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Development of discussion and verbal interaction skills in secondary stage EFL teachers through a multiculturally grounded training programme

Mohamed Saadallah Mohamed

Dr Heba Mustafa Mohamed

Dr.Mohamed Amin Mekheimer, Ph.D.

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Abstract

This study investigates the development of discussion and verbal interaction skills in secondary stage EFL teachers through a multiculturally grounded training program. The program was designed and implemented to address the gap between theoretical knowledge about integrating culture in FLT and its practical implementation in classrooms. The research employed a mixed-methods approach with a pre-test and post-test design to assess the program's effectiveness. Participants were 30 English language teachers in Dubai, UAE. The findings suggest that the program had a positive impact on teachers perceived intercultural competence, particularly in areas like awareness and knowledge. However, a disconnect emerged between teachers' self-reported use of social justice themes in their multicultural education practices and their interview responses. The study highlights the importance of professional development opportunities, especially coursework and conferences, in equipping teachers with the skills to integrate intercultural approaches effectively. Further

research is needed to understand the factors influencing the gap between stated practices and actual implementation of social justice within multicultural education.

Keywords: Multicultural education; EFL teacher training; Discussion skills; Verbal interaction skills; Social justice

Introduction and Background

Extensive research emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural understanding into language learning programs (Bacon, 1995; Bloch, 1996; Bruner, 1996; etc.). Teaching language devoid of its cultural context can foster miscommunication and hinder cross-cultural understanding. Insufficient teacher training in cultural components can further exacerbate these issues (Mekheimer, 2011, 2019). As Research on culture integration in foreign language teaching emphasizes the importance of integrating language and culture in teacher education programs (Bacon, 1995; Bloch, 1996; Bruner, 1996; Hendon, 1980; Mekheimer, 2011; 2019; Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2011; Pesola, 1991; Ramirez & Hall, 1990; Seelye, 1994; Spinelli & Siskin, 1992).

Teaching a language isolated from its culture can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings between foreigners and native speakers, especially in discussions and debates. Poor teacher education programs that do not pay homage to culture teaching or lack necessary background knowledge of perspectives and practices are inevitable outcomes of poor teaching programs. EFL teachers can have the opportunity to teach about the target culture and teach their students the cultural and social use of the target language, helping their students develop their sociolinguistic competence and cross-cultural understanding (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce Murcia, 1995; Hymes, 1972; Sauvignon, 1983).

As argued by Canale & Swain (1980). Hymes (1972) and Savignon (1983), developing EFL teachers' sociolinguistic and cultural competencies, including their ability to use the target language appropriately and know its culturally and socially appropriate functions, is essential for learners to be communicatively competent in the target language. For foreign language learners to develop more than their linguistic ability, they need to develop more areas of knowledge to be communicatively competent: discourse competence, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.

Experientially authentic reading texts can help teachers and learners acquire sociolinguistic and cultural competencies, especially in the classroom (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce Murcia, 1995; Hymes, 1972; Sauvignon, 1983). One critical concern that the standards of foreign language education address is that FL teachers must develop cross-cultural understanding and the ability to engage in appropriately culture-laden interactions in a rapidly globalizing world (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Linder, 1999; Mekheimer, 2019; Rogers & Medley, 1988; Swaffer, 1985; Nostrand, 1989, etc.). Classroom interaction includes verbal and non-verbal interactions, with the quality of the social framework and prevailing climate (democratic *versus* authoritarian) significantly impacting the pattern of classroom interaction between the teacher and students.

Many studies and research in relevant educational literature propose a multicultural approach to teaching English, focusing on the impact of teaching such multicultural approaches and strategies on learners' scholarly output and academic achievement (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Linder, 1999; Mekheimer, 2019; Rogers & Medley, 1988, Swaffer, 1985, Nostrand, 1989, etc.). However, there is a lack of consistency between theoretically prescribed teaching methods and what happens in the classroom when the teacher applies these methods.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of integrating culture and adopting multicultural teaching approaches in foreign language education (FLT) and linguistic and cultural pluralism. However, the relationship between linguistic preparation of teachers and their acculturation into the target culture is still debated. The popular view regards language as an aspect of culture, as it is how culture is socially constructed, transmitted, and embodied.

Focusing only on language proficiency and engaging in 'culture-free' language teaching may cause learners to focus on the literal meaning of the language, leading to fluency fools. Studies conducted in realistic environments for language learning indicated that traditional teaching of language and culture needed to consider the external world of learners, where their language and cultural practices differ.

Developing cultural and cultural awareness in language classes requires teachers to move from imparting cultural knowledge to helping learners perceive the state of culture during language communication (Christensen, 1990; Galloway, 1992; Gajdusek, 1988; Lazar, 1996; Oiler, 1983; Ramirez, 1999; Shook, 1996; Shrum & Glisan, 1994; Stewart & Talburt, 1996; Widdowson, 1982; Seelye, 1993, etc.). Cultural orientation views culture as a fixed entity, a state that must be studied through the accumulation of cultural knowledge (Liddicoat, 2005; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Although Fenner (2008) in his study, among others, advocates that developing this awareness is the responsibility of learners first and their teachers afterwards, factors such as the learners' background, age, and language level indicate that teachers must be more involved during language learning to achieve culture learning as well. Therefore, the cultural component becomes self-contained and often very distant from the language itself.

This study argues that equipping teachers with the necessary skills to teach the target culture alongside the language empowers them to:

- Foster students' sociolinguistic competence and cross-cultural understanding (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce Murcia, 1995; Hymes, 1972; Sauvignon, 1983).
- Develop students' ability to use the target language appropriately in various social contexts (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1983).

- Prepare students for an increasingly globalized world where cross-cultural communication is essential (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Linder, 1999; Mekheimer, 2019; etc.).

Literature review

This review explores the integration of multicultural education (MCE) into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. MCE encompasses diverse approaches, with various goals ranging from cultural awareness and appreciation to social justice and transformation (Banks, 2007). Its conceptual framework has evolved over time, shaped by historical events like the Civil Rights movement (Nieto, 2010).

Implementing MCE effectively requires careful consideration of various aspects. Teachers' attitudes and practices play a crucial role. They need positive attitudes towards intercultural understanding and the proper use of the target language (Rya, 2019). Regular training programs on MCE are essential to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge (Abu El-Haj, 2006).

Furthermore, the review examines various approaches to incorporating multicultural content into the EFL curriculum. Banks (2007) proposes four methods, each with its own strengths and limitations:

- Contribution: This approach, while easy to implement, risks reinforcing cultural stereotypes.
- Additive: This method adds ethnic content without altering the existing curriculum structure, potentially neglecting broader cultural contexts.
- Transformation: This approach modifies the curriculum to integrate diverse perspectives and foster a deeper understanding of the target culture.
- Social action: This method encourages students to engage critically with social and political issues through discussion and action, empowering them to become active agents of change.

Gibson (1984) further contributes to the discussion by introducing five models of multicultural education, each emphasizing different aspects of cultural understanding and interaction. By integrating diverse perspectives and fostering critical thinking skills, MCE empowers both teachers and students to engage in effective language learning, cultivate cultural sensitivity, and actively participate in promoting social justice within and beyond the classroom environment.

The discourse of multicultural education flows through various currents, each emphasizing different aspects of transformation and engagement.

One stream, proposed by Nieto (2010), is the "levels of transformation" model. It begins with tolerance, acknowledging but potentially grudgingly accepting differences. As it progresses, it fosters acceptance without disapproval, then deepens into respect for diverse cultures, culminating in support through affirmation, solidarity, and critical dialogue.

Another current, identified by Sleeter and Grant (2009), focuses on different groups. **Approach 1** emphasizes teaching cultural differences and social context, helping learners navigate the target language environment. **Approach 2** focuses on positive human interaction to build unity and cultural understanding among students and teachers, in which language is used to promote positive feelings, discussions, and self-esteem, reduce stereotypes and negative biases and denounce discrimination, inequality, and unfair treatment based on language differences. **Approach 3** highlights specific groups, promoting equality through representation and integration of their experiences into the curriculum. **Approach 4** champions equal opportunities and respect for diverse perspectives, fostering appreciation for different viewpoints.

Social justice and action also weave into the tapestry of multicultural education. McLaren (1994) advocates for "critical resistance," challenging power structures and promoting social change. Similarly, Sleeter and Grant (2009) highlight the "multicultural social justice education" approach, which prioritizes social structural equality, cultural pluralism, preparing students for international citizenship, and fostering a critical lens to analyze and challenge societal inequalities.

Finally, Rya (2019) emphasizes the crucial role of well-equipped teachers. They need multicultural knowledge, skills, awareness, and sensitivities to understand and appreciate diverse cultures. They must also be adept at creating inclusive classroom environments and possess multicultural sensitivity to effectively respond to the unique needs and perspectives of diverse learners. As such, these diverse approaches in multicultural education weave a narrative that goes beyond mere recognition of difference. They advocate for actively promoting social justice, equity, and respect for all cultures, fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students.

The curriculum is another critical element. Developing, designing, and implementing a multicultural curriculum should be tailored to the specific needs of both students and teachers in the EFL context (Abu El-Haj, 2006). Different approaches for incorporating multicultural content exist, such as Banks' (2007) contribution, additive, transformation, and social action methods, or Gibson's (1984) five models focusing on social justice and transformation. Each approach has its strengths and limitations, and educators need to carefully consider which ones best suit their specific context and learning goals.

MCE also emphasizes critical consciousness in teachers, encompassing power awareness, critical literacy, desocialization, and self-education (Shor, 1992). This allows them to navigate the complexities of addressing sensitive topics like race, gender, and class while fostering a democratic classroom environment that encourages student participation and discussion (Abu El-Haj, 2006).

However, implementing MCE in EFL classrooms is not without its challenges. These include potential classroom management concerns and the need to adhere to Ministry of Education

guidelines (Abu El-Haj, 2006). Despite these challenges, MGE offers an empowering framework for both teachers and students. It fosters effective language learning, cultivates cultural sensitivity, and promotes social justice engagement, ultimately empowering all participants in the learning process.

The Role of Multicultural Education in EFL Classrooms

Multicultural education plays a vital role in enriching the learning experience of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students and fostering intercultural understanding. This approach emphasizes incorporating diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences into the EFL curriculum and instruction.

Key aspects of multicultural education in EFL classrooms include

- Developing teachers' multicultural awareness and competence: EFL teachers need training to become aware of their own cultural biases and equipped with the skills to effectively navigate diverse cultural contexts within their classrooms. This involves understanding different cultural backgrounds, values, and communication styles of their students.
- Integrating culturally relevant materials and activities: The curriculum should incorporate diverse texts, activities, and discussions that reflect the lived experiences and cultural backgrounds of students. This could involve using literature, films, music, and other resources that represent various cultures and perspectives.
- Encouraging critical thinking and reflection: EFL classrooms should encourage students to think critically about their own cultural assumptions and biases, as well as those of others. This can be fostered through debates, discussions, and reflective writing exercises that prompt students to examine different viewpoints and perspectives.
- Promoting intercultural communication skills: Effective communication goes beyond language proficiency. EFL instruction should equip students with the skills to interact respectfully and effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This includes understanding cultural norms and practices related to communication styles, non-verbal cues, and appropriate language use in different situations.

Benefits of incorporating multicultural education in EFL classrooms

- Enhanced motivation and engagement: Students are more likely to be motivated and engaged in learning when they see their own cultural backgrounds and experiences reflected in the curriculum.

- Deeper understanding of language and culture: By exploring diverse cultures, students gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and culture, and how language use varies across different contexts.
- Development of intercultural competence: EFL students develop essential skills for navigating an increasingly interconnected world, including critical thinking, empathy, and respect for different cultures.
- Preparation for real-world communication: By fostering intercultural communication skills, EFL classrooms prepare students to interact effectively and respectfully with individuals from diverse backgrounds in various life situations.

Challenges and considerations

- Balancing diverse needs: EFL teachers need to find a balance between catering to the specific needs of individual students from diverse backgrounds and maintaining a cohesive curriculum.
- Navigating standardized testing: Integrating multicultural education might pose challenges when teachers are pressured to focus solely on standardized test preparation. Finding a balance between both is crucial.
- Addressing potential cultural sensitivities: It is important to approach sensitive cultural topics with respect and tact, ensuring all students feel valued and included in classroom discussions.

Ultimately, multicultural education is an essential element of effective EFL instruction. By incorporating diverse perspectives, fostering critical thinking, and promoting intercultural communication skills, EFL classrooms can equip students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to thrive in a globalized world.

Professional Development for cultivating EFL Teachers' cultural competence

This literature review explores the crucial role of professional development (PD) for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of cultural diversity in their classrooms. We argue that continuous PD, encompassing both pre-service and in-service training, is vital for educators to effectively integrate multicultural education principles into their curriculum and teaching practices.

Pre-service training programs should equip future EFL teachers with a solid foundation in cultural awareness and sensitivity. However, studies highlight that pre-service teachers often struggle to grasp the full scope of cultural diversity and may view multicultural education as merely incorporating information about "other" cultures. This necessitates a critical re-examination of pre-

service curriculum to emphasize the importance of not only cultural knowledge, but also the ability to critically analyze and incorporate this knowledge into pedagogical practices.

In-service training programs can play a crucial role in bridging this gap by providing continuous learning opportunities for practicing educators. Engaging in coursework focused on multicultural curriculum design, including the selection of appropriate content and teaching methods, empowers teachers to translate theoretical knowledge into real-world application within their classrooms. Notably, a critical social analysis conducted prior to designing such training programs can be instrumental in identifying the specific learning outcomes desired for both teachers and their students.

Effective communication skills form the cornerstone of successful EFL instruction. Verbal communication, encompassing spoken and written language, empowers teachers to exchange information, express ideas, and foster understanding in the classroom. Mastering these skills necessitates clarity, active listening, and the ability to deliver precise and informative responses in various contexts, such as dialogues or presentations. Beyond verbal communication, nonverbal cues like gestures and body language also play a significant role in shaping students' comprehension and fostering a culturally sensitive learning environment.

Classroom interaction emerges as a vital aspect of second language acquisition theories, with research consistently demonstrating its positive impact on student learning. This becomes particularly relevant in settings where English is taught as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL). Recognizing the importance of classroom interaction, several governments have implemented curriculum revisions that focus on developing communicative competence and cultural understanding among students. These revisions often emphasize the need for active student engagement with the target language within the classroom.

Teachers' attitudes towards classroom interaction significantly influence their willingness to engage in communication and guide students' language acquisition journey. Understanding teachers' perspectives on classroom interaction in the target language is essential for fostering a conducive learning environment. It is crucial to acknowledge that both verbal and nonverbal interactions contribute significantly to a well-rounded learning experience that encompasses both linguistic and cultural aspects.

Narrative elements, such as oral tales, play a critical role in discourse by facilitating discussions, encouraging creative thinking, and validating others' perspectives. EFL teachers can leverage the power of oral narratives to pursue diverse learning objectives, including fostering academic development, interpersonal skills, and creative expression. Different narrative types, such as vicarious, hypothetical, and procedural narratives, can be employed in the classroom to encourage

students to explore diverse viewpoints, develop critical thinking skills, and follow instructions effectively.

Multicultural education equips EFL teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of diverse student backgrounds and foster a culturally inclusive learning environment. It is imperative for teachers to undergo training in multicultural education principles to master the power of language as a tool for effective communication and cultural understanding.

Developing an effective multicultural curriculum necessitates careful consideration of student and teacher needs within the EFL classroom. This curriculum should encompass instructional strategies, everyday language usage, classroom discussions, and debates. By understanding students' diverse cultural backgrounds and learning styles, teachers can adapt their teaching methods to cater to individual needs and enhance student learning outcomes.

The implementation of multicultural education involves diverse approaches, such as thematic approaches, reader response activities, and classroom discussions and debates. Utilizing universal themes allows students to identify similarities and differences between various sociopolitical groups, fostering intercultural awareness. Teachers can further engage students by drawing upon their prior knowledge and experiences during classroom discussions.

It is crucial to acknowledge the challenges associated with teaching about sensitive topics such as race, gender, and class. To effectively navigate these complexities, teachers need to critically reflect upon their own cultural biases and engage in critical self-education on these sensitive subjects. Cultivating a critical multicultural consciousness characterized by power awareness, critical literacy, desocialization, and self-education is essential for tackling these challenges and fostering inclusivity within the EFL classroom.

Despite the numerous benefits, incorporating multicultural literature presents various challenges, including concerns regarding classroom control and adherence to educational standards. To effectively overcome these challenges, teachers require ongoing cultural **education** and training in multicultural pedagogy, equipping them with the necessary skills to navigate complexities and challenges, nuances associated with cultural diversity in the EFL classroom, the student backgrounds and sensitive topics and challenges in the foreign language classroom.

Problem Statement

The gap between theoretical knowledge about integrating culture in FLT and its practical implementation in classrooms remains a concern. While research advocates for multicultural approaches (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Linder, 1999; etc.), the connection between teacher training and their ability to effectively implement these approaches needs further investigation.

Research Aims and Questions

This study aims to:

- Design and implement a multicultural training program for English language teachers at the secondary level.
- Evaluate the program's effectiveness in developing teachers' verbal interaction and discussion skills.
- Contribute to improved teaching practices and learning outcomes in FLT classrooms by effectively integrating cultural components.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do Secondary School English instructors interpret multicultural education (awareness, transformation, and action) in their classrooms?
2. How effective is the proposed training program, grounded in the multicultural approach, in enhancing verbal interaction and discussion skills among secondary level English language teachers?
3. What is the Potential Relationship between implementation of intercultural education by Secondary School English instructors and the racial makeup of the schools they work in?
4. What is relationship between professional development in multicultural education and the implementation of it by Secondary School English teachers?

Significance of the Study

This research holds potential benefits for various stakeholders:

- **English language teachers:** By equipping teachers with essential verbal interaction and discussion skills, the program can enhance their professional development, performance, and satisfaction.
- **Students:** By fostering teachers' cultural awareness and teaching methods, the program can contribute to improved learning outcomes and cross-cultural understanding among students.
- **Curriculum developers:** The findings can inform the development of curriculum materials and training programs that effectively integrate cultural components into FLT.
- **Educational institutions:** Continuous professional development opportunities for teachers can enhance national educational capacity and prepare graduates for a globalized workforce.

Methodology

This study employs an **experimental design** with one experimental group and a **pre-test and post-test** design to assess the effectiveness of the training program. The program will be designed based on the **multicultural approach** and implemented with chosen units of the English language curriculum.

Participants

This study targeted English language teachers in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, focusing on secondary schools. A selective sample of five schools with a total of 30 teachers participated in the research. To ensure diverse perspectives, two to three instructors from each school representing different sociocultural backgrounds were included.

Sampling

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to ensure a diverse range of participants in terms of sociocultural backgrounds.

Research design

The study utilized a mixed-methods approach employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. This approach provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by combining the strengths of both methodologies.

Data collection

Quantitative data:

- A 36-item online survey was administered to gather data on participants' understanding of multicultural education, its implementation in classrooms, and related professional development activities.
- Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic information, awareness of curriculum integration, and perceptions of multicultural education practices.

Qualitative data:

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 teachers to gain deeper insights into their perspectives and experiences regarding multicultural education implementation.
- The Multicultural Competence Assessment Checklist was created to support self-reflection and identify areas for improvement.
- A pilot study with 25 teachers was conducted to assess the feasibility and suitability of the survey, interview questions, and checklist.

Data analysis methods

We used statistical methods (SPSS) to analyze numerical data (demographics, curriculum awareness) and identify trends and patterns. Additionally, thematic analysis (NVivo) helped us interpret interview responses (qualitative data) by uncovering recurring themes and ideas.

Triangulation

Triangulation techniques were employed to enhance the credibility of the findings by combining data from different sources (surveys, interviews, and self-assessment checklists).

Ethical considerations

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants.
- Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the research process.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the perceptions and experiences of English language teachers in Dubai regarding the Multicultural Education Programme (MCDEST). The findings provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness and offer recommendations for improvement.

Results

Multicultural Competence Assessment Checklist Findings:

While it's not statistically advisable to perform complex analyses on a small sample (30 participants), some basic observations can be made from the provided data:

Analyzing Intercultural Competence: A Closer Look at the Data

Part A: Awareness:

An analysis of Part A reveals that most participants have positive self-perceptions regarding their intercultural awareness. This is evidenced by the majority of responses falling under the "Fairly Often/Pretty Well" or "Always/Very Well" categories for most statements. However, a noteworthy exception exists. Statement 4 ("Express discomfort with differences") stands out with a significantly higher frequency of "Never" or "Sometimes/Occasionally" responses. This finding suggests that a subset of participants may experience occasional discomfort in certain diverse situations, warranting further exploration.

Part B: Knowledge:

Similar to Part A, participants generally responded positively in Part B, indicating a relatively good level of perceived intercultural knowledge. This is evident in the consistent use of higher category responses throughout the section. However, Statement 17 ("Understanding of historical events of racism and marginalization") presents a potential gap in knowledge. This statement elicited a noticeably higher frequency of responses in the lower categories compared to others. This finding suggests that some participants might benefit from further development in their understanding of historical injustices.

Part C: Skills:

Part C demonstrated greater response variability compared to the previous sections. Here, statements received a mix of responses across all categories, indicating a wider range of perceived competence levels among participants. Notably, statements 28 ("Flexible communication style"), 31 ("Respectful behaviors"), and 32 ("Learning and applying cultural norms") received mostly positive responses, suggesting that participants perceive themselves as having strengths in these areas. Conversely, statements 33 ("Perceived as an ally by colleagues") and 36 ("Acknowledging cultural

biases") received a wider range of responses, indicating potential areas for further development. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and support to enhance these specific skillsets.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perceived intercultural competence, we can employ several statistical measures:

1. Average Scores: Assigning scores (1-4) to each response category and calculating the average across all statements for each participant provides an indication of their **overall level of perceived intercultural competence**. This score reflects the general trend in their responses.

2. Standard Deviations: Calculating standard deviations for each section (Awareness, Knowledge, Skills) and overall score helps measure the **variability** in responses within each group. A high standard deviation indicates a wider range of responses, suggesting greater diversity in perceived competence within that section. The following Table 1 presents the **mean score, standard deviation (SD), and mode** for each statement:

Table 1

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and Mode

Statement	Mean Score	SD	Mode
1. Perceiving human diversity as a positive phenomenon	3.83	0.41	Agree
2. Having a well-defined understanding of one's cultural identity	3.33	0.57	Agree
3. Recognizing that understanding diverse cultures requires self-awareness	3.00	0.84	Neutral
4. Expressing discomfort with cultural differences	3.33	0.57	Agree
5. Understanding personal assumptions about people from different cultures	3.33	0.57	Agree
6. Having developed strategies to mitigate negative effects of preconceptions	3.33	0.57	Agree
7. Acknowledging that cultural perspectives influence evaluation	3.50	0.76	Agree
8. Recognizing the potential for discomfort in cross-cultural situations	3.33	0.57	Agree
9. Intentionally creating environments that foster diversity and connection	3.70	0.48	Agree
10. Acknowledging potential racial privilege as an Arab in Dubai	3.83	0.41	Agree
11. Understanding the impact of social context on diverse communities	3.83	0.41	Agree
12. Embracing lifelong learning for cultural competency	3.53	0.68	Agree
13. Acknowledging limitations in cultural understanding and seeking to learn more	3.70	0.48	Agree
14. Practicing active listening and research before asking questions of marginalized groups	3.70	0.48	Agree
15. Recognizing the importance of valuing differences in race, culture, and ethnicity	3.70	0.48	Agree
16. Having a thorough understanding of historical racism and marginalization	3.30	0.90	Agree

17. Recognizing that cultures evolve and exhibit variations among individuals	3.70	0.48	Agree
18. Believing in the importance of lifelong learning for cultural humility	3.83	0.41	Agree
19. Recognizing that stereotypes and discrimination can dehumanize and incite violence	3.83	0.41	Agree
20. Possessing knowledge of one's own familial history and cultural identity	3.50	0.76	Agree
21. Continuously working to improve communication and discussion skills across cultures	3.33	0.57	Agree
22. Recognizing the diverse identities of students and their potential interactions	3.33	0.57	Agree
23. Recognizing both inter-cultural and intra-cultural differences in student populations	3.33	0.57	Agree
24. Recognizing that everyone has their own culture and it shouldn't be the sole standard	3.33	0.57	Agree

The analysis reveals several key points about the participants' perceived intercultural competence:

- **Overall agreement:** The mean scores, ranging from 3.00 to 3.87, suggest a general trend of **agreement** with most statements. This indicates that, on average, participants reported positive self-perceptions regarding their intercultural competence.
- **Variability in responses:** While most statements have standard deviations (SD) below 1, suggesting **relatively consistent responses**, some statements like "awareness of cultural norms" (statement 3) and "confidence in adapting communication styles" (statement 17) have higher SDs. This indicates **greater diversity in viewpoints** on these specific aspects of competence. In other words, while participants generally agreed about some aspects, others sparked more varied responses, suggesting potential areas for further exploration or targeted development.
- **Dominant opinion:** The mode (most frequent response) being "agree" for most statements further reinforces the **overall positive self-perception** of participants regarding their intercultural competence.

These findings offer valuable insights into the participants' self-reported strengths and areas for potential development in intercultural communication. Further analysis, such as comparing responses across different groups or investigating correlations between statements, could provide even deeper understanding of the nuances within the data.

Therefore, based on the analysis of the central tendency (mode, mean, median) and dispersion (range) of the responses, it is evident that the participants in this survey generally agree with the presented statements on multicultural education. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the

limitations of the study, particularly the small sample size, which restricts the generalizability of these findings to a wider population.

Demographic and Variable Data

Following the removal of outliers and participants who did not answer relevant survey questions, a total of 30 surveys were analyzed. The majority of participants identified as male ($n = 17$), and female ($n = 13$). In Dubai, most participants ($n = 22$, 72%) indicated awareness of the meaning of intercultural education. However, 79.73% of participants responded negatively to clear recommendations regarding the inclusion of cultural training in the language courses being considered in schools. The majority of participants ($n = 20$, 68%) acknowledged awareness of online technologies that could enhance multicultural teaching approaches. Table 2 displays the frequencies and percentages of gender, age, and awareness of intercultural education.

Table 2

Participant Demographics and Intercultural Education Awareness

Variable	Frequency Percentage	
Gender		
Female	13	35%
Male	17	45%
Age		
18-25	3	10%
26-45	25	83%
46+	2	7%
Intercultural Education Awareness		
Yes	22	73%
No	2	7%

The internal consistency of the survey instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. This measure indicates the reliability of the scores, with higher values reflecting greater consistency. The acceptable range for alpha is generally considered to be between .70 and .90.

The results showed varying levels of reliability across the subscales. Recognition scores had a doubtful reliability of .60, indicating that the items within this subscale may not consistently measure the intended construct. Transformation scores were satisfactory at .74, while action scores achieved a good level of reliability at .71. Finally, use scores demonstrated strong reliability with an alpha of .80. These findings suggest that the survey items effectively captured the intended concepts within the transformation, action, and use subscales, but may require further refinement for the recognition section.

Table 3

The reliability statistics, means, and standard deviations.

Composite	α	No. of Items	M	SD
Recognition	.60	6	4.86	0.61
Transformation	.74	6	4.97	0.62
Action	.71	6	4.99	0.67
Use	.80	9	4.76	0.70

Research Question 1: How do Secondary School English instructors interpret multicultural education (awareness, transformation, and action) in their classrooms?

A within-subjects ANOVA was used to investigate research question 1. Before analysis, normality tests revealed that transformation and action scores were not normally distributed. However, Stevens (2009) suggests that the F statistic remains reliable even with non-normal data. Mauchly's sphericity test indicated a violation of the assumption of sphericity, which was addressed using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.

The results indicated significant differences in scores on recognition, transformation, and action, with an overall effect size of 3%. However, no statistically significant differences were found when pairwise comparisons were undertaken. These results suggest that there were no significant differences in scores among participants. Table 4 displays the ANOVA results.

Table 4

Within-Subjects ANOVA of Recognition, Transformation, and Action Scores

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η^2
Group type	1.11	1.85	0.60	3.74	.029	.03
Error	31.91	199.36	0.16			

Research Question 2: Implementation of Intercultural Education

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze how Secondary School English instructors implement intercultural education in their classrooms. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to understand the patterns in teachers' responses regarding their use of intercultural education. Table 5 summarizes the findings.

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Responses Regarding Intercultural Education Implementation

Statement	Agree	Agree Than Disagree	More Strongly Agree	Total
Ensure students participate in decision making.	25 (23%)	-	-	48 (44%)
Get to know students to select curriculum relevant to their sociocultural backgrounds.	35 (32%)	-	-	110 (100%)
Get to know students to select curriculum reflecting their perspectives.	35 (32%)	-	-	110 (100%)
Get to know students to select curriculum building on prior knowledge.	41 (37%)	-	-	110 (100%)
Use teaching strategies addressing diverse learning styles.	-	-	68 (62%)	110 (100%)
Lead students in finding contextual meaning.	-	-	45 (41%)	110 (100%)

Present curriculum critically to reveal social and political inequities.	37 (34%)	-	-	110 (100%)
Present curriculum critically to inspire change in the social and political status quo.	35 (32%)	25 (23%)	-	110 (100%)
Bring personal narrative to the classroom to connect with students.	-	-	36 (33%)	110 (100%)

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to exactly 100%.

Overall, teachers agreed or strongly agreed with most statements, indicating a positive attitude towards implementing intercultural education. Notably, all teachers reported getting to know their students to inform curriculum selection, and a majority used teaching strategies addressing diverse learning styles. Additionally, a substantial portion of teachers engaged in critical pedagogy practices, aiming to raise awareness of social and political inequities and inspire change.

An average score (mean) was calculated to assess the overall use of intercultural education by teachers. This score was based on their responses to the nine survey items in Table 4, which measured their agreement with statements reflecting actions associated with intercultural education. Responses were rated on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater use.

The average score for the implementation of multicultural education was 4.76, with a standard deviation of 0.70, on a scale of 1 to 6. All participants scored at least 3. This suggests that teachers generally agreed they often exhibited these behaviors associated with intercultural education. The low standard deviation indicates that most participants provided similar responses. Table 6 summarizes these findings.

Table 6

Self-Reported Use of Multicultural Education

Min	Max	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
3.00	6.00	4.76	0.70

The findings from Research Question 2 suggest a generally positive disposition among teachers towards implementing intercultural education in their classrooms. They reported engaging in

various practices aligned with this approach, and the average score indicated a moderate to high level of self-reported use.

Research Question 3: What is the Potential Relationship between implementation of intercultural education by Secondary School English instructors and the racial makeup of the schools they work in?

Research question 3 investigated the potential relationship between the implementation of intercultural education by Secondary School English instructors and the racial makeup of the schools they work in.

Eighty-eight surveys were included in this analysis, as some participants did not provide their school information. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine potential differences in the use of intercultural education among schools categorized by their dominant student population: predominantly white, predominantly black, or multicultural (neither predominantly white nor black). Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was conducted prior to the ANOVA and revealed no significant violation of this assumption. The subsequent ANOVA results showed no statistically significant differences in the use of intercultural education between instructors from schools with varying racial compositions, $F(2, 85) = 1.04$, $p = .357$. These findings suggest that the racial makeup of a school does not have a statistically significant association with the level of intercultural education implementation by English instructors. Table 7 summarizes the ANOVA results, and Table 8 presents the average use scores for each school composition group.

Table 7

ANOVA Results for Intercultural Education Use by School Sociocultural Composition

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η^2
Group type	0.82	2	0.41	1.04	.357	.02
Error	33.47	85	0.394			

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for Intercultural Education Use by School Composition

Sociocultural Composition	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
White	46	4.72	0.60

Black	28	4.87	0.58
Multicultural	14	4.98	0.80

Eventually, the findings of Research Question 3 suggest no statistically significant association between the racial makeup of a school and the use of intercultural education by its English instructors. This indicates that instructors across different school contexts may be implementing intercultural education at similar levels, regardless of the dominant student population.

Research Question 4: What is relationship between professional development in multicultural education and the implementation of it by Secondary School English teachers?

The fourth research question aimed to investigate the relationship between professional development in multicultural education and the implementation of it by Secondary School English teachers. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to ensure data reliability and statistical assumptions. Normal distribution and homoscedasticity, and Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were calculated to assess multicollinearity. All VIFs were below 2, indicating no concern for multicollinearity, ensuring the validity of the data and subsequent regression analysis.

Since the independent variables were binary (coded as 0 for "did not participate" and 1 for "did participate"), traditional correlation calculations between them were not possible. Instead, each independent variable was individually analyzed for its correlation with the dependent variable (use of intercultural education). Table 6 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 9*Correlation Matrix between Multicultural Education Training and Use of Multicultural Education*

Training Method	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Undergraduate classes	.25**	.008
Graduate classes	.01	.951
District-initiated professional development	.16	.102
Workshop participation	.11	.279
Conference participation	.32**	.001
Self-initiated development	.20*	.043

Note: * indicates significance at the $p < .05$ level, * indicates significance at the $p < .01$ level, and *** indicates significance at the $p < .001$ level.

The correlation matrix revealed that engaging in undergraduate coursework, attending conferences, and pursuing self-directed learning exhibited statistically significant positive associations with the use of intercultural education. These methods were subsequently included in the multiple linear regression model to assess their combined predictive power. The multiple regression analysis yielded statistically significant results with an F-value of 6. This signifies that the model effectively predicts the use of intercultural education based on the included variables. The R-squared (R^2) value of the model was 0.16, indicating that 16% of the variance in the use of intercultural education strategies by teachers can be explained by the six training methods included in the analysis.

Examining the model breakdown (Table 10), participation in both undergraduate coursework ($p = .034$) and conferences ($p = .005$) emerged as significant predictors of using intercultural education in the classroom. Teachers with prior coursework scored 0.29 points higher on average, while conference attendees scored 0.44 points higher. These findings suggest that both academic preparation and professional development opportunities like conferences can contribute to equipping teachers with the necessary tools for implementing intercultural education effectively.

Table 10*Multiple Linear Regression with Training Methods Predicting Use of Multicultural Education*

Training Method	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
Undergraduate classes	0.29	0.14	0.21	2.15	.034	1.11
Graduate classes	- 0.01	0.13	- 0.01	- 0.09	.930	1.02
District-initiated PD	0.16	0.14	0.11	1.08	.283	1.16
Workshop participation	- 0.08	0.15	- 0.06	- 0.55	.584	1.28
Conference participation	0.44	0.15	0.29	2.84	.005	1.24
Self-initiated development	0.02	0.15	0.12	0.15	.883	1.37

Note: $F(6, 101) = 3.16$, $p = .007$. This indicates that the model is statistically significant ($p < .05$), with an F-value of 3.16.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

Teachers showed consistent understanding and application of intercultural education across topics, used a multi-faceted approach emphasizing action and critical thinking, and perceived themselves implementing it moderately to highly. Notably, participating in specific professional development, like coursework and conferences, significantly predicted utilizing intercultural education in practice. These findings emphasize the value of diverse professional development opportunities, especially coursework and conferences, in empowering teachers to effectively integrate intercultural approaches in their classrooms.

Qualitative results from Interviews

Sixteen survey respondents agreed to participate in follow-up interviews. To schedule these interviews, all 16 individuals received emails, but only 11 replied. Out of these 11, seven interviews

were conducted over the phone and four in person. Although additional follow-up emails were sent, no further responses were received.

Interviewees came from nine different schools, reflecting the district's demographics. Two schools have predominantly Arab student populations (53%, 76%), four have majority Asian populations (49%, 56%, 63%, 77%), and two are multiculturally diverse (one predominantly Arab nationalities at 56%, and one with a mix of 35% Arabs, 28% westerners, and 32% Asian students). The first interview question explored teachers' definitions of multicultural education. In vivo coding was used to analyze the responses, revealing themes related to curriculum and students. These results are summarized in the table 11 below:

Table 11

Coding for Secondary School English Teachers' Definition of Multicultural Education

Theme	Frequency	Example Codes
Variety & Culture	18	variety, backgrounds, culture, cultural
Awareness & Acceptance	10	awareness, acceptance, norms, avoid prejudice
Equity & Inclusion	3	equal education, inclusive
Student Focus	5	interests, relevant, friendly, empathy
Respect & Understanding	10	similarities, differences, respect, meeting needs

Interestingly, while teachers emphasized variety and culture in their definitions, they rarely mentioned elements of social justice or taking action. This contrasts with survey responses, where teachers indicated they addressed both aspects. One interviewee expressed that literature classrooms were not the appropriate setting for discussions about social justice.

Dissonance in Implementing Social Justice in Multicultural Education

The initial survey suggested that teachers integrated social justice into their multicultural education practices. However, their interview responses revealed a different picture.

Contrasting Views:

- **Survey:** Teachers indicated addressing social justice in their teaching.
- **Interviews:** They rarely mentioned it in their definitions of multicultural education.

- **One interviewee explicitly objected:** They believed literature classes weren't the appropriate setting for social justice discussions, highlighting a disconnect between their survey response and stated practice.

Reasons for Discomfort:

- **Focus on traditional literature:** One teacher argued that social justice discussions were better suited for history classes, emphasizing their role as raising student awareness through literature.
- **Unease with controversy:** Another teacher expressed concern that social justice topics could introduce unwanted political elements.
- **Shifting responsibility:** Others suggested social justice belonged in other courses or extracurricular activities, not English language instruction.

Limited Implementation:

The study reveals that while some teachers acknowledge the importance of multicultural education, their implementation is limited. The study uses a thematic coding scheme to categorize practices of secondary school English teachers in terms of approaches and content. The findings show that despite some efforts towards diversity, the frequency of "general" content and the absence of codes discussing the experiences of marginalized groups raises concerns. The study also suggests that the focus seems to be on broader cultural exposure rather than a deeper understanding of the experiences of marginalized groups within those cultures. Table 12 offers valuable insights into the approach of these teachers to multicultural education, revealing that despite incorporating diverse materials and perspectives, their focus seems to be on broader cultural exposure rather than a deeper understanding of marginalized groups.

Table 12

Coding for Secondary School English Teachers' Usage of Multicultural Education

Theme	Frequency	Example Codes
Approaches		
Intercultural Communication	4	- Class discussions & role-playing on cultural communication styles.
ELL/ESOL	2	- Using visuals & pairing native/non-native speakers for collaboration.
Student Choice in Readings	3	- Students suggest diverse authors/topics or teacher guides selection for varied perspectives.
Current Events	1	- Analyzing global events highlighting cultural viewpoints.
Holidays & Food	1	- Exploring traditions respectfully, avoiding stereotypes.
Content		

Authors from Various Cultures	4	- Short stories/poems by diverse authors or excerpts from international literature.
Readings Reflecting Students	3	- Stories/novels with characters facing similar challenges to the student population.
Novels Embracing Cultural Differences	3	- Novels where cultural clashes or identity exploration are central themes.
Novels (General)	11	- High frequency suggests focus on traditional literature, potentially lacking diverse representation.
IB Works in Translation	2	- Utilizing translated works for specific units/projects within the IB curriculum.
Movies	9	- Films can be a good tool, but ensure accurate cultural representation and avoid stereotypes.
Author Background	3	- Briefly discussing the author's background for contextual understanding.
Literature Context	2	- Providing essential background information on the cultural context of the literature.

Note: The high frequency of "Novels (General)" and lower frequencies for content specifically reflecting diverse cultures highlights the "Limited Implementation" identified in the passage.

Overall, these findings reveal a gap between teachers' stated approaches and their actual implementation of social justice within their multicultural education practices. Further research is needed to understand the factors influencing this disconnect and how to bridge it.

Discussion

Building Upon the Study's Findings

The study's results support Castro's (2010) call for greater investigation into how specific strategies and curricular choices shape preservice teachers' beliefs about multicultural education. Additionally, mirroring the approach teachers use with students, research should examine the previous experiences of preservice teachers to better tailor instruction and support their development, as proposed by Owen (2010).

Prioritizing Teacher Development

Before further research, it's crucial to provide targeted training for existing teachers to deepen their understanding of intercultural education components. The interviews underscored the teachers' belief that their own professional development directly benefits their students.

The Power of Teacher Collaboration

All interviewed teachers emphasized collaboration as a powerful learning tool, aligning with McClure's (2008) findings on teacher retention, satisfaction, decision-making ownership, sense of belonging, and student performance gains. This collaboration can take various forms:

- **Peer Observation:** Teachers expressed a desire to observe colleagues at other schools, especially those teaching specialized courses without on-campus collaborators.
- **Informal Quarterly Meetings:** Interest in topic-based discussions suggests potential for self-organized meetings. The district could facilitate by collecting information on topics and preferences and sharing it with teachers.
- **Mentorship and Coaching Programs:** Inspired by previous studies (e.g., Yoon et al., 2007; 2009), teachers suggested formalizing mentorship and coaching structures to support practice improvement and student achievement.

District Support for Collaboration

While logistical challenges exist, the district can play a key role by collecting teacher interest in collaborative activities, fostering connections, and reviewing relevant studies (e.g., Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Dawson, 2014; Desimone, 2009, 2011, etc.). This support structure could significantly advance the implementation of multicultural education.

Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings and recommendations:

1. Time constraints: Due to the Dubai school district's restrictions, the survey window was limited to four weeks after the district-wide testing period, coinciding with a busy time for teachers. This

potentially contributed to the **low response rate (27%)**, raising concerns about the generalizability of the findings to the entire population.

2. Self-reported data: The study relied solely on self-reported data through surveys, which is susceptible to **social desirability bias**. Teachers who felt less confident in their multicultural education knowledge or practices might have been less likely to participate, introducing a potential non-response bias as described by Kano et al. (2008).

3. Lack of classroom observation: The study did not involve direct observation of teachers in their classrooms. Therefore, the findings primarily reflect **perceptions** of knowledge and application of multicultural education, rather than actual classroom practices.

4. Single contact attempt: While a second attempt was made to send the survey link to department chairs, the lack of additional responses suggests that potential bias due to nonparticipation may still exist.

It is crucial to acknowledge these limitations when interpreting the study's conclusions and consider them when formulating future research efforts in this area.

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