Investigating Intercultural Teaching Competence among Moroccan Teachers in Tertiary Education

Mouhssine Echcharfy
Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco
e-mail: M.Echarfy@gmail.com

Abstract:

Intercultural learning is a new pedagogy that encourages learners to establish relationships between their own culture and the other culture, managing dysfunctions and mediating differences. These skills and others will enable learners to develop intercultural competence and help them become intercultural speakers/mediators (Byram, 1997). However, learners' intercultural competence cannot be developed without an appropriate intervention and guidance on the part of the teacher who represents a central element in the intercultural learning process. Thus, the issue at stake is the degree to which teachers demonstrate knowledge of skills and competencies they need for the development of students' intercultural competence and awareness. In this respect, the present study is an attempt to explore the extent to which the teachers' competencies and skills meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding intercultural teaching competence. It included 25 Moroccan university teachers who have already taught culture at the university. In line with the objective of the study, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was adopted as a major data collection procedure. The results revealed that the majority of Moroccan university teachers demonstrated negative attitudes towards and lack of awareness regarding the intercultural teaching competencies provided. It also turned out that the majority of teachers' competencies do not meet the specifications formulated in the literature, regarding intercultural teaching competence. In light of the results obtained, several implications are derived from the study for decision makers and teachers.

Keywords: intercultural learning; intercultural teaching competence, Moroccan university teachers

1. Introduction

Multiculturality has been believed to cause problems between people from different cultures living together as they tend either to ignore each other or they compete aggressively especially when jobs opportunities are limited (Jackson, 2012). This suggests that people from a certain culture tend to centralize their own culture as the ideal one and consider their culture as a reference to the other cultures. However, towards more openness to and acceptance of different beliefs, values and customs, interculturality has come as a reaction away from the negative view towards cultural diversity. It is considered as a contradictory positive line of thought that aims to encourage intercultural dialogue among people from different cultures in multicultural and diverse contexts (Camilleri, 1992; Räsänen, 2007 as cited in Jokikokko & Karikoski, 2016) (see also Jackson, 2012). This intercultural trend has led to the emergence of a new language pedagogy called "Intercultural Learning" that aims at promoting intercultural competence in EFL classrooms and enable EFL learners to meet the challenges of the globalized world they live in. Thus, intercultural competence development has become a crucial issue in higher education institutions (Bodrič & Stojičić, 2013) due to its significant role in socio-cultural and cross-cultural contexts. In this respect, educationalists have strived to promote foreign language learners' intercultural competence through intercultural learning as a realistic pedagogy.

Being linguistically competent is insufficient in a multicultural context where individuals are required to achieve a mutual understanding among each other (Barro et al. 2002; Vrhovac, 2012 as cited in Bodrič &Stojičić, 2013) (see also Byram, 1997). Therefore, to function appropriately in such context, Byram (1997) proposes the term "intercultural speaker", who can easily and effectively engage with multicultural identities and in different cultural melting pots, as an alternative for "native speaker" (see also Byram, et al., 2002). In order to prepare foreign language learners with such attributes, intercultural learning seems to have the potential to provide a cultural platform for EFL learners to develop their intercultural competence to communicate and interact appropriately and effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds instead of preparing "fluent fools" (Bennett, 1997, p. 16). Indeed, intercultural education has become widely an interesting topic of discussion (Huber, 2012). This importance was drawn from the fact that it meets the needs of the current globalized world where individuals should have the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to engage with people of different cultural backgrounds.

Learners are required to hone a number of intercultural competences (e.g., Byram, 1997; Byram, 2009; Council of Europe, 2001). in intercultural learning, the learner should engage in a variety of activities and tasks that would help him/her develop his/her own awareness of the intercultural norms and principles, namely role plays/simulations, group discussions, projects, critical incidents, portfolios and so on (e.g., Huber & Reynolds, 2014; Kačkere, Lázár & Matei , 2007; Crobett, 2003; Lázár et al., 2007). According to many scholars, all of these tasks and others are meant to foster learners' intercultural competence as they provide learners with real

life situations that would help them interact meaningfully in different intercultural encounters outside the classroom.

Briefly, establishing relationships, managing dysfunctions and mediating portray the intercultural speaker that remains as the ultimate goal of the intercultural learning and the major role of learners in intercultural learning classrooms (Byram, 1997). However, these functions cannot be achieved without an appropriate intervention on the part of the teacher who represents a central element in the intercultural learning process. In constant with the principles of intercultural learning suggested by Liddicoat et al. (2003) and the contributions of other researchers (e.g., Byram et al., 2002; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2009; Fantini, 2009; Pajak-Wazna, 2013; Dimitrov et al., 2014), the present study aims to explore the extent to which teachers' competencies and skills meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding intercultural teaching competence. It is also informed by the following research question: To what extent do the teachers' competencies meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding teachers' intercultural competence?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence has been studied as residing within a person (i.e., encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral capabilities of a person). *Definitions* of *intercultural competence* are as varied. Intercultural competence is defined in a number of ways* but generally, it is the ability to communicate and behave in appropriate ways with those who are culturally different. Intercultural competence is "the ability to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that help the individual behave appropriately in intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2006). According to Fantini (2006), intercultural competence is briefly defined as: ". . . a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself." (p. 12). In "Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence," Spitzberg and Chagnon (2009) define intercultural competence as, "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world" (p. 7). Regardless of the varied definitions provided by scholars, there is, however, sufficient consensus amongst these variations to conclude that there is a common understanding of what intercultural competence is.

In light of a study that was conducted by Deardorff (2004), one of the most definitions of intercultural competence agreed upon by scholars is that of "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. *247*). However, it also turned out that among experts, Byram's definition is regarded as highly suitable for pedagogical purposes. Therefore, Byram defines intercultural competence as "Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role (…)" (p. 34) (see

Deardorff, 2004, 2006). Precisely, UNESCO (2013) suggests that intercultural competences can be summarized as having relevant specific and general knowledge about different cultures, being knowledgeable about and aware of the conflicts and misunderstandings that can arise in multicultural contexts when interacting and communicating with others. Intercultural competence cannot be achieved without having positive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining relationships with diverse others. On the basis of the attitudes and knowledge, being interculturally competent requires having the skills that would help when interacting with others from different cultures. Therefore, students cannot develop these skills along with other themselves, but rather with the help of qualified teachers who have an intercultural profile. There a number of skills however that portray and characterize an intercultural teachers with an intercultural profile that are discussed below.

2.2. Intercultural teaching profile

In order to achieve intercultural learning objectives, the teacher should play a major role in the classroom. However, the issue at stake is the extent to which a foreign language teacher can teach the intercultural dimension if he/she has never left his/her country or "visit one where the target language is spoken" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 10). It is noteworthy that intercultural competence development is not only about "the transmission of information about a foreign country" (Byram et al., 2002, p. 10), rather it is based on the development of "skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as to develop a knowledge of a particular culture or country" (p. 9).

According to them, the teacher's roles consist in:

> 1) helping learners to understand how intercultural interaction takes place, 2) how social identities are part of all interaction, 3) how their perceptions of other people and others people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication, 4) how they can find out for themselves more about the people with whom they are communicating. (p. 10)

In this respect, Pajak-Wazna (2013) argues that the intercultural competent teacher is able to interpret, evaluate and relate to ambiguous intercultural situations, relativize one's own frame of reference, and use behaviors and skills that fit a specific intercultural context. Pajak-Wazna (2013) also explains that "the level of intercultural competence of teachers, their activity or passivity in the broadly understood area of culture, have an undeniable impact on students' attitudes towards multicultural issues" (p. 318). The teacher therefore is not required to know everything about the target culture, but rather plays some roles that would help learners develop their intercultural competence namely, facilitator, task/activity-designer, skill-developer, information-provider, experience provider and, most important of all, he/she can act as an intercultural speaker or intercultural mediator (see Janku, 2017).

Intercultural competence development requires learners to discuss ideas and draw conclusions from their own experience of the target culture on the basis of what they have introduced to. To do that, teachers should play a significant role, which is designing a series of stimulating activities that would prompt students' critical thinking as they react to scenarios, critical incidents and other issues related to the other culture (Byram et al., 2002). The teacher, in intercultural learning, provides information about how the members of the other culture think and behave. More importantly, in order to have learners develop their intercultural competence, the teacher's role would be encouraging learners' discussion to draw differences and commonalities between their own culture and the other culture (Byram, et al., 2002). This explains the fact that the teacher is not required to be an expert and knowledgeable about other countries and their cultures, but provides information that should be authentic and which learners need to know about the other culture through various resources namely, internet, videos, pictures, reading texts and so on.

Thus, intercultural education comes into focus due to its importance in prompting learners' critical thinking about the issues presented and, in fact, even visiting the host country, one cannot learn the things he/she learns in intercultural education (Byram et al. 2002). Byram et al. (2002) suggest that the intercultural teacher should simplify the given material so that it fits the learners' language level. It goes without saying that intercultural learning is necessary for learners' intercultural competence development and so it needs someone who would play multiple roles effectively within the process of learning. According to Byram et al (2002):

> What the teacher should ask is not how much more
> information about a country and its cultures can I include
> in the syllabus, but how can I develop those other
> competences which will help learners to interact
> successfully with people of other cultures and identities.
> (p 12)

Therefore, providing teacher trainees with the necessary tools of intercultural competence is "a precondition of rising to constantly changing new challenges of the contemporary world" (Pajak-Wazna, 2013, p. 318). Inevitably, intercultural teachers are supposed to possess certain skills, behaviors, and teaching approaches and methods that would allow them to facilitate the intercultural learning process. In light of previous research, Dimitrov et al. (2014) presents a number of skills intercultural competent teachers should possess.

One of the very first skills an intercultural teacher should be aware of is students' attitude and view towards the other culture. Intercultural teachers should be able to model and encourage perspective taking in the classroom. This implies that learners' intercultural competence development is linked with their shift from an ethnocentric to ethnorelativistic perspective (e.g., Bennett, 1986; Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). In other words, the learners tend to show a subjective perspective towards the other culture and put their culture in the center as they alienate and set against the other culture. The teachers' role, therefore, is to help learners change their attitudes, and so decenter and relativize their own culture and encourage students to consider a

certain issue from a variety of perspectives by asking questions and expressing a diversity of opinions in class (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Bond, Qian, & Huang, 2003 as cited in Dimitrov et al., 2014). In the same vein, intercultural profile lies in the teachers' ability to model and encourage non-judgmental approaches**.** As noted by Dimitrov et al. (2014), interculturally competent teachers are those who encourage non-judgmental approaches and help learners avoid making negative prejudices and suspend judgments while discussing cultural and social differences. Dimitrov et al. (2014) also illustrate that intercultural teacher encourages students to describe, understand and interpret cultural differences in the issue under discussion before evaluating it so that not to fall into false judgments in intercultural situations (Bennett, 2011; Harlap, 2008 as cited in Dimitrov et al., 2014).

Interestingly, it is believed that effective facilitators are those who provide feedback across cultures in a variety of ways as they adapt their feedback style to meet the learners' needs and they are aware of the way feedback is offered in the learners culture (Laroche, 2003 as cited in Dimitrov et al., 2014). In line with this, facilitating the learning process lies also in tailoring and adapting messages to learners with different levels of linguistic ability and reducing the incorporation of complexities that may impede and get in the way of learners' understanding (Cushner & Mahon, 2009 as cited in Dimitrov et al., 2014).

In addition to that, the teachers' role in intercultural learning consists in creating opportunities for interaction among learners. This becomes a necessity in intercultural teaching competence as intercultural competence is based on developing learners' communication and interaction in different cross-cultural encounters (Byram, 1997). In fact, interaction would allow learners to "learn from each other, share different perspectives, and share the wealth of cultural knowledge they bring to class" (Arkoudis et al., 2013 as cited in Dimitrov et al., 2014, p. 90). Last but not least, developing an awareness of one's own culture and cultural identity may represent a crucial skill an intercultural teacher can have (Dimitrov et al., 2014). The teachers can develop this awareness through showing how one's own culture and cultural identity are perceived by other cultures, and how they influence cross-cultural interactions.

Overall, the teachers' intercultural profile is not only about transmitting knowledge, but also educating learners how to interact and communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds in intercultural encounters, being open to, accepting and respecting others (Hoxha, 2008 as cited in Janku, 2017), withholding negative judgments, be tolerant towards the others from different cultures, recognize other cultures perspectives, practices and products (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2004; Byram, et al., 2004; Byram et al., 2009; Council of Europe, 2001). Therefore, one of the prominent characteristics of intercultural teacher's profile is being intercultural mediator between students' culture and the other culture (Janku, 2017). Being a cultural mediator, according to Janku (2017), would enable pupils and students to be "more active in their attitudes and to be socially skilled" (p. 8). In accordance with previous research, the teacher is seen not only as a cultural mediator, but he is also seen as an "experience provider" (Janku, 2017, p. 8) in the classroom through

providing and creating an intercultural environment where learners can have the opportunity to experience, communicate and interact in cross-cultural environment. As noted in Janku (2017), the teacher is more than a leader or an evaluator in the classroom, he/she is someone who creates a prejudice-free atmosphere for the acceptance of the "foreign".

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

The study follows an exploratory research design in the investigation of the Moroccan university teachers' attitudes towards intercultural teaching competencies. The ultimate objective of present study is to explore the extent to which the teachers' competencies meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding teachers' intercultural competence. To this end, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used.

3.2. Instruments

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was adopted to explore teachers' attitudes towards intercultural teaching competencies. The questionnaire scale was assigned codes so that the data can be analyzed quantitatively through SPSS. The questionnaire is made up of 21 statements that correspond to intercultural teaching competencies and skills to which teachers have to respond by indicating the degree of agreement (1= strongly disagree➔5= strongly agree). The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 25 Moroccan university teachers.

3.3. Participants

In view of a convenience sampling, the study included 25 Moroccan university EFL teachers as they represent the sample of the study. The participants are required to respond to 21 statements that reflect intercultural teaching competences on the basis of the degree of agreement (1= strongly disagree➔5= strongly agree).

3.4. Reliability and Validity

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument adopted in the study, the questionnaire was submitted to my supervisor at the doctoral program "Applied Language and Culture Studies" to examine its face and content validity. In order to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of the questionnaire items and to see the extent to which it is a consistent measure of the concept, Cronbach's alpha is one way of measuring the strength of that consistency. **α** value is positive due to the positive average covariance among items. As it is showed below, **α** coefficient is .90, which indicates that all of the items, at least, most of them have high covariance as **α** approaches **1**. This also indicates that most of the items have shared covariance and so measure the same underlying concept. Therefore, the internal consistency of the measurement is observed to be strong.

Table 1: The assessment of internal consistency of measurement (Cronbach's alpha Reliability test)

Cronbach's alpha	N of Items
.902	21

3.5. Data Analysis

In light of the research question, the data obtained were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (frequencies).

4. Findings

The major data collection procedure used in the present study is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire (strongly disagree ➔ strongly agree) assuming that "strongly disagree" and "disagree" reflect teachers' negative attitudes while "strongly agree" and "agree" reflect their positive attitudes. With a total number of 21 items, the questionnaire was used to explore the extent to which the teachers' competencies meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding teachers' intercultural competence. These competencies are meant to feature teachers' intercultural profile, which in fact enables them to perform well in intercultural learning context and develop students' intercultural competence. The results below report on the teachers' responses regarding their intercultural teaching competencies adopted when teaching culture. The reported results are analyzed and presented as chunks due to the number of the items presented.

As can be viewed in the results in the table below, for item 1, the results show that 52% "disagree" that they develop learners' skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as I develop their knowledge of a particular culture or country, only 20% "agree" . For item 2, 40% of the respondents "disagree" that they encourage the understanding of how intercultural interaction takes place , 24% and 8% respectively "agree" and "strongly agree". As a response to item 3, the majority of respondents (60%) "disagree" that they help learners understand how social identities are part of all interaction, only 16% "agree" and 4% "strongly agree". For item 4, 44% of the respondents "disagree" that they help learners to understand how their perceptions of other people and other people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication while 24% of them "agree". Similarly, for item 5, 44% "disagree" that they help learners realize the relative validity of their own frame of reference, whereas 24% of them "agree". For item 6, 32% of the respondents admit that they do not act as intercultural mediators between their own culture and the other culture as they "disagree" while 20% "agree", and still 4% of the respondents "strongly agree" with the statement.

Table 2: *Frequency* percentages for teachers' attitudes regarding intercultural teaching competencies

Items		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.I develop learners' skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as I develop their knowledge of a particular culture or country.	**N**	0	13	7	5	0
	%	0%	52%	28%	20%	0%
2. I help learners understand how intercultural interaction takes Place	**N**	0	10	7	6	2
	%	0%	40%	28%	24%	8%
3. I help learners understand how social identities are part of all interaction	**N**	0	15	5	4	1
	%	0%	60%	20%	16%	4%
4.I help learners to understand how their perceptions of other people and other people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication	**N**	0	11	8	6	0
	%	0%	44%	32%	24%	0%
5.I help learners realize the relative validity of their own frame of reference	**N**	0	11	8	6	0
	%	0%	44 %	32%	24%	0%
6.I act as an intercultural mediator between the two cultures.	**N**	0	8	11	5	1
	%	0%	32%	44%	20%	4%

As in indicated below, the results show that most of the respondents expressed negative attitudes towards the intercultural teaching competences and still other significant number of respondents show positive attitudes towards these competencies. For item 7, 24% "agree" and 8% "strongly agree" that they design stimulating activities that prompt students' critical thinking, yet only 32% "disagree" that they don't use them. For item 8, 36% and 12% of teachers respectively "agree" and "strongly agree" that they encourage conversations through role-plays/simulations that would enable learners interact in different intercultural encounters, and only 36% report that they "disagree". Positive attitude towards item 9 is reported. 60% of the respondents "agree" that they provide information about the other culture namely, perspectives, practices and products whereas only 28% "disagree". For items 10, 11 and 12, most of the respondents show their disagreement with the intercultural teaching competencies provided. 52% of the respondents "disagree" that they encourage learners' discussion to draw differences and commonalities between their own culture and the other culture while only 36% and 4% of them respectively "agree" and "strongly agree". The same thing applies to items 11 and 12. The results show that 56% "disagree" with both items, for item 11, 28% "agree" that they provide information that is true and authentic, for item 12, 24% "agree" and 8% "strongly agree".

Table 3: *Frequency* percentages for teachers' attitudes regarding intercultural teaching competencies

Items		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
7.I design series of stimulating activities that would prompt students' critical thinking.	**N**	0	8	9	6	2
	%	0%	32%	36%	24%	8%
8.I encourage conversations through role-plays/simulations	**N**	0	9	4	9	3
	%	0%	36%	16%	36%	12%
9.I provide information about the other culture namely, perspectives, practices and products	**N**	0	7	3	15	0
	%	0%	28%	12%	60%	0%
10.I encourage learners' discussion to draw differences and commonalities between their own culture and the other culture	**N**	0	13	2	9	1
	%	0%	52%	8%	36%	4%
11.I provide information that is true and authentic and that learners need to know about the other culture	**N**	0	14	4	7	0
	%	0%	56%	16%	28%	0%
12.I help learners to shift from an ethnocentric to ethnorelativistic perspective.	**N**	0	14	3	6	2
	%	0%	56%	12%	24%	8%

On the one hand, for Items 13, 14, 15 and 17 as shown in the table below, the majority of the respondents showed a high degree of agreement with the intercultural teaching competencies presented. As indicated below, 32% "agree" and 8% "strongly agree" that I encourage students to consider a certain issue from a variety of perspectives, respectively; on the contrary, 40% "disagree". For item 14, 44% "agree" and 8% "strongly agree", and only 40% "disagree". As a response to item 15, 24% of the respondents "agree", 12% of them show high degree of agreement as they "strongly agree" while 32% "disagree". The same thing for item 17, the majority shows an agreement with facilitating the learning process by tailoring and adapting messages to learners with different levels of linguistic ability and reducing the incorporation of complexities. The results indicate that 28% "agree" and 16% "strongly agree" Whereas only 40% "disagree".

On the other hand, the majority of the respondents responded negatively to items 16 and 18. As a response to item 16, 48% "disagree" that they create a learning environment that recognizes the barriers students face in participating in intercultural interaction while 32% "agree" and 8% "strongly agree". As indicated below, 52% of the respondents show negative view towards helping learners learn from each other, share different perspectives, and share the wealth of cultural knowledge they bring to class as they "disagree", 20% shows a positive response as they "agree", and only 12% shows a high positive attitude as they "strongly agree".

Table 4: *Frequency* percentages for teachers' attitudes regarding intercultural teaching competencies

Items		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
13.I encourage students to consider a certain issue from a variety of perspectives by asking questions and expressing a diversity of opinions	**N**	0	10	5	8	2
	%	0%	40%	20%	32%	8%
14.I model, encourage and help learners avoid making negative prejudices while discussing cultural and social differences	**N**	0	10	2	11	2
	%	0%	40%	8%	44%	8%
15.I encourage students to describe and interpret cultural differences before they evaluate.	**N**	0	8	8	6	3
	%	0%	32%	32%	24%	12%
16.I create a learning environment that recognizes the barriers students face in participating in intercultural interaction	**N**	0	12	3	8	2
	%	0%	48%	12%	32%	8%
17.I facilitate the learning process by tailoring and adapting messages to learners with different levels of linguistic ability and reducing the incorporation of complexities	**N**	0	10	4	7	4
	%	0%	40%	16%	28%	16%
18.I help learners learn from each other, share different perspectives, and share the cultural knowledge they bring to class	**N**	0	13	4	5	3
	%	0%	52%	16%	20%	12%

For the last items 19, 20 and 21 of the questionnaire presented below, all the responses provided by the majority of the respondents are positive. For item 19**,** 16% and 8% "agree" and "strongly agree" that they develop intercultural awareness through showing how one's own culture and cultural identity are perceived by other cultures while a minority of 12% admits that they "disagree". For item 20, positive results are noticed. 24% of the respondents "agree" and 8% of them "strongly agree" that they help learners be open to others, to accept and respect them, withhold negative judgments and be tolerant towards the others from different cultures, whereas only 8% of them "disagree". The same results are noticed in their responses to the last item 21. As shown below, 28% of the respondents "agree" and 12% of them "strongly agree" that they provide experience in the classroom through creating an intercultural environment, only 20% of them disagree. (See table 4 below)

Table 5: *Frequency* percentages for teachers' attitudes regarding intercultural teaching competencies

Items		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
19.I develop intercultural awareness through showing how one's own culture and cultural identity are perceived by other cultures, and how they influence cross-cultural interactions	N	0	3	16	4	2
	%	0%	12%	64%	16%	8%
20.I help learners be open to others, to accept and respect them, withhold negative judgments and be tolerant towards the others from different cultures	N	0	2	15	6	2
	%	0%	8%	60%	24%	8%
21.I provide experience in the classroom through creating an environment where learners can interact in cross-cultural environment	N	0	5	10	7	3
	%	0%	20%	40%	28%	12%

5. Discussion

The findings obtained from the questionnaire clearly revealed that the majority of the Moroccan university teachers hold negative attitudes towards most of the intercultural teaching competencies needed for the development of learners' intercultural competence. This implies that they lack awareness of some intercultural teaching competencies that feature intercultural teachers' profile, especially those related to skills. Whereas, they showed an awareness of the competencies needed for the development of learners' attitudes. Consequently, it is realized that the majority of teachers' competencies do not meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding teachers' intercultural competence.

Regardless of the significant number of respondents who showed an agreement with some of the intercultural teaching competencies provided through the questionnaire, there has been a large number of respondents who disagreed with the majority of the competencies. Some of the respondents reveal positive attitudes towards some of intercultural teaching competencies as they admit that they provide information about the other culture namely, perspectives, practices and products. This three **P** model (Byram, 1997) represents the areas of intercultural competence that each individual is required to be aware of. Respectively, 44% agree and 8% strongly agree that they model, encourage and help learners avoid making negative prejudices and suspend judgments while discussing cultural and social differences. This implies that teachers are aware of the importance of the development of attitudes, especially, withholding judgments.

Again, 24% agree and 12% strongly agree that they encourage students to describe, understand and interpret cultural differences in the issue under discussion before evaluating it. In light of D.I.E model that was developed by Bennett in the 70s and D.I.V.E approach as developed by **AFS Intercultural Programs, t**his competence is

highly recommended as it helps learners develop their attitudes towards the other culture by avoiding negative prejudice or making any judgment before evaluating the given situation. Also, in order to develop learners' attitudes, 40% of teachers admit that they encourage students to consider a certain issue from a variety of perspectives by asking questions and expressing a diversity of opinions in class. In the same vein, 16% agree and 8% strongly agree that they develop intercultural awareness through showing how one's own culture and cultural identity are perceived by other cultures, and how they influence cross-cultural interactions. With a total number of 32% of the teachers assert that they help learners be open to others, to accept and respect them, withhold negative judgments and be tolerant towards the others from different cultures. On the basis of the results obtained, it shows that teachers show a high awareness of the intercultural teaching competencies that are linked with "attitudes" as they express their positive attitudes towards them.

On the other hand, the results revealed that most of Moroccan university teachers participated in the present study hold negative attitudes towards intercultural teaching competence. This implies that most of the teachers seem to lack an awareness of the intercultural teaching competencies that are meant to help them develop learners' intercultural competence, especially when it comes to competencies that relate to "skills" dimension of intercultural competence.

One of the astonishing responses indicates that 32% admit that they don't act as intercultural mediators between their own culture and the other culture while only 24% do act as intercultural mediators. Basically, the ultimate objective of intercultural teaching competence is acting as intercultural speaker or intercultural mediator between students' culture and the other culture. This means that most of the teachers are not aware of intercultural teaching competencies. It is noteworthy that intercultural competence development is restricted by the development of three major dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, and skills (e.g., Byram, 1997, INCA, 2004; Deardorff, 2004; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). However, this principle is violated when the majority of teachers disagree that they develop learners' skills, attitudes and awareness of values just as much as I develop their knowledge of a particular culture or country. Add to this, the results showed that all the competencies related to intercultural skills development are whether ignored by teachers or they do lack awareness of intercultural competence development. To put it differently, most of the results showed that the majority of teachers disagree with the development of the pragmatic dimension of intercultural competence, which in turn has a great importance in the development of intercultural competence.

On the basis of the results obtained, it was found that teachers do not:

- Help learners understand how intercultural interaction takes place;
- Help learners understand how social identities are part of all interaction;
- Help learners to understand how their perceptions of other people and other people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication;

- Help learners realize the relative validity of their own frame of reference and able to select and use communication styles and behavior that fit a specific local and intercultural context;
- Act as an intercultural mediator between the two cultures;
- Design series of stimulating activities that would prompt students' critical thinking while reacting to scenarios, critical incidents and other issues related to the other culture;
- Encourage learners' discussion to draw differences and commonalities between their own culture and the other culture through a comparative analysis;
- Provide information that is true and authentic and that learners need to know about the other culture;
- Create a learning environment that recognizes the barriers students face in participating in intercultural interaction;
- Help learners learn from each other, share different perspectives, and share the wealth of cultural knowledge they bring to class.

All of the above competencies form an intercultural profile. This profile enables teachers to act as intercultural speakers in the classroom and, importantly, develop learners' intercultural competence. In a nutshell, as a response to the major research question of the present study that seeks to answer the extent to which teachers' competencies meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding teachers' intercultural competence/profile, it is concluded that the majority of Moroccan university teachers' competencies do not meet the specification formulated in the literature regarding intercultural teaching competence. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that Moroccan university teachers seem to lack the intercultural profile that would enable them function and act appropriately and effectively in order to prepare global citizens and learners who can live in this diverse world and function effectively in different intercultural encounters.

6. Conclusion

Learners' intercultural competence cannot be developed without an appropriate intervention and guidance on the part of the teacher who represents a central element in the intercultural learning process. The present study has attempted to explore the extent to which the teachers' competencies and skills meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding intercultural teaching competence. Surprisingly, teachers did not demonstrate good knowledge of competencies they need for the development of students' intercultural competence. The results clearly revealed that a significant number of university teachers have negative attitudes towards intercultural teaching competence, which implies that they lack awareness of intercultural teaching competencies that have the potential to enable teachers develop learners' intercultural competence. The findings ultimately indicated that teachers' intercultural competencies do not meet the specifications formulated in the literature regarding intercultural teaching competence. In this vein, the present study provides several implications for decision makers and teachers. In light of the results obtained, Moroccan university teachers should reconsider their philosophy of

teaching regarding culture and, more precisely, their role in developing learners' intercultural competence. Therefore, teachers should stop a while and be wise and ask the following questions to reflect on how they can help students develop their intercultural competence (see Deardorff, 2009):

- How can I specifically incorporate students' cultural perspectives into the course?
- How can I allow space for students to reflect on their own intercultural competence development?
- What role can I play in mentoring students in this development?
- How can I help students demonstrate respect (in culturally appropriate ways) and openness to other ways of viewing the world?
- How can I move beyond 'objective culture' in the classroom to pushing students to learn more about 'subjective culture' which impacts on the ways in which students actually interact with others?
- Most important of all, How can I help students develop an 'intercultural lens' through which to view the world?

Now that we accept that intercultural competence is an essential component of the teacher's competence profile, it is necessary, for decision makers, to offer professional trainings to university teachers regarding intercultural learning. These trainings should develop teachers' intercultural competence mainly, attitudes, knowledge and skills in order to be interculturally competent and, more importantly, introduce teachers to intercultural teaching methodology used to develop EFL learners' intercultural competence. This would definitely equip teachers with appropriate intercultural teaching tools and competencies for better classroom practices regarding intercultural education. Therefore, on the basis of the literature, Miculescu and Bazgan (2017) synthesize that an intercultural teacher should be well trained from the scientific point of view. This implies that teachers should own a functional level of development of general culture and of a specialty culture. The teacher should also be high level trained as methodologist for teaching practices and for the assessment process. Last and foremost, he/she should be trained to be a model, a mentor and a facilitator of human and intercultural relations.

References
AFS Intercultural Programs. (2016). Tools to suspend judgment. Retrieved from https://woca.afs.org/education/p/icl-for-afs-and-friends

Bennett, M. J. (1997). How not to be a fluent fool: understanding the cultural dimensions of language. In A. E. Fantini, & J. C. Richards (Eds.). *New ways in teaching   culture. new ways in TESOL series II: innovative classroom techniques* (pp. 16–21). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Bennett, M.J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *10*(2), 179-95.

Bodrič, R., & Stojičić, V. (2013). Multicultural encounters in EFL classrooms. *Linguistics and Literature*, *11*(1). 35- 46.

Breka, O., & Petravić, A. (2015). Foreign language teachers and the intercultural dimension in primary education. *Croatian Journal of Education, 17*(2), 27-41.

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

Byram, M. (2009). Intercultural speaker and the pedagogy of foreign language education. Deardorff , D. K. (Ed.). *The sage handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 321-332). USA: SAGE Publications.

Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Strakey, H. (2002). *Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching: A practical introduction for teachers.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Corbett, J. (2003). *An intercultural approach to English language teaching.* Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Deardorff, D. K. (2004). *The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a students' outcome of internationalization at institutions of higher education in the United States* (Doctoral dissertation). North Carolina State University, USA.

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

Deardorff, D. K. (2009). *The sage handbook of intercultural competence*. USA: SAGE publications.

Dimitrov, N., Dawson, D. L., Olsen, K. C., & Meadows, K. N. (2014). Developing the intercultural competence of graduate students. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 44*(3), 86-103

Fantini, A., & Tirmizi, A. (2006). *Exploring and assessing intercultural competence*. Brattleboro, VT: Federation EIL. Retrieved from http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/worldlearning_publications/1

Howard-Hamilton, M. F., Richardson, B. J., & Shuford, B. (1998). Promoting multicultural education: A holistic approach. *College Student Affairs Journal, 18,* 5–17

Huber, J., & Reynolds, C. (Eds.). (2014). *Developing intercultural competence through education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Jackson, J. (2012). *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Janku, M. (2017). The teacher, as a cultural mediator between two languages. *Austrian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 1*(2), 8-13.

Kačkere, A., Lázár, I., & Matei, G.S. (2007). Planning intercultural communication workshop. In Lázár, I., Huber-Kriegler, M., Lussier, D., Matei, G.S., & Peck, C. (Eds), *Developing and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (pp. 11-18). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Lázár, I., Huber-Kriegier, M., Lussier, D., Mtei, G. S., & Peck, C. (Eds.). (2007). *Developing and assessing intercultural communicative competence: A guide for language teachers and teacher educators*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Miculescu, R. M., & Bazgan, M (2017). Intercultural competence as a component of the teachers' competence profile. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala, 9*(3), 17-41.

Pajak-Wazna, E. (2013). Teachers' intercultural competence and teacher education: A case of Poland. *European Scientific Journal, 1*(2), 318–322. Retrieved from http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/1343

Spitzberg, B. H & Changnon, G. (2009), Conceptualizing intercultural competence. In Deardorff (Ed.*), The sage handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 2-52). USA: SAGE Publications.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (*2013*). *Intercultural competences*: *Conceptual and operational framework.* Paris, France: *UNESCO.*