercultural understanding. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 29(2), 163-179.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Ghorbai, V., & Dowlatabadi, H. (2023). The Role of "Instruction" in the Development of Intercultural Communication among Iranian Language Teachers. *Research in English Language Pedagogy*, 11(2), 192-220. https://doi.org/10.30486/relp.2023.1979330.1437

Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* *85*(2), 348–362. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.348

Gu, X. (2016). Assessment of intercultural communicative competence in FL education: A survey on EFL teachers' perception and practice in China. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 16(2), 254-273.

Gudykunst, W. B. (2004). *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication* (4th edition). Sage Publications.

Hinds, P. J., Neeley, T. B., & Cramton, C. D. (2014). Language as a lightning rod: Power contests, emotion regulation, and subgroup dynamics in global teams. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 45, 536-561.

Hismanoglu, M. (2011). An investigation of ELT students' intercultural communicative competence in relation to linguistic proficiency, overseas experience and formal instruction. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(6), 805-817.

Irvine, J. J. (2003). *Educating teachers for diversity: Seeing with a cultural eye*. Teachers College Press.

Jackson, J., (2014). *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication*. Routledge.

Jalali, S. and Saad, H. T. (2014). Culture in ELT: A Probe into Iranian EFL Teachers' Perspectives. *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning* 3(3), 15–28.

Jie, F. (2010). A study on pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication. *Sino-US English Teaching, ISSN 1539-8072, USA*

Knutson, E. (2006). Cross-cultural awareness for Second/Foreign language learners. *The Canadian modern language review / La revue canadienne des langues vivantes,* 62(4), 591-610.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2013). Culture in foreign language teaching. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research* 1(1), 57-78. University of California at Berkeley.

Larzen-Ostermark, E. (2008). The intercultural dimension in EFL-teaching: A study of conceptions among Finland-Swedish comprehensive school teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52(5), 527-547.

Lasonen, J. (2005). Reflections on interculturality in relation to education and work. *Higher Education Policy*, 18(4), 397-407.

Lauring, J. (2011). "Intercultural Organizational Communication: The Social Organizing of Interaction in International Encounters". Journal of Business Communication. 48 (3), 231–5.

Li, J., & Yue, X. (2004). Self in learning among Chinese children. In M. F. Mascolo, & J. Li (Eds.), *Culture and developing selves: beyond dichotomization* (pp. 27-43). (New Directions for Child and adolescent development, (104). Jossey-Bass.

Li, M., & Campbell, J. (2006). Cultural Adaptation: A Case Study of Asian Students' Learning Experiences at a New Zealand University. https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ceducom/86

Liddicoat, A. J. (2008). Pedagogical practice for integrating the intercultural in language teaching and learning. Japanese Studies, 28(3), 277–290. http://doi.org/10.1080/10371390802446844

Liddicoat, A. J., Papademetre, M., Scarino, A., & Kohler, M. (2003). Report on Intercultural Language Learning. *Canberra: Department of Education Science and Training. Australian Government*.

Lloyd, S., & Härtel, C. (2010). Intercultural competencies for culturally diverse work teams. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 25, 845-875.

Malaklolunthu, S. & Selan, P.S. (2011). Adjustment problems among international students in Malaysian private higher education institutions. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 15(2), 833-837

Matsumoto, D., Jung Wook C., Satoko H., Akihiro D. and Susumu Y. (2003). Culture, display rules, emotion regulation, and emotion judgments submitted for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 85, 348-362.

Matsumoto, D. R., Hee Yoo, S., and LeRoux, J. A, (2005). "Emotion and Intercultural Communication." In H. Kotthoff and H. Spencer-Oatley (eds.), *Handbook of Applied Linguistics and Intercultural Communication,* Berlin: Mouton—de Gruyter Publishers.

Matsumoto, D., You S. H., & LeRoux, J. A. (2007). Emotion and intercultural adjustment. In H. Kotthoff., & H. Spencer-Oatey (eds.). *Handbook of Intercultural Communication*, Mouton de Gruyter: 77-98.

Matsumoto, D. (2009). Cultural adaptation. *Proceedings from the 7th Biennial DEOMI Equal Opportunity, Diversity, and Culture Research Symposium, Patrick Air Force Base, FL.*

Matveev, A.V., & Nelson, P.E. (2004). Cross Cultural Communication Competence and Multicultural Team Performance. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management,* 4, 253 - *270.*

Mirzaei, A., & Forouzandeh, F. (2013). Relationship between intercultural communicative competence and L2-learning motivation of Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 42(3), 300-318.

Mol, S. T., Born, M. P., & Molen, H. T. (2005). Developing criteria for expatriate effectiveness: Time to jump off the adjustment bandwagon. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 339-353.

Moloney, R., & Harbon, L. (2010). Making intercultural language learning visible and assessable. In *Proceedings of Intercultural Competence Conference*, 1, 281-303.

Panocova, R. (2020). *Theories of intercultural communication.* Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, Filozofická fakulta

Rashidi, N., & Soureshjani, K. H. (2011). The effect of teaching culturally-based texts on the Persian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' motivation and reading performance. *Journal of Languages and Culture*, 2(8), 141-147.

Reid, P. A. (2010). *The role of emotional abilities in the development of cross-cultural competence and their impact on cross-cultural adjustment and job satisfaction.* Doctoral dissertation, Florida Institute of Technology.

Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E. & McDaniel, E. R. (2007). *Communication between cultures*. (6th edition). Thomson Learning, Inc.

Sercu L. (2006). The foreign language of intercultural competence teacher: the acquisition of a new professional identity. *Intercultural Education,* 17(1), 55-72.

Sleeter, C. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: The overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education,* 52, 94–106.

Sharifian, F., & Jamarani, M. (2013). *Language and intercultural communication in the new era*. Routledge.

Sotoudehnama, E., Marandi, S., Mehran, P. (2012). A qualitative study of Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching/learning culture: A case study. *Teaching English Language*, 6(1), 1-37. https://doi.org/10.22132/tel.2012.54918

Sürücü, Lütfi & Yikilmaz, İbrahim & Maslakci, Ahmet. (2022). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in Quantitative Research and Practical Considerations. https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/fgd4e.

Tafaroji Yeganeh, M. Raeesi,H.(2015). Developing Cultural Awareness in EFL Classrooms at Secondary School Level in an Iranian Educational Context. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences,* 192, 534-542. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.084

Tenzer, H., Pudelko, M., & Harzing, A-W. (2014). The impact of language barriers on trust formation in multinational teams. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 45, 508- 535.

Tenzer, H. Pudelko,M. (2015). Leading across language barriers: Managing language induced emotions in multinational teams. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 26 (4), 606-625.

Tomkins, S. S. (1962). *Affect, imagery, and consciousness* (Vol. 1: The positive affects). Springer.

Tomkins, S. S. (1963). *Affect, imagery, and consciousness* (Vol. 2: The negative affects). Springer.

Vaara, E., Tienari, J., Piekkari, R., & Santti, R (2005). Language and the circuits of power in merging multinational corporations. *Journal of Management Studies,* 42, 595-623.

Wang, Q., Clegg, J., Gajewska-De Mattos, H. et al. (2018). The role of emotions in intercultural business communication: language standardization in the context of international knowledge transfer. *Journal of World Business,*55(6),1-60.

Wei, Y. (2005). Integrating Chinese Culture with TEFL in Chinese Classroom. *Sino-US English Teaching,* 2(7),55-58.

Wiseman, R. L. (2002). Intercultural communication competence. In W. B. Gudykunst, & B. Moody (Eds.), *Handbook of international and intercultural communication*, (2nd ed.) (pp. 207–224). Sage.

Young, T. J. and Sachdev, I. (2011). Intercultural communicative competence: exploring English language teachers' beliefs and practices. *Language Awareness,* 20(2), 81-98.

Zeichner, K. M., & Melnick, S. L. (1996). The role of community field experiences in preparing teachers for cultural diversity. In K. M. Zeichner, S. L. Melnick, & M. L. Gomez (Eds.), *Currents of reform in intern teacher education* (pp. 176-196). Teachers College Press.

Zhang, Xiaochi & Zhang, Jinjing. (2015). English Language Teaching and Intercultural Communication Competence. *International Journal for Innovation Education and Research.* 3, 55-59.

Zhu, H. (2011). From Intercultural Awareness to Intercultural Empathy. *English Language Teaching,* 4, 116-119.