Assessing Intercultural Competence: The Case of EFL Pre-Service Teachers in The Mexican Context

Elizabeth Margarita Hernández-López[1] [iD], **Patricia Núñez-Mercado[2]** [iD], **Lilia Sulema Bórquez-Morales[3]** [iD]

Corresponding Author:

Lilia Sulema Bórquez-Morales

Plantel Adolfo Lopez Mateos, Universidad del Estado de México, Mexico.
Email: liliaborquez.morales @gmail.com

Abstract: This research explores the intercultural competence of Mexican pre-service English language teachers, focusing on the dimensions of attitude, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Using a comprehensive model of intercultural competence as a theoretical framework, the study adapted a self-report questionnaire to assess these dimensions within a non-multicultural Mexican context. Data were collected from a sample of 137 pre-service teachers. The results indicate that among the five dimensions, attitude emerged as the most developed, while knowledge was the least developed. Although the comparative analysis did not reveal significant differences, it highlights relevant issues regarding gender and language proficiency that warrant further exploration. Additionally, the study examines the impact of studying abroad—a variable found to be significant but not essential for developing intercultural competence. This study contributes to the limited body of research on intercultural competence in Mexico, particularly within the context of English language teaching. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to enhance pre-service teachers' intercultural knowledge, which is crucial for their professional development and effective teaching in increasingly diverse classrooms. Future research should investigate the long-term impact of such interventions on teachers' intercultural competence.

1. Introduction

Intercultural Competence (IC) has become an increasingly important asset as people worldwide engage more frequently in intercultural relations in their work, education, or social life (Cancino & Nuñez, 2023; Guillén-Yparrea & Ramírez-Montoya, 2023). In this vein, Higher Education (HE) institutions are encouraged to prepare individuals not only to meet the demands of the globalised workforce (Öztürk & Ekşi, 2022) but also to understand and adopt different perspectives of the world to promote a culture of peace (2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean [2030 Agenda], n.d.). Accordingly, teacher education should focus on preparing interculturally competent experts who serve as intermediaries in multicultural classrooms (Echcharfy, 2022).

Intercultural competence is understood as the effective and appropriate behaviour and communication that a person demonstrates in culturally diverse situations and contexts including not only knowledge but also skills and attitudes (Deardorff, 2006). Complementing this conceptualization, and for a more holistic understanding of IC, Fantini (2007) also considers awareness a central dimension. Likewise, this notion advocates for understanding the differences in communication norms among the actors involved (Hismanoglu, 2011). A deeper realization is that interculturalism, as opposed to the analogy of multiculturalism as a salad bowl, is a cultural melting pot aimed at fostering dialogue among individuals from different cultures to support peaceful coexistence (Echcharfy, 2022).

With this in mind, IC is considered essential for creating healthy relationships and preventing conflicts between different cultures (Hoa & Viên, 2018). In this sense, Pinto (2018) argues that developing IC in university students, closely associated with the internationalisation of HE, is "crucial for changing prejudiced attitudes, preparing students to live in a global world and empowering them professionally" (p.137). Therefore, it is a transversal competence that must be developed in HE regardless of the discipline (Vromans et al., 2023). It is particularly important in the field of language education (Bickley et al., 2014) since language teachers serve as cultural managers (Suryani et al., 2020) through whom the culture of the language being taught is spread.

This study aims to explore whether, prior to completing their degree, students from a Bachelor's Degree program in English Foreign Language Teaching, enrolled in diffe-

---

[1] Departamento de Lenguas Modernas,Universidad de Guadalajara, México.
[2] Facultad de Idiomas, Universidad Veracruzana, México.
[3] Plantel Adolfo Lopez Mateos, Universidad del Estado de México, Mexico.

-rent Mexican public universities, developed their IC as part of their training as English teachers. If so, to what extent do they develop each of the dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills, or awareness?

2. Literature review

2.1. Conceptualization

Attributed to its dynamic nature (Liddicoat, 2002), Intercultural Competence (IC) is a concept that has undergone continuous changes over the last two decades. Correspondingly, scholars' understanding of it has been equally fluctuating, leading to a variety of definitions, components, and assessment tools that can be considered inconsistent, unclear, and murky (Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013; Griffith et al., 2016; Sabet & Chapman, 2023). Thus, the complexity of the construct has resulted in a myriad of different terms and definitions. Among the most common, Fantini (2009) suggests communicative competence, cross-cultural adaptation, cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural competence, and cultural or intercultural sensitivity, all of which are sometimes used interchangeably. From the standpoint that cross-cultural implies a comparison and contrast between cultures, while intercultural denotes "interactions between people from different cultures" (Sabet & Chapman, 2023, p.2), and for consistency purposes, this paper will draw on the concept of Intercultural Competence (IC).

The concept of IC has fluctuated since Deardorff (2006), a forerunner in research in the field, defined it as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes" (p.247). For Sabet and Chapman (2023), this conceptualisation is quite limiting, focusing only on the linguistic domain of IC and, as such, is more apt for use by transnational corporations. A more comprehensive concept is that of Fantini (2009) in the educational context, which outlines IC as "complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p.458). Nevertheless, Sabet and Chapman (2023) still consider it a narrow definition, as a holistic conceptualisation should not only include the individual and the context but also incorporate the affective, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions.

In this sense, Spitzberg and Changnon's (2009) IC conceptualisation meets this criterion, defining IC as "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world" (p.7). In this ongoing effort to reach a consensual and comprehensive definition, Deardorff (2020) has advanced her initial definition, claiming that intercultural competencies are "*the competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) needed to improve human interactions across difference, whether within a society (difference due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders*" (p.70). This definition seems more sensitive, nuanced, and inclusive of the differences in communication that might occur even within the same borders, responding to differentiating characteristics. As such, this study will embrace the latter definition for its focus and objectives.

2.2. IC In Today's Globalised World

In response to the pressing need to act in favour of a sustainable, socially just, and prosperous world, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) coined and promulgated, since 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Guillén-Yparrea & Ramírez-Montoya, 2023). Specifically, Goal 4.7 intends that by 2030, students will have gained, through education for sustainable development, the knowledge and skills necessary to advance a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, and a wider appreciation of cultural diversity (2030 Agenda, n.d.). To this end, recent literature (Echcharfy, 2019) has recognised intercultural learning as a crucial integrated approach in foreign language education to promote openness, acceptance, and appreciation of different cultural beliefs, values, and customs, to encourage a culture of peace through mutual respect and understanding. Thus, in this process of internationalisation, IC has been deemed a core ingredient (Sabet & Chapman, 2023) for the development of responsible global citizens in the present day (Hernández López, 2023; Hoa & Viên, 2018).

On this basis, two related yet distinct views heighten the relevance of the development of IC. On the one hand, a more market-oriented view suggests that IC is a crucial element for becoming a productive member of today's modern world (Öztürk & Ekşi, 2022). On the other hand, a more humanistic stance considers that "relationships between different cultural and linguistic groups are at the heart of diplomacy" (Byram, 1997, p.1). These two premises aim to enable graduates to perform effectively in the 21st-century global workforce and to relate harmoniously across cultures in today's hyperconnected world. In alignment with these views, recognising IC as a valuable asset for this purpose, HE institutions should focus on developing IC in their students, including those who have not engaged in exchange or study-abroad experiences (Griffith et al., 2016; Vromans et al., 2023).

In line with the latter perspective, although IC literature has wide applicability to international students, administrators, and teaching staff in the host culture, classrooms in HE local contexts have changed, demonstrating a more culturally and linguistically diverse composition of students. This, in turn, has warranted teachers' preparation to manage multicultural classrooms to "behave as intercultural teachers who favour and respect interaction

with all students without cultural bias" while enabling them to communicate effectively with speakers from different cultural backgrounds (Boudouaia et al., 2022, p.3). Accordingly, this research focuses on pre-graduate students in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, enrolled in different public universities in Mexico, and seeks to unveil the extent to which they develop their IC as part of their English teacher training (Sabet & Chapman, 2023).

2.3. IC And Foreign Language Teaching

Building on the understanding that there is an intrinsic relationship between learning a foreign language and the culture surrounding it for effective intercultural performance (Sevimel-Sahin, 2020; Suryani et al., 2020), Byram (1997) claims that "teaching for linguistic competence cannot be separated from teaching for intercultural competence" (p.22). Based on this, language and culture significantly influence the efficiency of communication, as it is through language that our understanding of the world is reflected. Thus, linguistic competence alone is insufficient for appropriate communication, and culture learning should be integrated into language learning and teaching (Liddicoat, 2002; Öztürk & Ekşi, 2022).

Despite this recognition, one of the criticisms of language teacher training programmes is that they have regularly focused on grammar methods and functions when it comes to communication. This indicates a lack of awareness about the importance of integrating the intercultural component in language classrooms, which is essential for advancing interaction in multicultural settings (Cancino & Nuñez, 2023). This approach hinders students from becoming interculturally competent (Echcharfy, 2022). Under this rationale, if the ultimate goal is to transform language learners into intercultural speakers who are aware of their own and other cultures and can engage in interactions with people from different cultures and backgrounds "in a relationship of equality" (Öztürk & Ekşi, 2022, p.493), the focus should extend beyond teaching linguistic features such as grammar, lexis, phonetics, and phonology to also address the intercultural domain (Sevimel-Sahin, 2020).

This approach is increasingly necessary as students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are becoming more present in language classrooms (Byram, 1997; Cancino & Nuñez, 2023). Consequently, there are implications for language teacher education departments on two fronts: first, they should promote awareness of the relevance of IC (Sevimel-Sahin, 2020); second, they should equip their trainees with the necessary tools to become not only linguistically but also interculturally competent educators who are aware of the diversity likely to be encountered in language classrooms (Echcharfy, 2019; Öztürk & Ekşi, 2022).

2.4. IC And Pre-Service English Language Teachers

Given the increased need to train language teachers to become not only linguistic experts but also intercultural mediators of the target language (Boudouaia et al., 2022; Echcharfy, 2019; Esteban-Núñez, 2021), there has been heightened interest in documenting pre-service English teachers' IC worldwide. Correspondingly, learning to communicate in English in non-English-speaking developing countries has become a growing demand (Suryani et al., 2020; Boudouaia et al., 2022). Pre-service English teachers' IC in such contexts has recently emerged as a relevant research issue, sparking reflection on the variety of models and approaches used for this purpose (Richter et al., 2023).

In the Turkish context, Sevimel-Sahin's (2020) quantitative study examined the IC levels of 238 undergraduate English language teaching students and analysed whether their IC development changed over four years of study. Using the Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire (ICCQ) by Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013), which measures knowledge, skills, and attitudes, Sevimel-Sahin (2020) concluded that the ELT program contributed to the participants' IC development by enhancing their cultural awareness and providing skills for more effective communication, despite the absence of explicit IC training (knowledge) during their studies.

In Morocco, responding to the strategic vision 2015–2030 to train global citizens for contemporary world demands, Echcharfy (2022) used Byram's (1997) IC Model to research 90 Moroccan EFL pre-service teachers and explore their intercultural awareness. The study revealed inconsistencies: while participants displayed positive attitudes—such as embracing otherness, curiosity, respect, and avoiding stereotypes—they lacked the skills essential for mediating differences and navigating intercultural interactions successfully. Furthermore, their knowledge was limited, indicating a superficial understanding of culture.

In the Chinese context, Lei (2021) gathered data from 186 pre-service teachers to measure their IC levels and assess differences based on gender or family origin using the Intercultural Communication Competence Self-Rating Scale (ICCSRS) by Zhong et al. (2013). Attitude emerged as the highest-scoring dimension, while linguistic competence ranked the lowest. Overall, the participants displayed a modest level of IC, with females demonstrating higher IC levels than males, and no significant differences between urban and rural participants. Based on the participants' low IC levels, Lei (2021) emphasised the need for greater focus on IC enhancement to enable pre-service teachers to communicate interculturally.

In Latin America, recent research has focused on Colombia's higher education system (see Gómez Rodríguez, 2012; Olaya & Gómez Rodríguez, 2013; Ramos Holguín, 2013; Rico Troncoso, 2012). Notably, using Byram's (1997) IC Model, Esteban-Núñez's (2021) qualitative case study examined how five female pre-service English teachers defined and characterized IC. Their understanding was primarily limited to the knowledge savoir, with a superficial grasp of a culture centred on surface-level cultural elements. Esteban-Núñez (2021) concluded that

language programmes should provide opportunities that go beyond fostering the ideal learner-speaker, promoting deeper and more meaningful IC development.

3. Theoretical framework

Although there is no consensus on definitions and components, various instruments have been designed to assess students' IC. Nevertheless, Byram's (1997) IC model has been recognized as a prominent one in language education, acknowledging the unbreakable link between culture and foreign language teaching (Öztürk & Ekşi, 2022). For Byram (1997), the value does not rest on equipping students with linguistic competence for communication. Rather, it is about understanding how foreign language acquisition embraces the cultural practices and beliefs of the target language. Conceding that successful human interaction is not dependent on an operational exchange of information but on being able to create and maintain relationships, Byram (1997) developed his Model of IC, which includes five dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. These are thoroughly explained as follows.

Attitude refers to how individuals perceive and respond to members of different cultural groups due to differences in values, beliefs, and behaviours. Prejudice and stereotypes play an influential role in how these attitudes are portrayed, and to move away from premature judgments and ethnocentric views, attitudes like openness and curiosity are encouraged (Deardorff, 2006; Byram, 1997). Recognizing a relationship of interdependence between this and the other dimensions, Deardorff (2006) acknowledges that attitude is key for the development of others. Moreover, the relationship between attitude and knowledge is not necessarily linear, implying that more knowledge does not automatically create positive attitudes (Byram, 1997).

The **knowledge** domain focuses on the knowledge an individual possesses concerning their own and other cultures to interpret an intercultural encounter. This knowledge is thought to be mainly acquired through formal education, though some of it might be unconscious and taken for granted and influenced by national culture and identity (Byram, 1997). This unconscious knowledge can only be brought to the surface when compared with a different system of beliefs, meanings, and behaviours. This is possible through increased contact with members of other cultures, especially since geographical distance is no longer a constraint for intercultural interactions.

Skills represent the next stage in knowing how to respond to specific intercultural situations. Byram (1997) divides this dimension into skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction. The former set of skills involves using knowledge, whether consciously or unconsciously acquired, to interpret and manage an intercultural encounter without necessarily interacting directly with a speaker. The latter implies using new knowledge to understand cultural phenomena and appropriately implementing attitudes, knowledge, and skills in real-time intercultural social interaction.

Lastly, **critical cultural awareness** is the dimension in which the learner critically engages with the social, cultural, and political components of the different intercultural contexts in which they interact. Byram (1997) claims that this involvement should go beyond a superficial level, and a deeper perspective ought to be sought through mediation, negotiation, and acceptance of different cultural frameworks.

As seen in the literature review, this model has been widely used and tested for validity in research related to foreign language teaching in non-native English-speaking contexts for the assessment of students' IC. Such elements are in direct alignment with the purposes of this study, and hence this is the theoretical framework that will assist the interpretation of findings.

4. Research Methodology

This study seeks to answer the pivotal research question: To what extent is intercultural competence developed in pre-service Mexican English teachers during their training as language instructors? To address this question, a quantitative research design employing a survey was adopted. The primary aim was to assess intercultural competence among pre-service English language teachers within the non-native English-speaking context of Mexico. A total of 137 pre-service teachers from English Language Teaching (ELT) B.A. programmes at 11 different Mexican public universities participated in this study. Aiming for a maximum variation strategy, the selected settings included universities located in various parts of the country, including the northern and southern borders as well as the central region, to capture varying degrees of exposure to intercultural interaction. Furthermore, the participants were in their final year of study, belonged to different proficiency levels, and had varying experiences with studying abroad.

4.1. Instrument Construction

The survey employed in this research was adapted from Fantini's (2007) comprehensive self-report questionnaire to measure participants' levels of intercultural competence. For the adaptation process, each researcher independently reviewed the original survey items for relevance and suitability in the Mexican context. This resulted in consensual removal and paraphrasing of some items for appropriateness. After several rounds of review and discussion, the final survey, consisting of multiple sections, was agreed upon.

The first section collected demographic information, including participants' age, gender, cultural background, and previous intercultural experiences. Subsequent sections contained 63 items specifically designed to measure each of the following four dimensions of intercultural competence:

- **Attitude**: Individuals' willingness and openness towards engaging with different cultures.

- **Knowledge**: Cognitive aspects of intercultural competence.

- **Skills**: Practical abilities in interacting effectively with people from different cultures.

- **Awareness**: The extent to which individuals identify and interpret their own and others' cultural principles, perspectives, and behaviours.

Recognizing the importance of self-report measures in capturing the psychological processes that drive human learning, including emotions, motivation, strategy use, and metacognition (Pekrun, 2020), this direct self-report survey was considered the most suitable instrument for assessing intercultural competence, aiming to understand an individual's current level of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and abilities.

4.2. Data Collection And Analysis

The survey was distributed to pre-service English language teachers from undergraduate ELT programmes at several universities, using convenience sampling in diverse geographical locations across Mexico to ensure a representative sample of future ELT educators. The survey was administered electronically, and responses were collected over a specified period. Upon closing the survey, the data file was downloaded for further processing.

The data cleaning process involved several steps. First, it was ensured that all the gathered information belonged to fourth-year students. Second, redundant questions were eliminated. Third, consistency between responses to questions about studying abroad and the purpose of their studies was thoroughly checked. The responses were then organized according to the survey items' order. Subsequently, variables were re-coded into numeric values for descriptive statistics, with Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. Finally, descriptive statistics and comparative means analyses were conducted using SPSS, focusing on independent variables such as gender, study-abroad experience, and language proficiency level.

The demographic data provided context for interpreting the extent of the participants' intercultural exposure and confirmed that the context of the study differed significantly from Fantini's (2007) multicultural context: the participants in this study had mostly not lived or studied abroad. Instead, they were learning or perfecting the English language, and possibly its culture, within their local country—Mexico. Thus, considering the satisfactory reliability testing and thoroughness of Fantini's (2007) survey design, but recognizing its paucity of a solid theoretical foundation (which may explain why this instrument has not been widely used to assess intercultural competence), Byram's (1997) well-reputed and validated Model of Intercultural Competence, as explained in the literature review, was used to interpret the results.

Overall, Fantini's survey and Byram's theoretical model shared the same four dimensions: knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness. Nevertheless, in Byram's (1997) model, **awareness** is referred to as *critical cultural awareness*, and the **skills** dimension is divided into *Interpreting and Relating* (henceforth *Interpreting*) and *Discovery and Interaction* (henceforth *Discovery*) skills. Based on this, the data collected were categorized into five dimensions:

- **Awareness** (22 items, α = 0.927)

- **Attitude** (18 items, α = 0.932)

- **Discovery Skills** (9 items, α = 0.869)

- **Interpreting Skills** (12 items, α = 0.913)

- **Knowledge** (22 items, α = 0.942)

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicate highly to very highly reliable measures of internal consistency (Cohen et al., 2013).

Comparing means is a crucial statistical method used to explore differences across various groups within a population (Field, 2024). It provides insights into whether certain characteristics or behaviours significantly vary among different categories. For this study, a linear statistical model (ANOVA) with Tukey's post-hoc test for mean comparisons ($p < .05$) was utilized. This approach allowed for a rigorous examination of the differences between groups across the five dimensions of intercultural competence. The dependent variables (awareness, attitude, knowledge, discovery skills, and interpreting skills) were analyzed against the independent variables to identify any significant differences, which were observed in gender, language proficiency, and study-abroad experience. Additionally, a further analysis comparing means was conducted with the top and least 10 items in the survey.

4.3. Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval from the largest university participating in the study and adhered to the principles, policies, and guidelines for good research outlined by its Research Ethics Committee. Researchers contacted academics involved in ELT undergraduate programmes across various Mexican universities via email, informing them about the research and requesting their collaboration.

Once positive responses were obtained, the researchers did not have direct contact with the participants, as access was granted through gatekeepers at each university. Participants were asked to provide written consent and were informed about the study's purpose, why they had been chosen, and the implications of their participation (Cohen et al., 2013). Anonymity was assured by deleting the email column during data cleaning, ensuring participants' identities could not be traced (Creswell, 2014).

5. Results and discussion

Survey results regarding demographics indicate a predominantly Mexican sample population, with 97.1% of participants identifying as Mexican, 2.2% as Mexican American, and only 0.7% as American. Gender distribution reveals a significant majority of females, comprising 73% of the sample, while males representing 24.1%, and 2.9% preferred not to disclose their gender. Regarding age, data indicate that the largest concentration, 57.7%, consists of adults in their early twenties, followed by 31.4% aged between 18–21 years, 8.8% aged between 26–30, and only 2.2% aged 31 or older.

Concerning English language proficiency, 48.2% of participants identified as having advanced proficiency, sufficient to satisfy most work requirements and communicate effectively on concrete topics. Intermediate proficiency, enabling respondents to meet some survival needs and limited social demands, accounted for 32.1%. Participants with superior proficiency, who can use the language accurately and effectively in most formal and informal situations, made up 17.5% of the sample, while 2.2% were native speakers of English. This distribution highlights a predominance of advanced and intermediate English proficiency among the participants, with fewer individuals at the superior level or native proficiency.

5.1. Culture Definition

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to select one of three definitions of culture that best resonated with their understanding of the concept. This was intended to gauge their interpretation of culture and how it might influence their intercultural relations.

The first definition, by Fernández-Benavides and Castillo-Palacios (2023), stated: *"Culture includes some elements—ideas, perspectives, attitudes, meanings, symbols, practices, behaviours, and conducts—shared by communities within specific chronological, geographical, and political contexts"* (p.192). The second definition, coined by Spencer-Oatey (2012), read: *"Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures, and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour"* (p.2). The third definition, by Liddicoat and Scarino (2013, as cited in Fernández-Benavides & Castillo-Palacios, 2023), defined culture as: *"Culture is the individual's reference framework to interpret and respond to social/cultural actions which determine people's relationships"* (p.193).

The following table compares the means and standard deviations for the five dimensions of intercultural competence—Awareness, Attitude, Knowledge, Interpreting Skills (ISKILL), and Discovery Skills (DSKILL)—across these definitions of culture.

Table 1: Comparison across the IC dimensions and three definitions of culture.

Intercultural Awareness Dimensions	Culture Definitions					
	Definition 1 (N=66)		Definition 2 (N=62)		Definition 3 (N=9)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Awareness	4.190	0.5280	4.156	0.4121	4.323	0.2605
Attitude	4.389	0.4775	4.461	0.4255	4.617	0.3291
Knowledge	3.483	0.6018	3.456	0.5768	3.565	0.7023
DSkill	3.910	0.5840	3.887	0.5445	3.960	0.6009
ISkill	3.643	0.6600	3.640	0.6230	3.880	0.8040

Source: Calculated by the author

Data in Table 1 indicates a nuanced understanding of intercultural competence across different definitions of culture. Fernández-Benavides and Castillo-Palacios' (2023) definition yields relatively high mean scores for Attitude (4.389) and Awareness (4.190), suggesting a strong recognition of and positive disposition towards these two intercultural dimensions. However, the Knowledge dimension has a lower mean (3.483), implying a less robust grasp of cultural knowledge among participants.

Spencer-Oatey's (2012) definition shows slightly higher means for Attitude (4.461) and Awareness (4.156) but similar trends with lower Knowledge (3.456) scores. The consistency in Attitude scores across both definitions points to a generally favourable attitude towards cultural diversity. The slightly lower standard deviation indicates a more uniform agreement among participants regarding these aspects.

Liddicoat and Scarino's (2013) definition yields the highest mean scores for Awareness (4.323) and Attitude (4.617) among the three definitions, indicating participants' openness and awareness of the critical engagement needed to understand a culture. The higher scores in DSKILL (3.960) and ISKILL (3.880) also indicate better-perceived abilities to interpret, discover, and interact amid cultural differences, aligning with the relational focus of this dimension.

These results suggest that pre-service teachers have developed a relatively shallow and static definition of IC in general, rather than an evolving and dynamic one, as Liddicoat (2002) suggests it should be. Participants also seem to hold a more individual view of IC rather than a collective one, which is particularly interesting given that Mexican culture has been widely identified as collectivist (Hofstede Insights, 2024; Sawicki & Chapa, 2018). This shallow, static perception of the IC concept can be linked, as previous studies have shown, to a basic understanding of culture rooted in a more stereotypical or traditional view of the concept (Esteban-Núñez, 2021). This limited understanding may inhibit teachers in training from fully becoming intercultural mediators in their language classrooms.

Overall, the data underscores the importance of considering different conceptualizations of culture for an appropriate assessment of intercultural competence. The higher scores for Attitude and Awareness across all definitions reflect a generally positive disposition toward intercultural relations and an appreciation of diverse cultural outlooks among participants. However, the relatively lower Knowledge scores across definitions suggest there is room for improvement in fostering an in-depth cultural understanding—one that goes beyond a superficial level. This comprehensive analysis highlights the strengths and areas for growth in intercultural competence, providing valuable insights for educational interventions aimed at fostering these skills in diverse contexts.

5.2. Gender

Gender has not been shown to have a substantial effect on self-reported intercultural competence or sensitivity in Higher Education students in general (Gutiérrez-Santiuste & Ritacco-Real, 2024), nor in the ELT field specifically (Genç & Boynukara, 2017; Ghaemi & Soltani, 2023; Idris, 2021). In this study, male participants reported higher scores for the awareness dimension (Male [M = 4.226] vs. Female [M = 4.176]), as well as for knowledge (Male [M = 3.672] vs. Female [M = 3.408]) and skills, both discovery (Male [M = 4.020] vs. Female [M = 3.711]) and interpreting (Male [M = 3.897] vs. Female [M = 3.575]). However, female participants scored higher for the attitude dimension (Male [M = 4.396] vs. Female [M = 4.457]).

These findings differ from those reported in the Chinese context, where female pre-service teachers generally exhibited higher levels of intercultural competence (Lei, 2021). However, they are similar to the results from Turkish pre-service EFL teachers, where female participants also scored higher for attitudes (Gün, 2023). Interestingly, participants who preferred not to disclose their gender reported moderate scores across all dimensions, but there was slightly higher variability in their perception of the interpreting skills dimension compared to discovery skills. This contrasts with both female and male participants, for whom the discovery skills dimension was moderately higher. These results suggest further research is needed to explore the influence of gender on pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of their intercultural competence development.

5.3. Language Proficiency

Participants with superior language proficiency demonstrated significantly higher awareness levels compared to those with intermediate and advanced proficiency (Intermediate [M = 3.990] vs. Superior [M = 4.471], [SEM = 0.110, $p = 0.000$]; Advanced [M = 4.196] vs. Superior [M = 4.471], [SEM = 0.104, $p = 0.045$]). Superior proficiency participants also exhibited significantly better attitudes toward intercultural engagement compared to those with intermediate proficiency (Intermediate [M = 4.347] vs. Superior [M = 4.643], [SEM = 0.111, $p = 0.044$]).

Knowledge scores were significantly higher for participants with superior language proficiency compared to those with intermediate proficiency (Intermediate [M = 3.315] vs. Superior [M = 3.757], [SEM = 0.146, $p = 0.016$]). Discovery skills were notably higher in both the superior and advanced proficiency groups compared to the intermediate group (Intermediate [M = 3.631] vs. Advanced [M = 3.971], [SEM = 0.103, $p = 0.007$]; Intermediate [M = 3.631] vs. Superior [M = 4.185], [SEM = 0.134, $p = 0.000$]). Finally, superior proficiency participants exhibited significantly better interpreting skills than those with intermediate proficiency (Intermediate [M = 3.414] vs. Superior [M = 3.947], [SEM = 0.160, $p = 0.006$]).

Proficiency in a foreign or second language is undeniably a key element of intercultural competence. A high level of proficiency enhances its development, while even a minimal lack of proficiency can constrain worldview and, consequently, intercultural competence (Fantini, 2009). The findings of this study confirm this perspective, as increased proficiency levels correlated with higher mean scores across all dimensions. Participants reporting superior and native proficiency generally had higher scores compared to those with intermediate or advanced proficiency.

However, native speakers only reported higher values for the knowledge dimension compared to superior proficiency participants. This may reflect the widely supported belief that an ethnocentric view can negatively affect intercultural competence development (Deardorff, 2009). It is possible that the native English speakers in this study hold a more ethnocentric worldview, influenced by the advantages of speaking a globally dominant language. This could result in a lack of interest in or dismissal of less prominent cultures and different mindsets, hindering their development in the other dimensions of intercultural competence (awareness, attitude, discovery skills, and interpreting skills).

5.4. Study Abroad

While detailed results from the ANOVA analysis indicate that many comparisons did not show significant differences, the mean differences regarding other independent variables—for instance, whether participants had studied abroad ($n = 108$ with no study-abroad experience vs. $n = 29$ with study-abroad experience)—were examined to explore the possible impact of this experience on the development of their intercultural competence:

Table 2: IC dimensions and study abroad

| Intercultural Competence Dimensions | Study Abroad | | | |
| | NO | | YES | |
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Awareness	4.141	0.4706	4.341	0.4066
Attitude	4.376	0.4580	4.662	0.3215
DSkill	3.818	0.5518	4.218	0.5008
ISkill	3.574	0.6391	3.971	0.6112

Source: Calculated by the author

Studying abroad has consistently been reported to positively impact the development of intercultural competence (Arfiandhani & Sudaya, 2020; Medina & Kiefel, 2021; Saricoban & Oz, 2014; Taşdemir & Gümüşok, 2022). In the present study, the dimension analysis suggests that engaging in a study-abroad program does enhance intercultural competence, confirming the value of international experiences in teacher education programmes for fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of intercultural dynamics. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the scores of participants who had not studied abroad were not significantly lower than those of participants who had. Furthermore, both groups—those with and without study-abroad experience—scored higher in the awareness and attitude dimensions compared to the knowledge and skills dimensions.

Supporting this finding, Syahrin et al. (2023) observed that after participating in an intercultural virtual exchange programmes, pre-service education students from Dhofar University in Oman began to develop attitudes such as openness, empathy, a broader worldview, and greater self-awareness. This indicates that pre-service EFL teachers can, to some extent, develop intercultural awareness and a positive attitude towards different cultures even without the benefit of studying abroad.

According to Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2014), cultural content programmes can successfully increase intercultural competence in a classroom context. In this study, participants who had taken more culture-focused courses reported higher scores across all dimensions; however, the differences compared to those with fewer courses were not significant. Intercultural learning activities, which are common in higher education and EFL teacher education programmes, may have contributed to the relatively high scores among participants without study-abroad experience. Nonetheless, this study did not specifically investigate such activities beyond culture-focused courses, leaving this as an area for further research.

5.5. Survey's Top 10 Items

The results indicate a strong interest and willingness among participants to engage with and learn from other cultures. The highest mean score was for the statement *"I am interested in travelling"* (M = 4.773, SD = 0.542), reflecting a keen interest in exploring new places. Following closely were statements such as *"I am willing to learn from other specific cultures"* (M = 4.664, SD = 0.532) and *"I am willing to extend a sense of empathy to those oppressed because of their sociocultural status"* (M = 4.540, SD = 0.618), highlighting participants' openness to cultural learning and empathy towards social issues.

Participants also demonstrated strong awareness and engagement with cultural differences. High-scoring items included *"I am aware of the differences across languages and cultures"* (M = 4.518, SD = 0.570) and *"I am willing to engage with others and to try to understand differences in their behaviour, values, and attitude"* (M = 4.518, SD = 0.595). Additionally, a willingness to be flexible and adaptive in intercultural communication was reflected in *"I am willing to be flexible in communicating and interacting with those who are linguistically and culturally different"* (M = 4.496, SD = 0.631). Participants also recognised the impact of stereotypes and prejudices, as shown in *"I am aware of how interpretations and evaluations can lead to stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination"* (M = 4.467, SD = 0.653).

Moreover, participants expressed motivation to seek more opportunities for intercultural interaction (*"I am willing to look for more opportunities to interact with members of specific other cultures,"* M = 4.459, SD = 0.717)

and to adapt to different social roles (*"I am willing to take on various roles as appropriate to different contexts,"* M = 4.459, SD = 0.594). Lastly, *"I am interested in particular aspects of a specific other culture"* (M = 4.445, SD = 0.640) indicated a deep-seated curiosity and respect for cultural diversity.

Interestingly, only two of the items with the highest means across the whole sample belonged to the awareness dimension, while the remaining eight items fell within the attitude dimension. The top scores primarily reflected participants' interest in travelling and their willingness to learn about various aspects of other cultures, such as language, behaviour, values, and attitudes, thereby engaging with them empathetically.

The two high-scoring awareness items support these results in the attitude dimension. Participants reported being aware of differences across languages and cultures and recognised how interpretations and evaluations could lead to stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination. This awareness partially explains their willingness to learn and their ability to communicate and interact successfully with people from other cultures.

5.6. Survey's Least 10 Items

The results for the least developed areas in the five dimensions of intercultural competence reveal that two of the ten items with the lowest means across the whole sample belong to the interpreting skills dimension, while the remaining eight items fall within the knowledge dimension.

The ability to identify relevant publications, journals, and professional societies that contribute to understanding intercultural communication received a mean score of 3.416 (SD = 0.928), indicating moderate proficiency. Recognising signs of cultural stress and knowing strategies for overcoming them also showed a moderate level of competence, with a mean score of 3.394 (SD = 0.869). Explaining the complex dynamics in multicultural settings involving individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds scored similarly at 3.387 (SD = 0.901).

Participants reported a moderate ability to provide professional and educational services in intercultural and multicultural fields (M = 3.321, SD = 1.042) and to offer alternative models for education or training that address diverse learning styles (M = 3.321, SD = 0.946). The ability to explain at least one model for understanding learning processes and strategies, such as the experiential learning cycle, received a mean score of 3.277 (SD = 0.983).

The ability to explain a range of models for understanding cultures and the dominant theories underpinning these models scored a mean of 3.255 (SD = 0.985). Utilizing multiple models for mediating and resolving conflicts among people from different cultures was rated at 3.248 (SD = 0.937). The capacity to cite primary and secondary research tools and other resources available to professionals in the intercultural field received a mean score of 3.211 (SD = 0.958).

Describing a range of models for understanding cultures, along with the main theories and paradigms in intercultural literature, was reported at a mean of 3.094 (SD = 0.976). Lastly, the ability to cite various publications about understanding cultures, including those related to work and teaching, was the lowest-rated item with a mean score of 2.978 (SD = 0.935). These results highlight areas where further development and training could enhance intercultural competence among participants.

The lowest scores, predominantly in the knowledge dimension, indicate participants' difficulty in identifying and citing academic works about cultural models, multicultural settings, and educational training processes within these contexts. Participants also acknowledged a lack of knowledge of cultural learning processes and strategies, including those for mediating and resolving conflicts among people from different cultures.

This knowledge gap reflects participants' perceived inability to provide professional and educational services in intercultural and multicultural fields and to explain theories underpinning models for understanding cultures. These constitute two aspects of the skills dimension among the ten lowest mean scores—key elements in their training as future English teachers in a globalised world.

Interestingly, in a previous study, Thai EFL teachers exhibited an opposite pattern, with knowledge at the top and attitude and awareness at the bottom (Imsa-ard, 2023). Similarly, research focusing on pre-service EFL teachers from a Serbian university revealed an in-depth understanding of the knowledge dimension, particularly regarding cultural models, but only shallow positive attitudes toward ICC-related matters. Therefore, the results in this respect warrant caution and further research is needed both in similar and different cultural contexts.

6. Implications and conclusion

The self-reported intercultural competence of the pre-service teachers in this study suggests that the **attitude** dimension is the most developed, significantly standing out among the others. This is evidenced by the mean values of the top ten items, where attitude consistently ranks highest. In contrast, **knowledge** appears to be the least developed dimension, as reflected in the mean values of the bottom ten items, which predominantly align with this aspect of intercultural competence. This disparity highlights a potential area for further development of the knowledge dimension among the participants.

Both similar and opposing trends in dimension development have been observed in prior studies across various contexts, including Turkish, Moroccan, Chinese, Egyptian, Serbian, Omani, and Colombian settings. These findings underscore that intercultural competence development in the ELT field remains an area requiring further

exploration. However, it can be concluded that possessing more knowledge about culture and intercultural models does not necessarily translate into higher levels of attitude and awareness. This is evident in the participants' very positive attitudes toward connecting with people from other cultures, despite their shallow and static definition of culture and self-reported relative lack of specialised knowledge regarding interculturality.

Participants also demonstrated awareness of the inevitable differences that need to be considered and addressed for effective and empathetic communication with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Nonetheless, the lowest scores highlight the need to equip Mexican English teachers in training with more specific cultural knowledge. This lack of knowledge may limit their ability to adequately address complex intercultural encounters in the classroom. For teacher training programmes, this suggests a need to include more content focused on building factual and conceptual knowledge about diverse cultures. Workshops on cultural history, panel discussions with guest speakers, and the integration of intercultural literature and media analysis could serve as valuable tools for enhancing this knowledge dimension. Empowering future English teachers with such knowledge would enable them to foster deeper, more informed intercultural experiences for their students, ultimately contributing to a globally aware and socially inclusive learning environment in Mexico.

Another important conclusion drawn from this study is that contrary to the common belief that studying abroad is the most effective strategy for developing intercultural competence, it is neither a compelling necessity nor the only way for undergraduates to achieve this goal (Deardorff, 2006; Hernández López, 2023). This is evidenced by the relatively high levels of intercultural competence reported by Mexican pre-service EFL teachers in their senior year, even though the majority did not have the opportunity to participate in international mobility programmes. Notably, the participants reported high levels of attitude, which supports the view that attitude is a central element within the intercultural competence dimensions (Hernández López, 2023).

However, less apparent issues remain unresolved. Regardless of whether pre-service EFL teachers develop moderate or high levels of intercultural competence, and whether certain dimensions are more developed than others, it is unclear if the various participating Mexican EFL B.A. programmes intentionally aim to instill intercultural competencies in their students. This is an area that warrants further investigation. Moreover, it would be valuable to explore whether these programmes include curricular decisions aimed at fostering intercultural competencies. For instance, are such decisions driven by the desire to prepare undergraduates for the challenges of a globalized market, or are they aligned with promoting a culture of peace in accordance with the SDGs suggested by the United Nations? Unveiling these motivations could help raise awareness about the need for a balanced approach—one that not only equips students for global professional demands but also recognises the impact that effective intercultural competence development can have on fostering harmonious intercultural relationships and, ultimately, a more inclusive society.

This research makes significant contributions to the field of intercultural competence (IC), particularly within the context of English language teaching. **Theoretically**, it challenges the Eurocentric perspective by incorporating insights from recent studies conducted in diverse Global-South, non-English-speaking countries, thereby enriching the understanding of IC from a more global standpoint. **Practically**, it adds to the existing literature by focusing on pre-service English teachers, most of whom have limited or no experience abroad, and demonstrates how IC can develop within locally grounded educational settings. A unique aspect of this study is its exploration of the connection between IC and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, framing IC as a critical skill for achieving global objectives such as peace, inclusivity, and global citizenship. **Methodologically**, this research enhances the predominantly qualitative Latin American IC literature by providing insights from a quantitative approach, offering a fresh perspective to the field.

Admittedly, this study has some limitations. First, reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of subjective bias, as participants' responses may reflect personal perceptions rather than objective measures. Additionally, although the sample is geographically diverse, it may not fully represent the rich variety of cultural differences across Mexico. Expanding participant demographics in future studies could address this limitation, thereby enhancing the generalisability of the findings.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced this work.

Authors' Contribution Statements: The authors contributed significantly to this research in various capacities. Elizabeth Margarita Hernández López, as the first author, was instrumental in the conceptualisation and methodology design of the study. She conducted the investigation, wrote the original draft, managed project administration, and secured funding for the research. Additionally, she provided essential resources, supervised the reproject, and contributed to the writing, review, and editing of the manuscript. Patricia Núñez Mercado, the second author, was responsible for formal analysis and further investigation. She played a key role in writing the original draft

and was actively involved in the review, editing and formatting process. Her supervision contributed to the depth and rigour of the study. Lilia Sulema Borquez-Morales, the third author, made significant contributions to the methodology and formal analysis validation. She managed the software and data curation aspects of the research and was deeply involved in the investigation and writing processes. Her expertise ensured the accuracy and reliability of the data presented.

Data Availability Statement: The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request from the first author, Elizabeth Margarita Hernández López. Due to privacy and ethical restrictions, the raw data, which includes personal and sensitive information from the participants, cannot be made publicly available. There are no publicly available datasets associated with this study.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and contributor(s) and do not necessarily reflect JICC's or the editors' official policy or position. All liability for harm done to individuals or property as a result of any ideas, methods, instructions, or products mentioned in the content is expressly disclaimed.

References

Arfiandhani, P., & Sudaya, F. (2020). Pre-service English as a foreign (EFL) teachers' intercultural communicative competence: Development during their study abroad program. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 518*, 402-406. https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210120.152

Bektaş-Çetinkaya, Y. (2014). Extension of teacher knowledge: Developing the intercultural competence of pre-service foreign-language teachers in Turkey. *Novitas-Royal: Research on Youth and Language, 8*(2), 153-168. https://novitasroyal.org/volume-8-issue-2-october-2014/

Bickley, C., Rossiter, M. J., & Abbott, M. L. (2014). Intercultural communicative competence: Beliefs and practices of adult English as a second language instructors. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 60*(1), 135-160. https://doi.org/10.11575/ajer.v60i1.55810

Boudouaia, A., Wint War Htun, K., Al-Qadri, A. H., Saroh, Y., & Beddiaf, A. (2022). Intercultural sensitivity of English language teachers in Algeria. *Cogent Education, 9*(1), 2042034. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2042034

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

Cancino, M., & Nuñez, I. (2023). EFL teachers' perceptions towards multicultural classrooms: The role of intercultural sensitivity in developing intercultural communicative competence. *rEFLections, 30*(3), 620-646. https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v30i3.267833

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2013). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203720967

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 10*(3), 241-266. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002

Deardorff, D. K. (Ed.). (2009). *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence*. Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071872987

Deardorff, D. K. (2020). *Manual for developing intercultural competencies: Story circles*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429244612

Echcharfy, M. (2019). Intercultural learning: A promising pedagogy in the new millennium. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 4*(3), 361-377. https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v4i3.309

Echcharfy, M. (2022). Exploring intercultural awareness among Moroccan EFL pre-service teachers. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 7*(1), 99-125. https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v7i1.736

Esteban-Núñez, M. T. (2021). Pre-service language teachers' knowledge and practices of intercultural communicative competence. *HOW, 28*(1), 11-29. https://doi.org/10.19183/how.28.1.596

Fantini, A. E. (2007). Exploring and assessing intercultural competence. *Center for Social Development, Washington University*. https://shorturl.at/NajC0

Fantini, A. E. (2009). Assessing intercultural competence. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 456-476). Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071872987.n27

Fernández-Benavides, A., & Castillo-Palacios, S. (2023). Exploring music to learn languages from an intercultural perspective. *Folios, 58*, 190-206. https://doi.org/10.17227/folios.58-16178

Field, A. (2024). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. Sage Publications Limited.

Genç, G., & Boynukara, E. (2017). Pre-service EFL teachers' social intelligence and intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics, 4*(4), 232-239. https://ijllnet.com/journal/index/2410

Ghaemi, H., & Soltani, S. (2023). Examining intercultural communicative competence in collectivist and individualistic EFL teachers. *International Journal of Clinical and Medical Education Research, 2*(3), 61-67. https://doi.org/10.23977/aduhe.2023.050802

Gómez Rodríguez, L. F. (2012). Fostering intercultural communicative competence through reading authentic literary texts in an advanced Colombian EFL classroom: A constructivist perspective. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 14*(1), 49-66. https://shorturl.at/kDRWm

Griffith, R. L., Wolfeld, L., Armon, B. K., Rios, J., & Liu, O. L. (2016). Assessing intercultural competence in higher education: Existing research and future directions. *ETS Research Report Series, 2016*(2), 1-44. https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12112

Guillén-Yparrea, N., & Ramírez-Montoya, M. S. (2023). Intercultural competencies in higher education: A systematic review from 2016 to 2021. *Cogent Education, 10*(1), 2167360. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2167360

Gün, S. (2023). Intercultural communicative competence and cultural perceptions of pre-service teachers of English language. *International Journal of Education Technology and Scientific Researches, 8*(24), 2780-2802. https://doi.org/10.35826/ijetsar.659

Gutiérrez-Santiuste, E., & Ritacco-Real, M. (2024). Gender perspective on intercultural competence: Communication and student self-perceptions in higher education. *European Journal of Education*, e12699. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12699

Hernández López, E. M. (2023). Fostering intercultural competence in a pre-graduate course at a public university in Mexico. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 23*(16), 74-86. https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v23i16.6464

Hismanoglu, M. (2011). An investigation of ELT students' intercultural communicative competence in relation to linguistic proficiency, overseas experience, and formal instruction. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35*(6), 805-817. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.09.001

Hoa, C. T., & Viên, T. (2018). Integrating cultures into teaching EFL in Vietnam: Teachers' perceptions. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network, 11*(2), 103-115. https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/LEARN/article/view/161551

Hofstede Insights. (2024). Country comparison tool. The Culture Factor Group. Retrieved August 8, 2024, from https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/mexico,the-uk/

Idris, M. M. (2021). Does gender influence the intercultural competence (IC) of Indonesian English teachers? *Suar Betang, 16*(1), 99-106. https://doi.org/10.26499/surbet.v16i1.237

Imsa-ard, P. (2023). Thai EFL teachers' self-reported levels of intercultural communicative competence and intercultural sensitivity. *Issues in Educational Research, 33*(1), 71-90. http://www.iier.org.au/iier33/imsa-ard.pdf

Lei, W. (2021). A survey on preservice English teachers' intercultural communicative competence in China. *English Language Teaching, 14*(1), 37-47. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n1p37

Liddicoat, A. (2002). Static and dynamic views of culture and intercultural language acquisition. *Babel, 36*(3), 4-11. https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/ielapa.200204271

Liddicoat, A. J., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning.* Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118482070

Medina, A., & Kiefel, K. (2021). Global literature in tandem with study abroad: Cultivating intercultural competence for preservice teachers. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 33*(2), 61-78. https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v33i2.498

Mirzaei, A., & Forouzandeh, F. (2013). Relationship between intercultural communicative competence and L2-learning motivation of Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 42*(3), 300-318. https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2013.816867

Olaya, A., & Gómez Rodríguez, L. F. (2013). Exploring EFL pre-service teachers' experience with cultural content and intercultural communicative competence at three Colombian universities. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 15*(2), 49-67. https://shorturl.at/SwKmv

Öztürk, S. Y., & Ekşi, G. (2022). Fostering critical cultural awareness among prospective teachers of English via virtual exchange project. *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 10*(1), 491-502. https://doi.org/10.18506/anemon.1052025

Pekrun, R. (2020). Self-report is indispensable to assess students' learning. *Frontline Learning Research, 8*(3), 185-193. https://doi.org/10.14786/flr.v8i3.637

Pinto, S. (2018). Intercultural competence in higher education: Academics' perspectives. *On the Horizon, 26*(2), 137-147. https://doi.org/10.1108/OTH-02-2018-0011

Ramos Holguín, B. (2013). Towards the development of intercultural competence skills: A pedagogical experience with pre-service teachers. *HOW, 20*(1), 206-225. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1127939

Richter, N. F., Schlaegel, C., Taras, V., Alon, I., & Bird, A. (2023). Reviewing half a century of measuring cross-cultural competence: Aligning theoretical constructs and empirical measures. *International Business Review, 32*(4), 102122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2023.102122

Rico Troncoso, C. (2012). Language teaching materials as mediators for ICC development: A challenge for materials developers. *Signo y Pensamiento, 31*(60), 130-154. https://shorturl.at/IiLwl

Sabet, P. G., & Chapman, E. (2023). A window to the future of intercultural competence in tertiary education: A narrative literature review. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 96*, 101868. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2023.101868

Saricoban, A., & Oz, H. (2014). Research into pre-service English teachers' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in Turkish context. *The Anthropologist, 18*(2), 523-531. https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2014.11891570

Sawicki, S., & Chapa, S. (2018). Growing apart: Collectivism and acculturation. *Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings 2018, 15.* https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/amtp-proceedings_2018/45

Sevimel-Sahin, A. (2020). A survey on the intercultural communicative competence of ELT undergraduate students. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 6*(2), 141-153. https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.775793

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012). What is culture? A compilation of quotations. *GlobalPAD Core Concepts.* https://shorturl.at/sjOEd

Spitzberg, B. H., & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing intercultural competence. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 2-52). Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071872987.n1

Suryani, A., Soedarso, S., Diani, K. T., & Rosmawati, R. (2020). English teaching in social and cultural contexts: Language teachers as cultural managers. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching, 23*(2), 273-292. https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v23i2.2470

Syahrin, S., Akmal, N., Spromberg, S., DePriest, J., & Oman, O. (2023). Promoting intercultural competence in preservice teacher education through virtual exchange. *Studies in Media and Communication, 11*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v11i1.5791

Taşdemir, H., & Gümüşok, F. (2022). An EFL instructor's study and teach abroad experiences and complementary views from learners. *Focus on ELT Journal, 4*(1), 91-104. https://doi.org/10.14744/felt.2022.4.1.7

2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean [2030 Agenda] (n.d.). 4. Quality education. *ECLAC - United Nations.* Retrieved June 4, 2024, from https://agenda2030lac.org/en/sdg/4-quality-education/targets/47

Vromans, P., Korzilius, H., Bücker, J., & de Jong, E. (2023). Intercultural learning in the classroom: Facilitators and challenges of the learning process. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 97*, 101907. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2023.101907

Zhong, H., Bai, Q. H., & Fan, W. W. (2013). Construction of intercultural communicative competence self-report scale for Chinese college students: A pilot study. *Foreign Language World, 156*(3), 47-56.

About the Author(s)

Elizabeth Margarita Hernández-López holds a PhD in Education from the University of Southampton (UK), a Master's in Intercultural Communication from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (USA), and a Bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching from the University of Guadalajara (Mexico). She is a full-time faculty researcher in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Guadalajara. Her research focuses on the internationalisation of Higher Education, intercultural communication and mediation, and the training and development of English language teachers.

Patricia Núñez-Mercado holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Southampton (UK), an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the Universidad Veracruzana (Mexico), and a BA in English and French Language from the Universidad Veracruzana. She is a full-time lecturer-researcher in the School of Languages at the Universidad Veracruzana. Her research focuses on English teacher education, research processes, and the development of academic literacy in Higher Education.

Lilia S. Borquez-Morales PhD is a teacher and researcher in the Language Department of Adolfo Lopez Mateos school at UAEMex, specialising in applied linguistics, language education, and inclusive teaching practices. She belongs to the country's National Research Council (SNII). Her major research interests lie in the area of belief systems in language teaching, sociocultural approaches to language acquisition, and the integration of social justice in education.