



# EFL College Programmes In Egypt And Saudi Arabia: Advantages And Difficulties In Intercultural Instruction

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**Abstract:** The present study evaluated faculty and student perceptions of the challenges and benefits of intercultural and multicultural education in EFL college classrooms. Using the descriptive approach through survey, the study further investigates the benefits and barriers to inter/multicultural education in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, including content integration, acculturation pedagogy, and the incorporation of cultural knowledge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses as perceived by faculty and students in both countries. The sample consisted of 25 EFL instructors and 33 fifth and sixth-grade EFL students from King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia, as well as 45 TEFL students from Beni Suef University in Egypt. Findings revealed that while both teachers and students value cultural integration, challenges such as limited resources and cultural sensitivity persist. Notably, the results showed that literature-based English teaching could be an efficient medium for introducing the target language culture to students. However, challenges include acquiring requirements to develop intercultural competence, professional development needs, and obstacles that hinder EFL instructors from teaching linguistic and cultural competence.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Education, Intercultural Competence, Challenges and Impediments to Cultural Teaching, Egypt, Saudi Arabia

## 1. Introduction

Foreign language instruction and intercultural communication are two interconnected disciplines that deal with cultural interactions. Intercultural and multicultural education in foreign language classrooms is critical for establishing intercultural competence among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and students. Intercultural competence entails successful communication with people from diverse backgrounds, whereas linguistic competence entails knowledge of a foreign language. Intercultural education enables students to learn about and appreciate diverse cultures while also improving their general language proficiency and intercultural skills.

However, faculty in English departments frequently encounter obstacles in imparting language and cultural competency due to limited resources, training opportunities, and the difficulty of obtaining the necessary conditions for intercultural competence (Batunan et al., 2023). Professional development requirements and barriers also impede the incorporation of cultural competency into language instruction. These challenges come from disparities in cultural competency concepts, such as content, focus, and group orientation, which are significant to multicultural educational or training programs (Esmacili, 2024; Gay, 2002; Han, 2023; Pereira, 2023).

Furthermore, the lack of established rules or frameworks may make it difficult for language instructors to include cultural competency into their teaching approaches properly. Furthermore, the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and experiences of staff and students might make it challenging to identify common ground for intercultural understanding and communication.

There are differences between the concepts of intercultural and multicultural education and/or training in foreign language classrooms in terms of content, focus, or group orientation (e.g., Esmacili, 2024; Gay, 2003; Grant & Tate, 2001; Nieto & Bode, 2008). For example, researchers in various fields of educational science generally accept multicultural education and training as a 'concept, framework, way of thinking, philosophical viewpoint, value orientation, and a set of criteria for making decisions that better serve the educational needs of culturally diverse student populations' (Gay, 2003).

This study also investigates intercultural/multicultural education via the lens of acculturating language learners from different nations, taking into account both universal and specific cultural traits (Chen & Lai, 2013; Heine & Buchtel, 2009; Sapir

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Sapir & Irvine, 2002). Current acculturation and enculturation approaches seek to help students and teachers recognize, accept, and appreciate cultural, ethnic, social class, sexual orientation, religion, special needs, and perverse genderist orientations across cultures (Manning & Baruth 2009). The study investigates several aspects of inter/multicultural education in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, such as content integration, equity pedagogy, cultural knowledge creation processes, bias reduction, and cultural empowerment in the academic setting (Hussain, Ahmed & Zafar, 2009). The history of intercultural and multicultural education and training will be examined in both countries as part of a comprehensive global overview (needed.g., Dervin & Jacobsson, 2021; Hermans, 2002; Spiteri & SpringerLink, 2017). Intercultural education will be emphasized in both countries' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curricula and classrooms (Yashima, 2002; Tran, 2020).

The study also provides the criteria that should be considered while developing, teaching, and assessing intercultural education and curriculum, particularly in EFL classrooms (Mekheimer, 2019). Finally, the authors discuss the difficulties of incorporating intercultural education into the mainstream curriculum at the college level, such as the requirements for developing intercultural competence, professional development needs and impediments, and barriers that prevent EFL instructors from teaching both linguistic and cultural competence (Freire, Alfaro & de Jong, 2023). When planning, pedagogizing, and evaluating intercultural education and curriculum in EFL classes, it is also critical to include multiple perspectives and cultural experiences (Early, Kendrick & Potts, 2015). Materials, exercises, and debates that highlight diverse cultures and enable students to critically reflect on their own cultural preconceptions can aid in this (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Furthermore, it is vital to provide chances for meaningful involvement and collaboration among culturally diverse students since this encourages empathy, comprehension, and the development of intercultural competency (Hossein, 2024; Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, the authors underline the importance of teaching students cultural sensitivity and awareness, as well as encouraging inclusivity and respect for opposing opinions (Arbour, Kaspar & Teall, 2014). Furthermore, the authors underline the significance of ongoing collaboration and communication between EFL instructors and other stakeholders, such as administrators and curriculum writers, in order to successfully integrate intercultural education into the primary curriculum (McConachy, Golubeva & Wagner, 2022; Rader, 2018).

The purpose of this study, which includes two samples of teachers and students, is to identify the benefits of culture-embedded English language teaching while also identifying the barriers to culture teaching that exist when teaching English literature to EFL students in Saudi Arabian universities (Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2011). The survey also wants to know how teachers and students feel about including cultural issues in language instruction. It also investigates the advantages and disadvantages of including cultural elements in EFL classes at the university level in Egypt and Saudi Arabia

Teaching English literature in the classroom is essential for cultural integration, but it presents challenges due to instructors' lack of foreign experience, awareness of the target culture, a lack of resources, time, and fear of controversy (Cushner, McClelland & Safford, 2012). Acculturation methods and procedures that eliminate layers of obscurity conflate the term 'culture' (Kramsch, 1993). As the ownership of English and the privileged standing of English-speaking countries are called into question, researchers studying English language education and acculturation have turned their attention to non-native English speakers (Byram, 2014; Kramer, 2002). Harumi (2002) contends that globalisation of English is linked to the 'nativization' of English and the 'Englishization' of other languages. Because of its global reach, English is no longer the sole domain of its native speakers; rather, it serves as a secondary medium for transmitting Western civilization (Kachru, 1992).

## 2. Literature Review

This review examines the integration of a culture-laden curriculum in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, focussing on the benefits and challenges in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. It highlights existing research, identifies gaps, and justifies the current study exploring these issues in these specific contexts.

Effective communication between cultures is dependent on understanding not only the words but also the cultures behind them. Although the significance of both linguistic and sociocultural competence is paramount, its full recognition faces hurdles (Deisyi et al., 2023). Concerns like integrating cultural elements into curriculums (Lafayette, 1997) and skepticism about the proficiency gained through foreign language education (Byram & Wagner, 2018) complicate matters. However, language acquisition goes beyond mere fluency. It is a gateway to cultural immersion, broadening perspectives and facilitating meaningful cross-cultural interactions. As noted by scholars like Citron (1995), Harumi (2002) and Mekheimer & Aldosari (2011), incorporating elements of acculturation in language classes fosters deeper understanding and enriches the learning experience.

Learning a language beyond its native environment, such as in Saudi Arabia or Egypt, or as a native speaker, intertwines with acculturation, the process of adapting to a new cultural context. This necessitates competence in intercultural communication, which encompasses both linguistic and nonlinguistic skills. Balboni and Caon (2014) introduce the concept of intercultural communication competence, highlighting its role in navigating acculturation and building effective interpersonal and intersocietal relationships. They emphasise the interplay between universal and local cultural nuances, governed by the combined influences of verbal, non-verbal, and cultural competency standards.

Recent changes in foreign language pedagogy echo evolving theories and practices of acculturation, drawing inspiration from Chomskyan "linguistic competence" and Hymesian "communicative competence" models. Acculturation emphasises learning and communicating with diverse cultures, fostering understanding, compassion, and openness. This contrasts with earlier enculturation goals that solely focused on improving language proficiency by immersing learners in the target culture's communication practices.

Integrating cultural instruction demonstrably enhances language education by enriching pedagogical approaches, curriculum development, and learners' linguistic proficiency. In addition, it cultivates crucial sensitivity and competence in intercultural communication. Educators achieve this by weaving culturally general and specific information into lessons, demanding a blend of intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Aldosari & Alrefai, 2020; Çelik, 2023; Cushner et al., 2012). This aligns with the "cultural idiot/fluent fool" (Bennett, 1997) concept, highlighting the dangers of lacking cultural understanding despite high language proficiency.

In the specific context of Saudi Arabia, language education should emphasise developing subject competencies while prioritising the promotion of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to foreign languages. This requires focusing on intercultural competence. This is crucial in professional fields such as banking, healthcare, and entrepreneurship, where communication failures and misunderstandings can have significant consequences. Lack of intercultural competence risks creating exactly the "cultural idiot/fluent fool" scenario, hindering effective communication, and potentially impacting professional success.

The "cultural idiot/fluent fool" paradox (Bennett, 1997) highlights the potential pitfall of foreign language education: achieving fluency without cultural understanding. This scenario involves possessing strong oral communication skills but lacking comprehension of the target culture's intricacies, leading to ineffective and potentially offensive interactions. The "culture-contrast" method (Bennett, 1997) offers a valuable tool for language teachers, promoting broader worldviews, and preventing the "fluent fool" trap. Although Egyptian and Saudi students often demonstrate high English proficiency thanks to years of schooling and media exposure (Chen, 2020), true intercultural communication competence requires understanding the culture intertwined with the language.

Researching methods to enhance intercultural communication competence (ICC) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programmes within Egypt and Saudi Arabia remains an underexplored area. Integrating intercultural education into the EFL college curriculum in the Middle East and North Africa region presents a promising solution, fostering comprehensive cultural understanding beyond what advanced proficiency courses might offer. Embedding cultural instruction within the EFL curriculum empowers students to effectively engage with diverse cultures, boosting their intercultural awareness and developing vital cultural, pragmatic, and communicative competencies.

As Liaw (2006) suggests, foreign language instruction has shifted its focus from native speaker models to the learner and their diverse interlocutors. This aligns with the growing emphasis on "intercultural competence," which recognises the importance of both understanding the target culture and fostering self-awareness within one's own cultural background to navigate communication effectively. More research is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of intercultural competency approaches and instructional materials in integrating culture into EFL education. Furthermore, ongoing multicultural education and training for EFL teachers are essential (Aldosari & Mekheimer, 2013; Kanaan, 2018; Mester, 2016), as their influence on student learning and communication processes is undeniable. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills, we can empower them to guide students toward true intercultural understanding and avoid the pitfalls of the "fluent fool."

This review examines the current literature on integrating culture into EFL education, highlighting research gaps and justifying the need for further exploration, particularly in contexts like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The present study contributes to this field by analysing teacher perspectives and experiences in these specific settings through mixed-method research. In Saudi Arabia, a closed survey was used to gauge teacher perceptions of the benefits and challenges of incorporating culture-laden content into their English curriculum. On the contrary, an open-ended survey approach was adopted in Egypt to collect qualitative data in-depth on teacher experiences and suggestions regarding cultural integration. This combined approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of teacher perspectives across both contexts. Building upon previous research that examined the views of EFL teachers on the incorporation of elements of the target culture, this study dives deeper, offering valuable insight into the specific realities and complexities faced by educators in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

### 3. Methodology

This study used a descriptive method, using closed and open-ended introspective surveys to gather data from participants in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The aim was to generalise the findings to a population representative of the research samples. The study aimed to determine the obstacles in teaching culture to EFL students at Saudi Arabian and Egyptian universities. The research question best suited the study's problem object:

*How do teachers and students in Saudi Arabian and Egyptian EFL programmes feel about teaching languages with cultural embeddedness?*

This technique can be beneficial for evaluating current pedagogical practices in multicultural education in Arab nations.

### 3.1. Instrumentation

An online survey was designed to collect feedback from EFL teachers and students on three key topics: the importance of teaching English language, culture, and literature in EFL classrooms, the role of culture in the current language and literature curriculum, and the barriers and facilitators of EFL literature instruction in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The poll was aimed at getting feedback from instructors and students at King Khalid University's English department about the role of culture in the classroom and the study of English literature. The survey offered open-ended and Likert scale response options, which provided more informative and relevant data. Due to sample size constraints, the fundamental disadvantage of responding to large open-ended questions with unmanageable amounts of data was overlooked. To analyze vast amounts of qualitative data, the researchers used NVivo. Examples were supplied to ensure comprehension, and informants were encouraged to provide additional information or comments.

### 3.2. Validity And Reliability Of Instruments

The study instruments underwent interrater validation and comprehensive testing by a team of experts. The pilot testing revealed potential concerns and places for improvement, prompting small changes. The Kuder-Richardson method was used to calculate the questionnaire's reliability, which came out to be 0.76 for 35 items. This suggests satisfactory internal consistency, but more research is required to establish its reliability. A test-retest process was used to assess the dependability of academics and junior staff in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The Kuder-Richardson formula was used to determine the survey's dependability, which yielded a computed reliability coefficient of 0.87. More research is needed to confirm the survey's dependability and guarantee that it appropriately measures the desired variables.

### 3.3. Participants

Participants were recruited from two contexts: the Saudi Arabian context and the Egyptian context.

### 3.4. Participants From Saudi Arabia

The study included 25 KCU English faculty members, including language instructors, and 33 participants, predominantly students in grades five and six, with an average age of 20.3. The majority spoke Arabic at home, and because no standardised tests were given, the researcher concluded that their grade point averages were generally comparable. The professors worked primarily at universities, with some teaching at community colleges.

### 3.5. Participants From Egypt

This survey included 66 students from Egyptian higher education institutions as well as English-language instructors. The students were enrolled in a TEFL methodology course during their junior year and spoke Arabic as their native language. 45 of the 66 students expressed interest in the study. The pupils' average age was 19.6 years, which put them in the intermediate competency level. Among the 66 students, 30 studied English as a foreign language, 10 studied French, and 5 studied German.

## 4. Results

The findings of these two descriptive investigations are provided in the following cases: Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The findings indicate that the majority of teachers and students in both nations expressed a strong desire to participate in the study. Furthermore, the findings revealed quantitative and qualitative data in the case of the Saudi Arabia study, whereas the researchers restricted themselves to the presentation of qualitative data in Egypt.

### 4.1. The Case Of Saudi Arabia

The authors uncovered fascinating insights about intercultural education in Saudi Arabian contexts. The survey items answering these topics indicated EFL instructors' perspectives on teaching and understanding the target language's culture as part of their English courses. A multicultural faculty sample (N = 25) from a Saudi institution provided feedback on teaching culture in the EFL program. In the Saudi Arabia study, the quantitative data showed that 80% of teachers and students exhibited a strong willingness to engage, but the qualitative data in Egypt revealed the reasons for their motivation.

Both studies' outcomes indicate that people in these nations are quite eager to participate in this research. The findings are presented in a linear format, with separate sections on Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The findings are presented after a thorough examination of the quantitative data (using SPSS version 25) and qualitative data obtained (using the NVivo version 10 software), which provides insight into the motivations and viewpoints of participants in each region. Furthermore, the conclusions are backed with pertinent comments and experiences from participants, which add to the legitimacy and richness of the qualitative data given.

**Table 1:** EFL instructors' perceptions of the importance and attitudes towards cultural teaching (N= 25)

Items	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Weighted%	Qui <sup>2</sup>
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Importance of including the target culture in the curriculum	10	41.8	11	42.9	4	14.1	2.29	*67.33
Integrating native and target culture	12	48.1	9	37.8	4	14.1	2.34	63.24*
Including planned versus spontaneous cultural content	15	60.8	8	31.1	2	8.1	2.53	145.52*
Including factual/overt cultural information	18	72.3	6	25.1	1	2.6	2.69	**263.82

\* Significant at 0.01; \*\* significant at 0.05

The study revealed a consensus among informants about the significance of cultural elements in English language instruction, but 8.5 respondents expressed a neutral position, suggesting that some instructors may still have uncertainties about the value of culture. Chi<sup>2</sup> values for items 1 to 4 in Tables 1 and Table 2 were all significant at the 0.05 level, showing that all respondents agreed that cultural components should be included in language instruction. This finding indicates that students generally agree that cultural elements should be included in English language education courses. However, some teachers may struggle to incorporate these elements due to a lack of materials or instruction. More research and assistance could help resolve these issues.

**Table 2:** Perceptions of EFL students of the importance and attitudes towards cultural teaching (N= 33)

Items	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Weighted%	Qui <sup>2</sup>
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Importance of including the target culture in the curriculum	13	38.6	10	30.8	10	30.5	2.08	*4.36
Integrating native and target culture	28	86.7	4	11.8	1	2.9	2.85	451.04*
Including planned versus spontaneous cultural content.	10	61.1	11	34.9	2	6	2.57	169.84*
Including factual/overt cultural information	16	44.4	11	35.1	6	19.6	2.24	30.03*

\* Significant at 0.01; \*\* significant at 0.05

A survey of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers revealed that despite acknowledging the importance of integrating culture into the curriculum, the majority of participants remained neutral. The survey also revealed that EFL faculty believe in including cultural information about covert culture, teaching aspects of culture in the target language, and explaining culture-specific behaviours in daily communication. The survey respondents also expressed their perceptions of the role of culture in teaching English as a foreign language.

These results provide insight into the connection between culture and language in English language courses, especially literature courses. These findings suggest that the faculty of EFL recognise the importance of integrating culture into language instruction. They believe that by incorporating cultural information and teaching culture-specific behaviours, students can develop a deeper understanding of the target language and enhance their communication skills in real-life situations.

**Table 3:** EFL teachers' perceptions of the relationship between language and culture

Items	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		WP	Qui <sup>2</sup>
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Teaching covert culture such as values, beliefs, and attitudes	20	78.9	1	4.9	4	16.2	2.33	58.07*
Teaching native versus target culture	21	82.9	2	8.1	2	9	2.39	83.40*
Explaining culture-specific behaviours	17	70.7	5	22.5	3	6.9	2.63	221.54**
Cultural role in TEFL	21	83.1	1	4.8	3	12.1	2.32	53.40*

\* Significant at 0.01; \*\* Significant at 0.05, WP = weighted percentage

The Chi<sup>2</sup> values presented in Table 3 demonstrate statistical significance at the 0.01 level for items 1 through 4. This indicates unanimous agreement among informants regarding the positive inclusion of cultural aspects in English language instruction. Consequently, it can be inferred that instructors perceive the incorporation of cultural elements as essential in English language teaching (ELT).

Based on an analysis of teachers' perceptions about integrating culture-related content into literature courses, it is evident that the majority of instructors surveyed hold favourable views regarding cultural teaching side by side with language teaching, corroborating Cai (2002). The data shown in Table 3, which shows a significant trend towards positive scores among informant teachers with little variation, support this. None of the teachers in this survey claimed that they never incorporated cultural content into their teaching. However, a small number of instructors indicated their neutrality by circling the option, suggesting that their lessons only provide a small amount of cultural material.

Although the significance of culture in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes was not considered inconsequential by any teacher, it is noteworthy that almost 8.5 respondents indicated a neutral stance. This suggests that certain instructors may still harbour uncertainties regarding the value of culture, but more than 44% of them perceived the significant role of culture in language teaching, confirming the extensive body of research defending its role in EFL education.

According to the feedback provided by the faculty in their open-ended responses, it was indicated that fiction and drama are the primary genera of creative writing that are most effective in portraying a specific culture within a particular language. Consequently, the teachers, who served as informants, expressed the view that these genres should be considerably incorporated into the English literature that makes up the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme in English. Furthermore, it was found that students expressed the view that fiction, including novels and short stories, contains a significant amount of cultural content. As a result, they believe that these types of courses should be included in the language curriculum rather than focused solely on intense skills-based courses.

**Table 4:** Perceptions of the connection between language and culture by students of EFL (N = 33).

Items	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		WP	Qui <sup>2</sup>
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Teaching covert culture such as values, beliefs, and attitudes	24	72.5	6	19.8	3	7.8	2.65	237.22*
Teaching native versus target culture	18	54.8	8	25.7	7	19.5	2.35	71.18*
Explaining culture-specific behaviours	21	64.1	9	27.2	3	8.7	2.55	159.28**
Cultural role in TEFL	24	72.5	6	19.8	3	7.8	2.65	237.22*

\* Significant at 0.01; \*\* Significant at 0.05, WP = weighted percentage

The Saudi students shared a consensus with their teachers, expressing a positive agreement about the inclusion of cultural education into the existing curriculum (see Table 4 above). They acknowledged that their instructors effectively integrated cultural elements into language instruction. However, a minority of college students studying English as a foreign language remained unconvinced about the adequacy of cultural instruction within the English language programme. Students expressed in open-ended sections that the current literature curriculum lacks sufficient coverage of cultural learning in a balanced way. They noted that certain literature courses have been modified to focus on Islamic subjects or literary topics with reference to Arabian history or literature, such as translations of ancient Arab literature (e.g., the Arabian Nights or the Pre-Islamic Seven Odes) which does not contribute to effective direct instruction into the culture of the target language.

Literature plays a crucial role in cultural learning in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia. This is in line with previous scholarly investigations that have examined its use to familiarise learners with the cultural aspects of the English language (Kramersch, 1993; Lessard-Clouston, 1996; 1997; Nostrand, 1967; Seelye, 1984). This approach aims to provide a more contextualised and immersive experience. Current scholarly studies also acknowledge the efficacy of the literature in promoting intercultural competence. This recognition is evident among faculty and students in Saudi Arabia (Blackledge & Creese 2010; Cronjé, 2011; Deters 2009; Mohammadzadeh 2009; Göbel & Helmke 2010; Savignon 2007).

In addition, it is imperative for EFL faculty to incorporate cultural knowledge into their language instruction, as it seems to be introduced in a less structured manner compared to other instructional components. The absence of explicit courses focused on cultivating cultural awareness within English programmes in ELT colleges is due to the fact that, apart from a language awareness course, there is limited exploration of cultural concepts beyond the introductory level and the use of cultural technical terminology. As expounded on in the literature review section, the acquisition of cultural knowledge is frequently facilitated by the instruction of literature (Cronjé 2011; Deters 2009; Göbel & Helmke, 2010; Harumi 2002; Ilieva 2005).

However, the process of acculturation requires the implementation of more rigorous educational programmes that are explicitly designed to impart cultural understanding. The aforementioned findings align with previous studies that indicate the necessity of including culture in language learning programmes in order to foster the development of both cultural and linguistic competences (Harumi 2002; Göbel & Helmke 2010; Ilieva 2005).

Dirven and Putz's research (1993), along with others (e.g., Byrnes, 1991; Kramersch, 1998; Valdes, 1995), suggests that language instructors should focus on teaching cultural competency alongside language proficiency. Stephens (1997) highlights the necessity of cultural understanding, noting that disparities in culture may come not just from linguistic barriers but also from dissimilar life histories, upbringings, and worldviews.

The study also examined teachers' and students' perceptions of barriers and difficulties in teaching culturally rich or culture-specific texts such as English and American literature in Saudi universities. Tables 5 and 6 show the perceptions of teachers and students of the barriers to teaching culture alongside the target language.

**Table 5:** Teachers' perceptions of impediments to culture teaching (N = 25)

Items	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		WP	Qui <sup>2</sup>
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Lack of cultural adjustment of teaching materials	10	40.4	11	44.9	4	14.7	2.26	53.36*
Contradiction between teaching styles and students' cultural background	12	50	6	24.4	7	25.6	2.25	41.75**
Dissatisfaction with the quantity/quality of cultural content in EFL textbooks	14	56	5	19.8	6	24.3	2.31	78.44*
Availability of materials and technology or lack thereof.	18	71.6	5	21	2	7.5	2.64	228.69*

\* Significant at 0.01; \*\* Significant at 0.05; WP = weighted percentage

**Table 6:** Perceptions of students of impediments to culture teaching (N = 33)

Items	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		WP	Qui <sup>2</sup>
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Lack of cultural adjustment of teaching materials	15	45.8	13	39	5	15.2	2.3	47.32*
Contradiction between teaching styles and students' cultural background	8	24	16	49	16	49.48	1.97	39.17**
Dissatisfaction with the quantity/quality of cultural content in EFL textbooks	16	48.8	7	21	10	30.2	2.19	40.28*
Availability of materials and technology or lack thereof.	9	27.2	11	35.7	12	37	1.9	5.79*

\* Significant at 0.01; \*\* Significant at 0.05, WP: Weighted Percentage

The Chi2 values presented in Table 5 indicate that all of them were statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01. These findings suggest that teachers were aware of the barriers and obstacles to teaching culture in the bachelor programme designed for EFL students in language education colleges.

In Table 6, approximately 50% of the student participants express disagreement with perceived inhibitive obstacles, mainly the contradiction between the teaching styles of their instructors and their native cultural background, with the exception of the availability of teaching materials and technological resources, such as video and audio clips. The reasons for this belief are as follows.

Certain courses lack drama video clips to introduce target cultures effectively, and the integration of literary texts with audio-video materials is hindered by classroom time constraints and lack of laboratory facilities. Cultural barriers, particularly related to religion, often prevent teachers from incorporating video clips. Additionally, students perceive that literature course instructors lack additional materials to effectively integrate culture and literature learning.

The study identifies several obstacles to incorporating culture in English literature courses and BA English programmes in Saudi Arabia, including insufficient representation of native language speakers, insufficient time and resources to address cultural elements, significant influence of sociocultural and religious variables on social norms and values, and the absence of instructional technology in classroom settings. These factors were ranked on the basis of the respondents' impressions and statistical analysis.

The study found a significant difference in the average scores between teachers and students regarding barriers to cultural instruction. Teachers acknowledged the importance of cultural content in the literature curriculum, but only included it sometimes because of time constraints, and caution was exercised with culturally sensitive material such as a very open literature. This suggests that educators focus more on lesson components than on cultural aspects. The theological makeup of Saudi culture also interferes with the justifications for cultural instruction. Students expressed negative sentiments about participating in dramatic video clips featuring musical accompaniment and female performers, as they perceive these portrayals as culturally inappropriate.

Teachers often find it challenging to teach students about hidden aspects of culture, whereas overt aspects are considered more feasible. Overt culture refers to the visible features of a civilisation, while covert culture encompasses less visible aspects such as beliefs, attitudes, and values. The study found that teachers tend to prioritise overt aspects of culture over covert ones, but this preference is not consistently observed. Teachers' responses to the use of covert culture in their lessons varied, with some mentioning religious beliefs and others focussing on various aspects of society. Twelve instructors mentioned religious beliefs, while the remaining instructors focused on various aspects of society, such as marriage, dating, social life, and privacy. However, these instructors did not provide explicit explanations for the values they imparted in relation to these elements. In general, the study highlights the need for educators to consider the various aspects of culture and their teaching methods.

Inferences arising from these responses indicate that the native culture of students, specifically the Saudi culture, exhibits a greater degree of reservation and adherence to religious principles compared to English-language cultures. Although there is substantial evidence supporting this assertion, postmodern perspectives argue that cultural constructions are insufficient to capture the vast variation that exists, not only within a particular culture but also among individuals (Spack, 1997). As a result, instructors are subjected to potential criticism about the use of stereotypical phrases denoting the target culture.

In Saudi Arabia, similar to Egypt and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, current English-language programmes show a reduced emphasis on cultural instruction. This is evident in the adoption of less rigorous methodologies in language teaching materials, the presence of inflexible socio-religious constraints, the lack of appropriate literary resources, and the constrained access to time and technology. These reasons cumulatively contribute to the subordinate and less facilitative function of culture learning compared to language learning as a comprehensive process as suggested in pertinent research (e.g., Ryffel, 1995).

Quintessentially, the less of these traits a person has, the smoother the process of learning a new language will go. Given the current state of affairs, it is clear that the acculturation and language learning processes are intertwined. This is because incorporating cultural lessons into second/foreign language instruction is now seen as essential rather than optional (Courchene 1996). The results of this study are consistent with those of other studies that have shown a link between linguistic education and acculturation (Kramersch 2003; Kubota 2003; Roberts et al. 2001; Zaid 2011).

The findings of the reported study, consistent with previous scholarly investigations (Damen 1987; Cortazzi & Jin 1999; Shardakova & Pavlenko 2004), have established that 'the materials used for language learning and foreign language instructors play a significant role in transmitting cultural knowledge in the context of second or foreign language education' (Zaid 2011, p. 1).

#### 4.2. The Case Of Egypt

A qualitative survey study conducted at Beni Suef University in Upper Egypt aimed to gather faculty opinions on the benefits and drawbacks of including a culturally enriched curriculum in English education courses. The results showed that faculty believed that including cultural information in literary courses enriched students' comprehension, critical thinking, empathy, and tolerance, equipping them with the necessary skills to navigate an increasingly interconnected global society.

The inclusion of cultural instruction is identified as one of the five objectives in foreign language education, but there is a lack of clarity regarding the ideas and attitudes of college-level foreign language instructors towards the instruction of culture. Most of the participants agreed that there is a strong correlation between culture and language, since language plays a crucial role in categorising and reflecting cultural interrelationships.

Egyptian faculty have emphasised the importance of understanding and incorporating cultural education into their teaching methods. They believe that teaching language without incorporating cultural information is challenging as the target language is a vehicle for its matching culture. They believe that textbooks are a natural pedagogical instrument for language learning, as they naturally include cultural references. They argue that cultural education should be incorporated into the curriculum to address the common problem with students' language acquisition: they often show proficiency in learning grammar and vocabulary but lack the cultural understanding necessary to apply their knowledge effectively in the appropriate cultural context. English teachers argue that, since language learning is primarily a cultural endeavour, it is crucial to include cultural components in lessons. Without cultural education, students may learn the language well but deviate from cultural expectations.

Survey data analysis identified two main attitudes about the importance of culture in language training. One perspective sees culture as a supplementary or adjunct element in language instruction, with educators viewing cultural knowledge as a preliminary course and language knowledge as the principal component of a meal. Incorporating cultural elements serves primarily as a means of enhancing the appeal of a language, rather than being an essential component of language acquisition. Some educators believe that incorporating discussions on cultural knowledge within the classroom setting would be effective in engaging students with the target language, but often neglect to prioritise teaching culture as a primary objective.

On the other hand, a minority of teachers of EFL view culture as an additional rather than a primary component of their instructional approach. They believe that culture invariably envelopes a language and plays a pivotal role in shaping its interpretation. Language acquisition cannot occur in isolation, highlighting the need for a contextual framework within which language instruction occurs.

EFL teachers are increasingly incorporating culture into their teaching methods to foster intercultural communication and exchange between Arabic and American cultures. They encourage students to engage with authentic materials and communicate effectively with native speakers. External influences, such as new national rules for foreign language instruction, have transformed the curriculum, emphasising the importance of integrating cultural elements into language training. Globalisation and increased cultural exchange have further emphasised the importance of integrating cultural subjects. The National Standards for Foreign Language Education have influenced pedagogical perspectives on cultural instruction, leading to increased interest in teaching foreign





#### 4.4. Education In A Multicultural World

In an English as a Foreign Language classroom, a multicultural curriculum is crucial for effective language learning. This can be achieved through efficient instruction, language use in everyday life, classroom discussions, and debates. Previous research recommends creating an educational community for EFL teachers and students, focusing on equality while acknowledging language use differences that could cause cultural misunderstandings. Marx & Pray (2011) suggested that originality, positivity, and empathy should be included in EFL teachers' acculturation programmes to build relationships with students and understand their cultural needs.

Multicultural education empowers EFL teachers and students to work together for effective language learning, but requires teachers to establish meaningful relationships with their students. Methods used by English instructors include theme units, reader responses, class discussions, and even classroom disputes. Students are more engaged in class discussions when they focus on people they can relate to and when they draw on their existing knowledge of sociopolitical organisations. Multicultural literature can also be taught through the use of film and video, journals, traditional foods, discussions with ethnic writers, historians, storytellers, performers, creative writing exercises, and oral and written reports by students on their cultural backgrounds.

To effectively teach a multicultural curriculum in an EFL classroom, lessons should involve student participation and address socio-cultural issues. Teachers should be aware of the potential for misinformation and the potential for misinformation when discussing race, gender, and social class. Qualitative research recommends confronting both students' and teachers' racial formation to generate awareness and solutions. Multicultural instruction seeks to revitalise democracy and address ethical issues. A critical understanding of diverse cultures is essential for effective foreign language education. Shor (1992) argues that one must have a critical understanding of diverse cultures, characterised by four qualities: power consciousness, critical literacy, perpetual desocialization, and permanent desocialization. These traits are essential for educators to successfully implement multicultural education programmes.

Multicultural education and training programmes for English language teachers require them to self-educate beyond their initial courses and contribute to necessary changes. Teachers should connect diverse student experiences to challenging curriculum goals and develop an equity pedagogy by understanding students' experiences and learning strategies. English language teachers may resist incorporating race, sex, and class awareness into their teaching due to fear of classroom uncontrollability and uncontrolled emotions. The inclusion of multicultural literature in the curriculum can be challenging due to resistance from stakeholders and potential tokenistic selection. EFL educators believe that adopting a curriculum without incorporating multicultural modifications may hinder the integration of multicultural curriculum and instruction.

Research indicates that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers often focus on the set curriculum for formal examinations or school-set tests, which can hinder multicultural education (e.g., Au, 2007). Sleeter (2008) warns that adhering to set curriculums can lead to a focus on test-taking over communicative language use. This focus on testing can be seen as a political concern, as there is often limited time and energy for examining content. Educational institutions may have deviated from their intended purpose of being public spaces for students to learn diverse perspectives, demonstrate empathy, and address social issues. This is evident in the absence of classroom-based debates, fostering curiosity and passion for knowledge, and nurturing artistic and ethical sensibilities. The current educational landscape has seen a decline in the emphasis on student-teacher relationships, authentic learning, meaningful instruction, and the fundamental objectives of English language education.

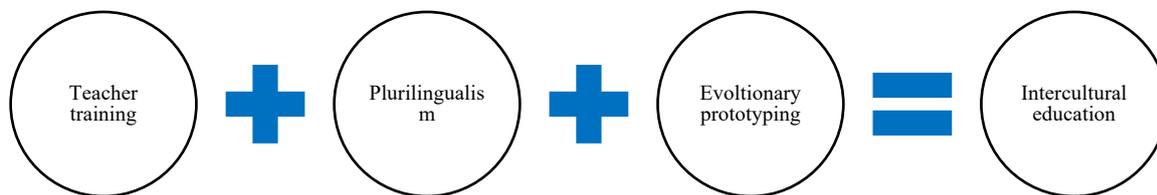
Prioritisation of evaluation in education has led to a significant loss of essential foundational knowledge and skills for multicultural education, particularly in public schooling and language instruction. Gay (2003) emphasises the importance of incorporating multicultural education and training for English language teachers to improve academic performance by adapting pedagogical practices to the needs of students from underrepresented backgrounds. Hooks (1994) and Sleeter and Grant (2009) emphasize the importance of English teachers' awareness of race, sex, and class in teaching EFL students. Understanding the language and culture of students can help them perform well in academic assessments and in real-life situations. Teachers can process cultural information through class discussions and assignments, making informed decisions about the inclusion of literature in the multicultural curriculum. When trained, teachers are more willing to incorporate the multicultural approach in teaching speaking skills.

However, this is only possible when English teachers have received training. Other studies have addressed various aspects of the multicultural curriculum from the perspective of how it is viewed, used, and evaluated. However, most of these studies came to the conclusion that English teachers need a curriculum that is designed not only to address teaching by merely integrating multicultural texts but also to use standardised culture-responsive tests as the primary focus.

#### 4.5. Intercultural Education: A Blueprint For The Curriculum

Due to cultural and socio-political disparities between stakeholders, curriculum creation is typically seen as a challenging topic. There may be discrepancies between the planned curriculum, the actual curriculum, and the curriculum achieved as a result of these disparities. If participants in a reform or improvement effort already feel

irritated, these tensions will only make things worse. A lack of clarity and consistency in curriculum development can result, for instance, from debates in the MENA region over the role of foreign languages in higher education, the number of classes to be taken, whether or not they should be mandatory, and what the ultimate goals of EFL instruction should be for students in nonnative English classrooms. The discussions presented a conceptual paradigm for intercultural education, including three main elements: 1) professional training and teacher education; 2) awareness of plurilingualism and multiculturalism; and 3) evolutionary prototyping, summarised in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** A paradigm of intercultural training

Curriculum development that isn't clear and consistent might have a negative impact on classroom instruction. Stakeholders in education must talk openly and cooperatively about the curriculum's goals and expectations if they are to resolve these disagreements. Teachers, students, and other stakeholders should have a voice in shaping the curriculum so that the final product truly serves the interests of its intended audience.

Overly ambitious innovation goals, little investment in teachers, and a lack of coherence between curriculum modifications and other system components are only some of the problems plaguing many global approaches to curriculum development. Since teachers are ultimately accountable for the success or failure of a curriculum's implementation, it is imperative that schools of teacher education provide them with culturally sensitive modules and innovative interculturally orientated courses. As a result, educators will have a common understanding of the purpose and desired outcomes of using culturally sensitive materials and methods.

The true odds of success in implementing a multicultural curriculum are greatly increased when curriculum development, school organisation development, and teachers' professional development are all integrated. Colleges of education may better prepare teachers for diverse classrooms by including all of these elements in their curricula. This comprehensive strategy will help educators successfully negotiate cultural differences and create welcoming classrooms for all students. Teachers need consistent feedback and opportunities for professional development to help them improve their multicultural teaching strategies.

The political, economic, social, and educational benefits of multilingualism and cultural understanding are substantial. Many people, including educators, employers, international organisations, members of the labour force, and language learners, have a vested interest in the success of plurilingual programmes, but their timely and active participation is often ignored. These groups are crucial in spreading the message of multilingualism and cultural understanding. Your input is valuable in shaping curricula, developing new programmes, and establishing new policies for teaching and learning languages. By realising the importance of early involvement, these parties may make plurilingualism a cornerstone of educational systems and cultures, leading to a more welcoming and interconnected world.

Tyler's rational-linear method, Walker's deliberative approach, and Eisner's creative approach are just a few of the many technical-professional models and techniques available in the literature for designing effective curricula. Marsh and Willis (2003) refer to these examples as "educational texts." The approach used to develop a curriculum depends on its environment and the nature of the work at hand. Education and training are increasingly using blended methods, which combine several approaches to design and development. These methods have many distinguishing features, the most prominent of which is an emphasis on student-centred instruction.

Pragmatism emphasises the importance of thinking about the real-world situation and the intended audience while developing and implementing a programme. In comparison to quasi-rational and linear methods of development, evolutionary prototyping is considered to be more fruitful. Frustrations may be avoided if academic goals gradually converge. Improvement strategies must always include a formative assessment of prototype versions of the curriculum. To find common ground among those invested in English-language education, intercultural contact is important. In today's diverse society, there has been a shift towards merging curricular reform with professional education. One of the most important aspects of introducing the desired culturally based FL curriculum is the professionalisation of language instructors, both preservice and in-service.

The incorporation of expanding cultural knowledge and strengthening the knowledge base in curriculum creation are desirable outcomes of development or design research. It highlights the academic grounding of design concerns while also providing heuristic guidance via design principles. A more well-rounded approach to curriculum creation is offered by the empirical data presented on the viability and efficacy of curricular interventions that incorporate acculturation and enculturation in real user situations.

## 5. Conclusions

Assessment of current research on Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) reveals a strong need for teachers to incorporate intercultural education into language training. However, there is a huge difference between scholarly recommendations and classroom execution. To bridge this gap and effectively lead students, educators must possess more than just awareness of intercultural topics. They require training and resources to successfully traverse the complexity of intercultural communication and apply them to language learning activities.

The purpose of this study, which used introspective questionnaires with closed and open questions, was to learn about the perceptions of cultural integration among teachers and students in EFL programs in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The online questionnaires asked participants about the relevance of teaching culture alongside language, the role of culture in the curriculum, and potential hurdles and facilitators to effective cultural integration. The findings demonstrated that, while teachers and students agreed on the significance of cultural integration, they also recognized problems. Teachers, for example, voiced concerns about limited resources and time, whereas students highlighted cultural sensitivity and trouble understanding specific cultural references.

The study examines cultural integration in Saudi and Egyptian EFL programs, with 80% participation from faculty and students. Literature has been shown to be critical for contextualised learning, however, obstacles such as limited resources and technology provide difficulties. Due to time limits and sensitivity, teachers take care when integrating culture. Survey results reflect varying perspectives on cultural significance, with some supporting intercultural communication and others emphasizing its inherent value. The report emphasizes the value of multicultural education in language learning and encourages instructors to keep studying and advocating for the necessary reforms.

These findings underscore the need for additional research and resources to help teachers effectively integrate culture into their EFL lessons, enabling successful communication and language acquisition for students from varied backgrounds. Some ESL teachers may be unaware of the importance of cultural factors, yet research indicates that they have a significant impact on classroom achievement. More study and resources are required for teachers to fully realize their potential in EFL classrooms. Teachers of English recognise the need to incorporate cultural material and teaching behaviours specific to that culture into language training since this helps students improve their communication skills in real-world situations and gain a better understanding of the target language.

In Saudi Arabia, literature has been regarded as an essential component of cultural education for students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The idea is to provide a more immersive and contextual experience. Scholarly studies have demonstrated that literature is an effective instrument for developing intercultural competence. However, there are several barriers to incorporating culture into the education of English literature in Saudi Arabia, including a lack of representation of native language speakers, a lack of time and resources to address cultural elements, the significant influence of sociocultural and religious variables on social norms and values, and the lack of instructional technology in classroom settings.

Cultural instruction has been acknowledged as an important goal in foreign language education in Egypt, although the attitudes of college-level instructors toward it are unclear. EFL teachers stress cultural integration in their teaching methods in order to enhance intercultural communication skills and encourage exchanges between Arabic and American cultures. External factors, such as new national standards for foreign language instruction, globalisation, and increased cultural exchange, have modified the curriculum and highlighted the necessity of cultural integration. EFL educators must tailor their teaching approaches to students' cultural expectations while also addressing hurdles and limits in incorporating cultural education into literature courses through facilitative alternatives and curriculum revisions.

These findings can be extended to other programs that teach foreign languages. Nonetheless, these thoughts and attitudes must find their way into actual practice. Finally, in order to meet the future needs of EFL preservice teachers and in-service teachers, practical teacher training and professional development on how to use a multicultural approach to English language instruction are required.

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### About The Author



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