Development of Moroccan University Students' Intercultural Competence - Department of English Studies

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This article attempts to analyze the development of intercultural communicative competence in Moroccan universities to identify whether the pedagogy administered by teachers and educators caters to the intercultural competence goals and teaching objectives and whether students manage to develop their competencies over their undergraduate program. The researcher conducts questionnaires with 875 university students from three different English departments in three different universities and 40 observation classes. Besides, investigations are implemented on the curriculum content, the materials, and the teaching strategies involved in developing intercultural competence. Findings generated from data demonstrate that most Moroccan university students partly develop their intercultural competence from S2 to S6 on particular intercultural components, including attitudes, skills, and values. Conclusions attest that more efforts are to be considered by policymakers and educators to rethink the factors halting this development and design more advanced strategies and syllabi that contribute to the improvement of all intercultural components central to adequate and appropriate foreign communications.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The study

Intercultural communicative competence has been introduced in the last decades as an independent course in multiple universities around the world, believing in the substantial contribution of teaching this module to students' intellectual and personal growth, as well as in preparing future graduates to integrate successfully into the world market through demonstrating decent attitudes and representing their country positively. Nonetheless, regardless of the meaningful impact of incorporating IC teachings in higher education, most Moroccan universities have not yet decided to teach intercultural competence as a separate course inside university classrooms, notably in the teaching of languages.

The article targets the central problem of Moroccan university students' English lackingIC due to the inconsideration of crucial skills in teaching and the irrelevance of acceptable teaching practices; in this regard, the study under inquiry attempts to analyze the development of Moroccan university students' ICC and examine whether these students possess the adequate knowledge, a satisfactory level of awareness, proper attitudes and abilities and finally the required skills and values.

1.2.Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to investigate whether Moroccan university students develop their intercultural competence and examine the factors involved in the teaching and learning of English; this comprises curriculum goals, content and procedures, the course syllabi, the teaching practices, and the learning process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many experts have elaborated the conceptualization of ICC by providing crucial components involved in the acquisition of intercultural competence; the study considers the model of (Deardorff, 2009) as the background model of this study that falls deeply into the realm of this research; the former included knowledge, attitudes and skills as three basic foundations of ICC consisting of being knowledgeable about one's own culture and the host culture, being aware of cultural values and socio-linguistic concepts, learning the good attitudes and finally acquiring the essential skills to ensure an effective and successful interaction.

In the Moroccan context, (Lazrak, 2016) stated in his study that most Moroccan university students possess good intercultural knowledge and a fair IC competence. Additionally, (Koumachi, 2015) provided evaluative guidelines, measurements, and questions to assess ICC among university students, which is much useful in the evaluation of university curriculums, syllabus, and materials; the findings reveal that Moroccan university students have an average level of IC competence, they possess an average knowledge of EFL culture. However, they have a competent level when it comes to assessing home culture, with respectively 85% of Moroccan cultural knowledge.

Besides, (Benhima, 2015) asserts that being knowledgeable of the linguistic rules severally from the cultural cultivations and erudition is a meagerness of the language awareness as a whole; students with high expertise in linguistics and with a shortage of cultural knowledge would not achieve the legitimate objectives of language interaction and would fail in integrating effectively in multicultural environments. Wherefore, the former admits that educational curriculums would better propone a double-objective teaching strategy that serves to improve Moroccan university students' linguistic and cultural competence through incorporating ICC approach.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research approach adopted in this study is mixed –a method approach deployed to reach a complete understanding of the research target by examining the study's qualitative and quantitative aspects and obtaining a general and detailed interpretation of study-related issues.

3.1.Sampling

In the study under inquiry, the sample comprises Moroccan university students from the English department, particularly students of semesters 2, 4, and 6, and the choice of working with students from different semesters is primarily to evaluate the development of their intercultural competence. These students are a mixture of males and females of different ages, starting from

18 years old to adulthood, who belong to different cities (Rabat, Casablanca, and Kenitra) and whose first language is either Arabic or Tamazight. The total number of students who participated in this study reached 875 students from the three universities and the three semesters of the English studies department.

Table 1: Total number of students in the three universities

University	Frequency	Percentage(%)
IBN TOFAIL Kenitra	*220*	25,1
MOHAMED V Rabat	*314*	35,9
HASSAN II Casablanca	*341*	39,0
Total	**875**	**100,0**

3.2. Data collection tools
3.2.1. Questionnaires

A formal standardized questionnaire is designed and administered to many university students. The components of intercultural competence to be assessed are the following: Knowledge, awareness, attitudes/abilities, and values/skills, in addition to an examination of the different materials used in the classroom to promote intercultural competence. Therefore, the questions formulated concern all of these components, which represent competencies that a university student should possess to become interculturally competent.

3.2.2. Observation classes

The researcher conducted observation classes in 40 classes around the three universities; the table below is an overall summary of all classes investigated during the observation process:

Table 2: General table of observation administration process

University	N of Classes	S2	S4	S6
Hassan II - Casablanca	15	6	7	2
Mohamed V -Rabat	14	6	6	2
Ibn Tofail - Kenitra	11	5	5	1
TOTAL	40	17	18	5

4. RESULTS

1. *Do Moroccan university students develop their intercultural competence in English over semesters?*

Results on the development of competences
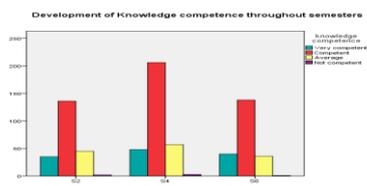
Knowledge competence over semesters

Figure 1: Knowledge competence development throughout semesters

The comparison between semesters is based on the item category within the same semester rather than the number of students; as the number varies from one semester to another; determining the competence degree development is hence achieved through observing whether the same item (ex: competent/Red bar) changes from a semester to another. In the graph above, it is resultant that:

- All semesters indicate a competent level of knowledge competence
- A constant development appears from S2 to S6 in knowledge competence. The S4 red bar is superior due to the emergence of a more comprehensive number of students compared to other semesters.

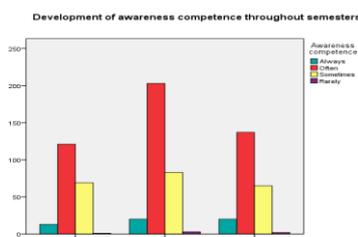 Awareness competence over semesters

Figure 2: Awareness competence development throughout semesters

No significant evolution has been registered, indicating that awareness and competence may not have been empowered throughout semesters.

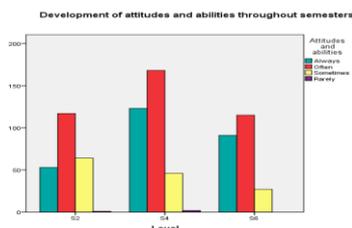Attitudes and abilities over semesters

Figure 3: Attitudes/Abilities and semesters

The graph indicates that particular development in attitudes and abilities occurred from S2 to S6; most students in S2 answered "sometimes" with n=52 students compared to "always" with a total of n=65 students. In S4 and S6, more answers indicated "always" rather than "sometimes". This could suggest that most students have demonstrated proper attitudes and possess abilities for effective interaction.
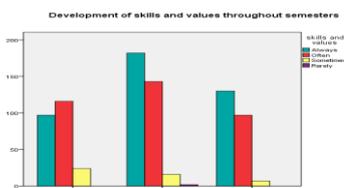
Skills and values over semesters

Figure 4: Skills/values and semesters

According to the results indicated above, an essential development in skills and values has been registered from S2 to S6; S2 students have recorded more answers in "often" rather than "always," whereas students in S4 and S6 recorded more answers with "always" rather than "sometimes," this suggests that students have improved their skills and learned more values throughout semesters.

Results of the Moroccan English curriculum

The table below introduces the courses provided by the three departments and their aims regarding English language teaching each semester.

Table 3: Courses in S1-S2

Courses	Aims	Contribution to IC
Reading and Comprehension	Practicing reading and phonetics.	Development of students' vocabulary knowledge is required for proper communication.
Writing paragraphs	Consolidating knowledge in writing coherent paragraphs.	Development of students' writing skills.
Grammar	Consolidating students' knowledge in syntax and English grammar rules.	Promotes language accuracy.
Listening and Speaking/ Public speaking	Students are exposed to different English accents.	Develops students' listening and speaking skills.
World literature	Knowledge of the anglo Saxon contributions to literature and novels.	Development of knowledge competence about English countries.
Reading in cultures	Reading different contributions of thinkers in the cultural field.	Developing a sense of scientific and cultural curiosity.
British culture and society	Knowledge of British culture along with historical and social movements.	Developing a sense of reflection, analysis, and comparison.
Business communication	Knowledge of business vocabulary.	I am developing skills in communication in the business environment.

Table 4: Courses in S3-S4

Courses	Aims	Contribution to IC
Extensive reading across disciplines	Exposing students to different ideologies and academic concepts.	Development of reflection and critical thinking skills.
Grammar 3	Consolidating students' knowledge in syntax and English grammar rules.	Helps students acquire advanced grammatical rules of the English language.
Studies in Media	Knowledge of different media tools and their functions. Exposing students to the work of media in influencing the mass population.	Reflection on different cultural representations elaborated through media.
British and US Culture	Knowledge of British and American cultures.	Developing knowledge of different English cultures.
Introduction to cultural studies	Knowledge of famous thinkers who contributed with theories in the cultural studies field.	Gaining knowledge about western cultures.

Table 5: Courses in S5-S6

Courses	Aims	Contribution to IC
Moroccan linguistics	Knowledge of Moroccan linguistics and literature	Development of observation, comparison, and critical thinking skills.
World literature	Discovery of ancient and contemporary literature.	Knowledge of different cultures and writing styles.
Literary criticism	Reflection on different literary texts.	Acquiring skills of critical analysis, interpretation, and critical reflection.
Cultural representation	Knowledge of different cultural ideologies and doctrines.	Acquiring skills of representation
Popular culture and society	Learn different cultural manifestations and their significance in society.	Raise awareness on a variety of popular culture aspects.

Results on materials and teaching practices

Materials derived from questionnaires

The documents and copies prov
teacher are helpful in your unde
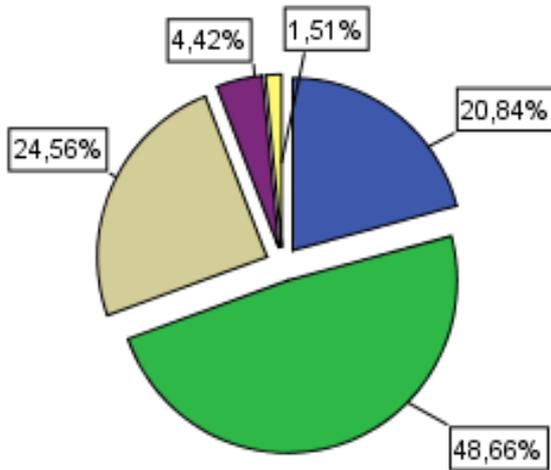cultural texts and artic

Figure 5: Documents

This figure shows that 69,50% of students confirm the effectiveness of documents and copies during the course.

The electronic equipment in you
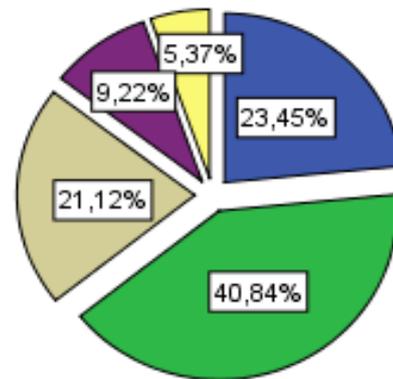useful for the ongoing of the less
computers....)

Figure 6: Electronic devices

Almost 62.29% of students agree that the electronic devices used for teaching in their classrooms are effective during the course. However, 21% have no preference.

The visual and audio materials ar
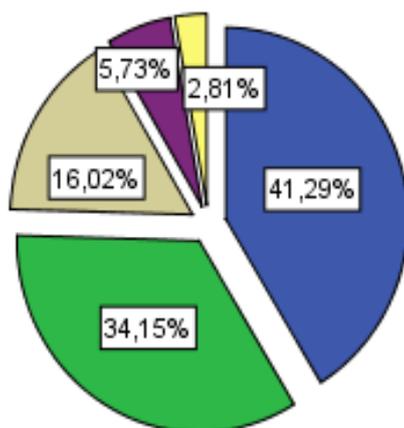training on pronunciation and lis

Figure 7: Digital devices and listening skills

Almost 75% of students (Strongly agree/Agree) confirmed that practicing pronunciation and listening is strongly reinforced through the use of visual and audio materials.

Using internet in class is helpful in ra
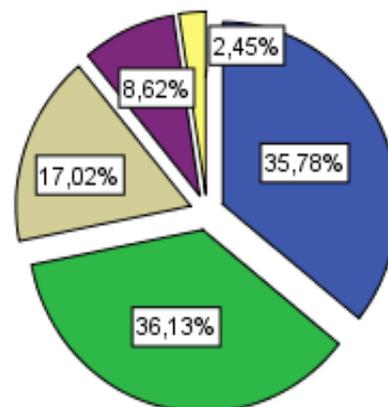knowledge about cultures around t

Figure 8: The use of the internet in class

35% of students strongly agree that using the internet in class is helpful for reaching cultural knowledge; 36% agree on the same point. Only 17% find it neutral to have access to the internet inside university classrooms.

Electronic materials in class such a
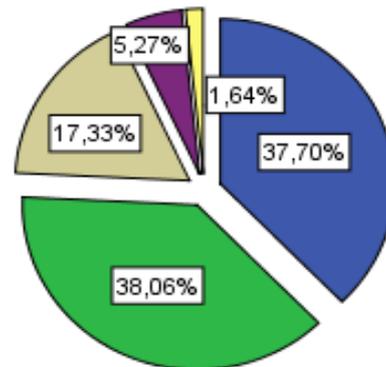computers would be more helpful in
Checking) English articles and d

Figure 9: Electronic materials in consulting information

Almost 70% of the population admits that electronic materials used for research are useful for consulting documents.

Electronic devices in class would
concentration and attenti

Work and projects in groups develo
skills: Speaking, taking initiative, ta
sharing opinions, etc..
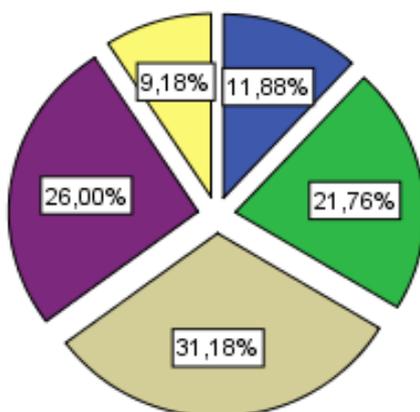
Figure 10: Electronic devices and attention impact

31.18% of students pretend that the usefulness of electronic devices in class depends on other factors. Opinions diverge among students, as 26% disagree versus 21.76% who agree that technology could distract from concentration.
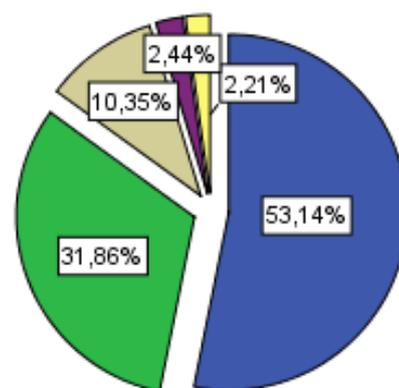
Figure 11: Collaborative work in class

53.14% strongly agree that group and pair work develop students' personal and professional skills.

Materials and teaching practices derived from observation classes

Table 6: Materials used in the Department of English studies

Materials
1. Handed copies/Written documents
2. Datashow presentation
3. Board
4. Dictionary
5. References and books

Since the sessions under observation have been repeated in order to obtain relevant and valid results, it is assumed that 13 classes out of 40 are representative of the various modules and different classes of English studies. The graphs below demonstrate the most common techniques and teaching practices adopted by English university professors in the development of each competence.
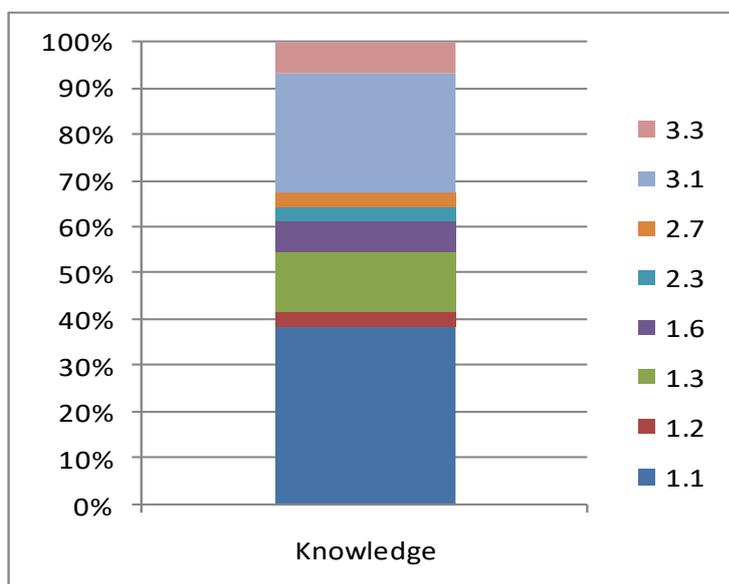
Figure 12: Teaching practices used in the development of intercultural knowledge

The highest values indicated are 1.1 with almost 38% of answers and 3.1 followed by 1.3. These values represent the most used techniques that contribute to raising intercultural knowledge.

1.1: Learning new vocabulary related to everyday interaction.

3.1: Exploring texts about famous authors and philosophers.

1.3: Providing students with different cultural tools to critically read and analyze texts.
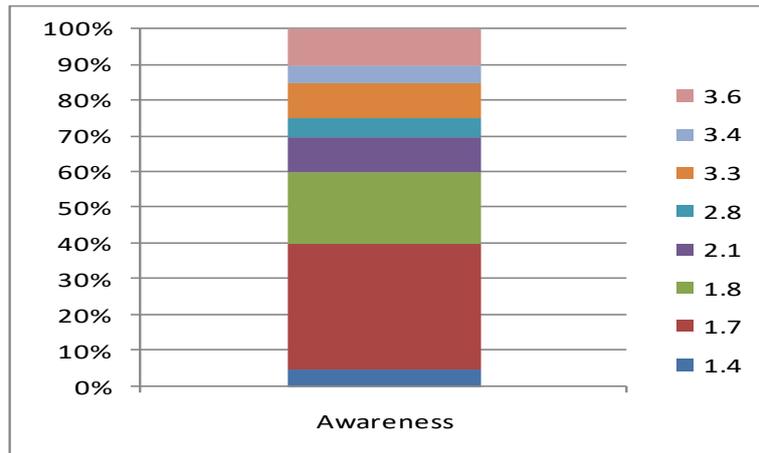
Figure 13: Teaching practices used in the development of intercultural awareness

The dominant values indicated are 1.7 with 36% of answers, followed by the value 2.8 with 20% of overall answers and 10% for 3.6 and 3.3

1.7: Discussing broader issues related to general culture and actual debates.

1.8: Discussing and writing on topics related to cultural aspects in Morocco and abroad.

3.6: Discussing about how to engage with differences inside Morocco and abroad.

Figure 14: Teaching practices used in the development of attitudes and abilities

The values are distributed in proportion of 25% for each. This implies that these techniques are used equally in the teaching of intercultural attitudes.

3.7: Teacher talking about general attitudes and good behaviors to adopt in a particular situation.

3.2: Discussing about skills and attitudes of a confident and successful person

2.8: Student-centered technique

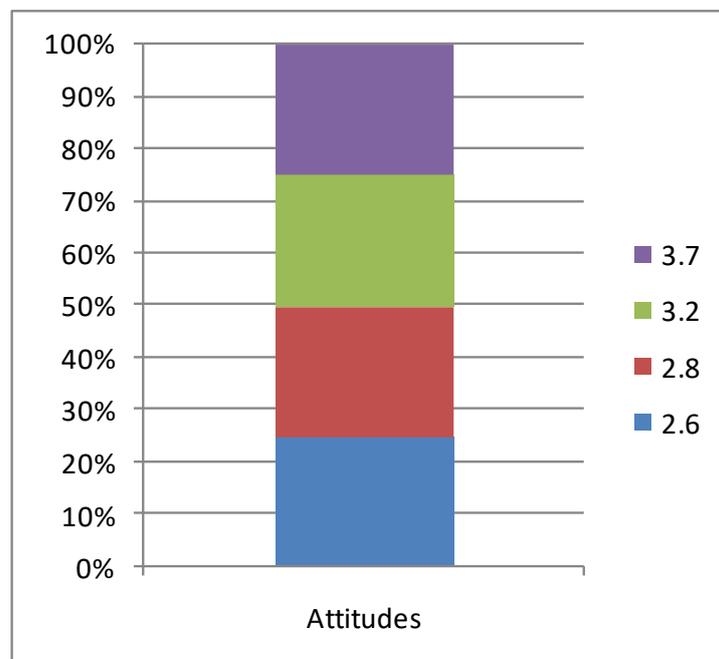**2.6**: Discussing or writing about real-life situations and interpersonal experiences with foreigners.
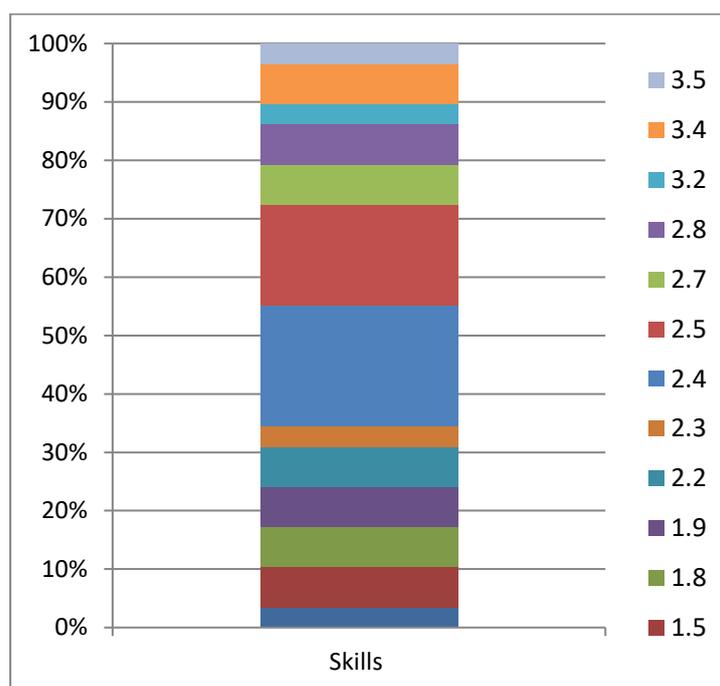
Figure 15: Teaching practices used in the development of intercultural skills.

The central values recorded for the development of intercultural skills are 2.4 with a score of 23%, followed by 2.5 with a total of 17%. Other scores are not representative as they are dividable according to different items.

2.4: Learning skills of summarizing, criticizing, evaluating, and synthesizing.

2.5: Practicing critical thinking through reading texts.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Discussion on the development of competencies

Results demonstrate that Moroccan university students did not record significant development in knowledge and awareness competencies; S2 students have registered an average level in both competencies, and S4 and S6 students with a very slight improvement that is insignificant. Nonetheless, the same students have recorded a considerable development in attitudes/abilities and skills/values from S2 to S6 semester, as indicated in the graphs above.

This divergence in results drives reflection on many reasons behind the non-development of students' knowledge and awareness; the researcher suggests a lack of literature resources in the hand of university students from which they could develop their knowledge and awareness level; since the main tool to perform knowledge is to expose students to a high amount of reading and resources which is -according to teachers' statements- missing within students' community. Moreover, most Moroccan university libraries have minimal documents provided in English and ICC approach, particularly restricting access to information on this topic.

As discussed by (Byram et al., 2001), students must have a proper level of knowledge competence which indicates possessing proper skills of communication, being able to socialize appropriately, representing and defending one's country with legitimate tools, and finally, having good knowledge of international norms and universal values that humans share worldwide. Moreover, being knowledgeable in communication is first to get the intrinsic motivation to communicate with a foreigner, to get the desire to foster intercultural relationships, and build a constructive conversation and rewarding encounters. Knowledge of communicative techniques, skills, and behaviors builds explicitly or implicitly an appropriate intercultural competence, and to fulfill this, students should be first knowledgeable about their culture, country, history, and norms.

Furthermore, knowledge includes cultural awareness, mindfulness, and cognitive flexibility acquired through intercultural interactions and proper teaching methods that construct knowledge and develop self-awareness. The development of knowledge and awareness are crucial keys to determining students' proficiency in their abilities, skills, and values and quality education focuses mainly on the developmental aspect of learning skills as it is, for the most part targeting sustainability of knowledge throughout student academic years(Gudykunst & Mody, 1983). Besides, development of knowledge and awareness is not restricted only to students' conditions but also to teacher's contribution in enhancing their learning; referring to teaching inputs and how teachers transmit knowledge and raise awareness inside university classrooms.

On the other hand, students have demonstrated proper development in all of attitudes/abilities and skills/values as shown in the graphs above, this suggests that Moroccan university students of English have probably improved their attitudes through interacting with different people in various circumstances. According to the study results, *89% of students (n=783)* have reported to be able to engage with differences in relationships with different capacities, only *11% of students (n=92)* have admitted to find obstacles in interaction.

Furthermore, findings show that *64, 2%* of Moroccan university students are in most circumstances able to control misunderstandings with people from other cultures, this may explain that they can show proper attitudes while talking about serious cultural issues without being emotionally or subjectively involved. Besides, having proper attitudes implies having great abilities to perform positive behaviors with others; these abilities indicated by students target the ability to critically evaluate messages particularly in social media, stressing on the crucial impact of media studies in providing students with the essential tools to help them criticize, reflect and evaluate from different perspectives.

Regarding skills and values; 68,6% of students reported to be self-confident while interacting in English with foreigners enabling them to represent their country positively. Moreover, 68,

7% admitted that they are able to evaluate critically some cultural situations they encounter during their interactions through paying attention to explicit and implicit messages transmitted by the speaker. In addition to that, the measurement of the degree to which Moroccan university students possess certain skills and values is uncountable, as some students may carry for instance the skill of being self-confident but not a good listener.

Ultimately, (Yunlong, 2014) admits that discussing the development of students' ICC delves principally into the different techniques students and teachers use inside university classrooms such as reflecting on personal cultural experiences and personal identities, discussing cultural issues and reflecting on universal and human values such as tolerance, empathy, and acceptance.

Discussion on the English curriculum in Morocco

Error! Reference source not found.reveals that courses included in semester 2 do cater to intercultural competence to some extent and Table 4 describes also the major skills and knowledge that second-year students should acquire. This entails that the syllabi and lesson plans designed by teachers must incorporate practical exercises to help students in S3 and S4deepen their knowledge of culture. On the other hand, S6 students are expected to deepen their knowledge about cultural representations of their country and others, to know how to reflect critically on cultural texts and articles; Table 5 indicates the presence of popular culture and society courses, fundamental in raising cultural awareness, students in this course combine between the skills of communication and cultural studies, they identify popular culture and its aspects, significance and impact on society; they also reflect on the Moroccan culture, communicate their feelings and share ideas.

Besides, the cultural representation course; combines media studies notions and popular culture knowledge; it is a great opportunity for students to reflect and analyze cultural practices and how they are being represented in media. Students thus build their own perception and interpretation of cultural practices in their country and the world, understand how cultures appropriate language and literatures, how individuals represent themselves and others and reflect on the intersections between gender, power, hegemony, race, politics, and cultural practices.

Nonetheless, few limitations encounter in the Moroccan English curriculum; the teaching of extrinsic values is lacking; students report not to learn essential values that they need to possess for effective interaction, and they assumed that the university does not contribute enough to raise students' awareness of human and universal values. These values are abstract notions of what is important and respectable and what is not, this is why it is difficult to measure the students' level of values insofar as exams do not reflect the real level of acquisition. Thus, a practical evaluation is necessary to check whether students have been able to acquire values inside university classrooms since questionnaires and interviews only report what students believe about intercultural values and interpersonal experiences with foreigners.

On the other hand, the crucial elements included in the design of the language curriculum established by the council of Europe curriculum are General aims, specific competencies, teachers' roles, evaluations, resources, activities, cooperation, and time.

Starting with assessments and evaluations, (Dumit, 2012) clarifies that exams are indeed proper means to test students' acquisitions and they do test knowledge to a certain degree, however, they do not measure communicative skills, social abilities, and values. Hence, international exchanges for instance are perfect ways to evaluate Moroccan students' acquisition of intercultural competencies, through assessing their social abilities, interactional skills, attitudes, and values, this kind of evaluation is conducted through observation of students' attitudes, behaviors, skills, and share of values, and this is called the performance-based assessment.

Moreover, teachers can go for different kinds of evaluations, particularly in language studies; peer assessment is also an agreeable kind of practice as students evaluate one another based on a series of criteria; it is called an assessment for learning. Additionally, there is also the portfolio assessment which consists of gathering a collection of students' work throughout a unit of study that can be applied in composition and writing courses where the teacher gathers many papers along the semester to chart each student's progress rather than choosing to grade the student on the final test.

Additionally, time management is also an important component to guarantee a good learning process; in Moroccan English departments, the majority of course duration is up to three hours with a 10 minutes break per 90 minutes, which is a considerable long span for attention. Many studies have demonstrated the direct impact of course duration on students' attention and concentration; it is said that long courses routinely deliver poorer learning outcomes than shorter courses. To maximize concentration, (Srini, n.d, 2017) stated that periods of downtown with work and studies are vital for the brain to operate efficiently; students must use both the focus and the unfocused circuit of the brain. Therefore, micro-learning comes as an alternative method for attention span, it consists of a few minutes course in which students learn essential notions on their modules and where all information is available in their student platform; this method encourages the student to learn, get the information easily and assimilate better.

Moreover, a good quality the curriculum takes upon the criteria of respecting students' cognitive skills through designing adequate materials, adopting proper teaching practices, and planning adequate schedules respecting students' attention and concentration abilities; and this is only feasible with teachers being aware of educational neurosciences; which consists of knowing how the brain functions during learning. This area of science provides teachers with crucial notions on brain acquisition, how information is encoded into memory, understanding stages of discovery, memorization, and assimilation, and how the neural circuit activity operates in the prefrontal cortex when dealing with learning. Teachers who possess important knowledge of educational neuroscience would be more apt to guide their students toward acquiring high potential and this would impact positively the teaching input in English Studies.

Discussion on the materials

Observation reports reveal that documentation raises student's motivation for academic exploration and curiosity and constructs their knowledge on specific fields, in consonance with (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2016), documentation is an active process that enhances students' knowledge and skills, it develops students' research skills and prepare them for becoming active researchers, however, this material should imply a follow up such as a discussion afterward, otherwise, its effectiveness on students learning outcomes is restricted.

Furthermore, most students fulfill the learning objectives using handed copies only if their level of English is satisfactory and allows them to deeply grasp the underlying notions and the author's perspective. Not to mention that classes of English studies in Morocco contain 40 to 120 students depending on semesters, and interaction is impractical among the huge number of students. This entails that the material under study is suitable for a minimum number of students and does not achieve its positive learning objectives for all students. This elucidation might look controversial with the responses derived previously by students, but this is interpreted as:

- Students find that documents are helpful in their understanding of cultural texts, but still do not achieve the ultimate learning goals and do not enhance automatically their intercultural competence due to the reasons explained above.
- Students ignore what learning outcomes they should accomplish and ignore the targeted competencies they should develop. This is why learning in this way is arbitrary and students confuse between helpful materials according to their own perceptions of learning and helpful materials based on the learning objectives catering for intercultural competence.

On the other hand, in Figure 7; 75% of the population considers that visual and audio materials are fundamental while practicing English, besides; 71.91% of students agree on the internet is advantageous in reaching rapid and direct information inside classrooms (Figure 8), but concretely speaking, this could affect the session progress at three levels:

▪ Time: Seeking information frequently on the internet is time-consuming when it is redundant and could affect teachers' classroom management.
▪ Reliability: Students could delve into dicey data that could misguide their learning.
▪ Attention: Figure 10demonstrates that 21.76% of students report being disturbed and troubled with an important stimulation; recent studies advocate that electronic devices affect attention span and reduce concentration, and the amount of exposure to these formers is a decisive variable as overexposure could lead to fewer concentration abilities and less cognitive activity. However, no scientific evidence acknowledged that digital instruction is more effective than the classical one insofar as technology develops faster than researchers could test the effectiveness of the products. The Pew Research Center in America surveyed 2500 teachers and concluded that 87% found that modern technologies are creating an easily distracted generation with a short attention span (Jeffries, 2013).

In the course of popular culture, images and visual elements are decisive in insure a good quality input; students are asked to reflect on cultural figures and bring their interpretations and criticisms, in this way, they develop their awareness of multiple representations and improve their skills of critical observation and analysis, moreover, audios and videos develop students listening skills of English accents and boost their verbal and non-verbal communication skills. As reported by (Reid, 2015), these materials are authentic materials which are the best types of materials for developing ICC; as they bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside world.

However, higher institutions must update their resources and e-tools since technology is developing rapidly and materials' digitalization also witnesses an evolution in the innovative world of education; Moroccan universities can design online applications attributed to students of English studies, which consist of a collection of English e-articles, documents, video conferences on cultural issues, audio podcasts and a group of foreign students belonging to an international university, they would then be asked to communicate with those students, and together will build an international relationship and improve their English language and intercultural skills.

Discussion on the teaching practices

Teaching techniques for knowledge competence

As reported in Figure 12, value n=1.1 refers to the learning of new vocabulary used in everyday interaction and constitutes the highest teaching technique. Reports on observation classes affirm that training on vocabulary is mainly done through listening tasks, dialogues, and reading; where many cognitive processes are taking place such as recognizing logical relationships between speakers, languages, and events, ordering, seriating, classifying, exploring other views, analyzing, and memorizing. (Anderson, 1996) believes that focusing on vocabulary through task-based learning appears to enhance declarative knowledge which consists in knowing the basic rules of effective interaction and this process requires that the student is aware of his understanding, could execute information, and conveniently perform knowledge. On the other hand, procedural knowledge is the knowledge exercised in the performance of tasks, which suggests that students know how to use communicative skills, how to interact effectively, and what to do during a foreign interaction; this is also considered implicit learning where students have already acquired certain skills and are performing them unconsciously.

Besides, Figure 12demonstrates that students usually explore texts written by famous philosophers and pioneers in the field of cultural studies (n=3.1), this technique is implemented through reading parts of books and articles given to students, and teachers are confident about delivering valid and accurate information and believe that it is a proper way to enhance students' motivation to reading. The necessity to explore the thoughts of other writers is crucial to stumble upon different perceptions and opinions, this helps students figure out common points and distinguish differences in criticisms and approaches. Data nowadays is impacted by the involvement of technology and the internet and by their influence on social relations, economy, culture, politics, globalization, digitalization, and many other variables that are missed in the analysis and investigations of outdated literature, hence, it is necessarily required that teachers provide a variety of references and resources for students to get a broader perception of the field.

Finally, instructing students with cultural analytical tools used for critical analysis has also been reported as a teaching technique used by Moroccan teachers of English to raise students' intercultural knowledge (n=3.1); in the popular culture module, the researcher reported that teachers' direct students' attention toward cultural characteristics such as rituals, costumes, folklore, poetry, and learners are required to identify cultural components in any written, spoken and visual text and interpreting them, aiming to enhance students to make correlations between cultural features and their representations.

Teaching techniques in awareness competence

Awareness competence is reported to be enhanced through discussion on different topics around recent phenomena (n=1.7), as well as debating on particular subjects related to the Moroccan culture (n=1.8). The researcher noted that teachers read a paragraph or release a video on the cultural characteristics of a particular country and ask students to reflect on it, describe it, analyze cultural features, make comparisons and provide opinions; these techniques suggest that students not only develop skills but also raise their awareness through exploring and reflecting on differences. However, this technique in Moroccan university classrooms is limited in terms of advantages since the interaction is restricted to a few students with the teacher taking over the discussion. It is better advised to organize panels of discussion or round tables where

each group of students prepares content where they raise issues of culture and discuss it together by analyzing, describing, and providing arguments to each other; this technique motivates students to follow the course and collaborate.

In Figure 11, 85% of students consider that pair and group work in classrooms contribute to the development of professional and personal skills, this technique prepares students for successful foreign interactions through sharing ideas, defending opinions properly, managing emotions, and explaining attitudes. Moreover, this task is social and tangible; insofar as students communicate with each other, entertain and try to perform as lecturers by bringing academic literature and scientific evidence to defend their statements, along with focusing on their nonverbal gestures and speaking delivery, a good point for university students who are usually invited to participate in seminars and conferences. Therefore, techniques used in improving intercultural awareness in Moroccan university classrooms should make a transition from the traditional way of teaching to a more modernized way where the teaching is more student-centered than teacher-centered.

Teaching techniques in attitudes and abilities

In Figure 14, observation findings demonstrate that 25% of techniques focus on discussions about attitudes and proper behaviors to adopt in intercultural relationships (n=3.7), these discussions are usually brief, not deepened and without any interaction. Another 25% of techniques is devoted to the discussion about skills to become a successful and confident person in the future (n=1.4), this usually happens in business communication classes where the teacher not only focuses on the qualities of a CEO but also on the skills to perform for students to become self-confident and successful in their personal and professional carrier.

Besides, Moroccan professors need to include social strategies in classrooms by performing tasks with other learners; (O'Neil, H.F and Spielberger, 1979) emphasized the importance of three learning strategies including the meta-cognitive strategy which refers to the executive control over cognitive strategies, in other terms, executive control encompasses the execution of tasks through skills such as problem-solving, memorization, behavioral management, abstract reasoning, shifting flexibility, prioritizing, self-control, and initiation. The teaching of executive functioning skills is compulsory inside university classrooms, but how do skills help in building positive attitudes?

Inevitably, a positive attitude is cultivated by a soft skill; in a Moroccan university setting, the researcher noted through observation classes that the teaching of soft skills is quasi absent and the solution starts when teachers incorporate teaching practices involving skills such as flexibility, organization, problem-solving and. Supposing that students learn flexibility as an executive function, this implies that they have gained the ability to be flexible in tough situations, to have a good sense of decision making, and to be good at solving problems. At the intercultural level, students would then be able to control misunderstandings during interactions, be confident and behave smartly in negative situations, deal with conflict management and take wise decisions.

To reach these outcomes, teachers shall design tasks where students use their imagination and reasoning thinking, the task consists of providing students with a paper where the teacher narrates and describes a difficult and alarming situation and asks students to work in a group to suggest solutions and respect the time provided. This task appeals to their motivation, encourage

them to work in a group, defend opinions and make suggestions as well as enhances their capacities for problem-solving and time management. (Paul, 2016) stated that activities related to imagination, improvisation, and theatre is an effective way of communicative approaches to language learning insofar as learners use English vocabulary and acquire principles of collaboration, group work, emotional management and become more creative in an environment where they can make mistakes.

The last example targets task initiation as a pivotal skill that leads to the performance of great attitudes, teachers shall design tasks that stimulate learners and appeal to their motivation and curiosity, encourage with inspiring speeches and monitor with suitable guidance and assistance. Students who learn to take initiative to tend to have leadership attitudes in the future, have a positive mindset, bring creative projects, build strong and multiple intercultural relationships, and show motivation to listen and share ideas, willingness to make effort toward others, help them and tolerate differences. Pragmatically, teachers should notice task initiation challenges signs among students and help them overcome their troubles by giving tasks in pairs and groups where students learn from each other indirectly.

Indeed, the findings show that Moroccan university students have developed their intercultural attitudes over semesters which is a positive indication, however, their level still requires in-depth development targeting the specific attitudes and skills mentioned above. Besides, effective strategies come also as far-reaching techniques to take into consideration in the acquisition of attitudes and abilities, (O'Neil, 1978) points out the importance of these strategies in managing emotions and motivation explaining that emotional management contributes to the acquisition of self-regulation skills that are the core of learning objectives.

In this token, Figure 14reveals a teaching practice (n=2.6) consisting of students discussing and sharing their own interpersonal experiences with each other; this is intended to help students learn to express their feelings towards attitudes, but no compelling tasks are conducted nor tips provided helping students properly manage their emotions in communication. (Oxford, 1990) cited 3 major options to consider while designing tasks with effective strategies.

1. **Lowering anxiety**: It is a technique aiming to reduce stress and raise levels of relaxation; this is closely determined by students' self-confidence and external problems; learners have difficulties interacting and working in groups, and their negative feelings urge them to isolate and their intercultural interaction and attitudes become challenging. On the other hand, students with a low level of anxiety show motivation in learning and are keen on exploration, they can interact easily and are not afraid to make mistakes, which helps them learn and acquire skills comfortably.
   Hence, teachers must consider students' feelings as crucial elements for their learning prosperity, they shall ensure a relaxed learning atmosphere and encourage all students to take part in discussions, monitor them, and help them achieve their tasks' goals as well as encourage autonomous learning through individual and pair group activities.

2. **Encouraging oneself:** The second technique aims at training students to encourage themselves and acquire positive internal discourses as this raises their self-estimation and confidence and provides them with personal satisfaction. The teacher may design tasks where students are asked to be coaches and give advice and tips to coachees about different topics related to communication and well-being and this can be used in public speaking and communication as an alternative to traditional teacher-centered techniques. Another task targets both writing skills and self-encouragement practices;

students are supposed to write a letter of encouragement to a friend who lacks confidence, is afraid to make mistakes, and is discouraged to engage in conversations with foreign people, to motivate him/her and give him/her tips to become confident, the final outcome is that students themselves search for the tips and apply them.

3. **Taking emotional temperature**: The teacher has a major role in recognizing learners' emotions during the learning process and students themselves should learn to define them and acknowledge their limitations. In this token, the teacher shall design a task where students express their feelings while learning the English language to a group of people and try to empathize with each other.

Teaching techniques in skills

Furthermore, two main teaching practices have been recorded during observation classes' process addressing students' intercultural skills; (Vygotsky, 1978) considered analyzing, synthesizing, planning, monitoring, and evaluating as self-regulated strategies which require high psychological and cognitive processes that all learners need to acquire to become independent learners and morally reasoning individuals, he also confirmed that one of the major techniques for students to internalize these processes is social mediation which suggests an interaction with more capable people such as native speakers of English from whom they will acquire accurate language and experience real foreign interaction; until these processes become inner speech at which point to be fully self-regulated.

This opens up for discussion that learners who manage their emotions and possess self-regulated skills can easily acquire academic skills and achieve high professional objectives; this implies also that the cognitive operations occurring in the individuals' everyday life activities and events that require self-regulation, have contributed to the development of his or her awareness and abilities to pause the feeling and the action, to make wise decisions and manage pressure.

Self-regulation is important to instruct in university as it enhances personal and academic skills and abilities and promotes self-determination, motivation, and self-management, three basic elements for effective and appropriate intercultural communication. Teaching practices need to emphasize enhancing students' learning autonomy to insure that these formers can seek knowledge outside university classrooms, manage their time, and take their full responsibilities. Learning autonomy is when students are self-governed and self-directed; this implies that they know where and how to seek knowledge and promote their skills which require a certain degree of awareness about their weaknesses and objectives.

In order to put self-regulation and autonomy into practice in university classrooms, professors should follow the following principles:

1. Allow students to take decisions on some aspects of the lesson as choosing the material and technique they want to use to achieve a certain task.
2. Teachers leave the opportunity to students to lead the course.
3. Provide model behaviors and skills that promote intercultural competence
4. Ask for feedback: This method makes students feel that their opinions matter and that they are encouraged to express their feelings with confidence.
5. Ask students about their learning goals and needs.
6. Make students work in pairs and groups.

In self-regulation practices, teachers may design tasks where students train on self-management, self-confidence, determination, problem solving through:

1.	Providing a material where students rehearse on summarizing, evaluating, organizing and criticizing.
2.	Students make projects in groups and train on goal setting, planning, time management and organization.
3.	Students correct each other at the end of each task in order to learn note taking, monitoring, and evaluating.
4.	Students try to find solutions and manage problems in imaginative conflictual situations to practice self-management skills, emotional management, and problem-solving skills.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of the research provide extensive knowledge about the situation of ICC teaching in Moroccan English departments; the level of ICC among Moroccan university students is modest and requires improvement. Besides, the results on the development of competencies determine the weaknesses and the strengths of the curriculum designed as well as the materials and teaching practices employed in the enhancement of intercultural competence; the analysis of these factors produces in-depth information on the central elements that need to be reexamined inside Moroccan universities and sheds the light on the reasons behind the constant development in knowledge and awareness competencies along with the frail strategies adopted in the teaching of intercultural competence. This is considered a great resource for Moroccan higher education to review the pedagogy as it provides concrete and explicit claims addressed to policy makers, teachers, and educators to rethink the strategies used to develop intercultural competence and apply adequate modifications to the curriculum through building up a solid content carrying intercultural and universal values and ensuring the acquisition and development of personal and professional skills.

Table 7: Concluding results

Research items	Results			
	Knowledge	**Awareness**	**Attitudes/Abilities**	**Skills/Values**
Development	No development from S2 to S6.	No development from S2 to S6.	Important development from S2 to S6.	Good development from S2 to S6.
Curriculum	The curriculum content caters partly to ICC goals and a reconsideration of specific aspects is required.			
Materials/T.P	**Materials:** Documents and electronic devices enhance to some extent the development of intercultural competence but have to be updated to meet students' needs.		**Teaching practices:** Teaching practices poorly incorporate techniques enhancing ICC.	

I.1. Recommendations

1.	Designing an independent module in all departments of English studies; devoted to the acquisition of intercultural knowledge, awareness, and the teaching of executive function skills and values.
2.	Rethinking about the ultimate vocation of teaching English through incorporating social and affective strategies.

3.	Developing a Moroccan online application designed by Moroccan universities aiming to build real interactions between Moroccan students and foreign students.

4.	Organizing international exchanges to provide real intercultural situations for Moroccan students.

5.	Rethinking about the assignments and examination modes insuring that students are tested at the theoretical and practical levels.

6.	Readjusting the organization of the curriculum courses, timing, and schedule

7.	Incorporating neuro-educational sciences in areas of language teaching methodologies.

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