

Instruction on Intercultural Communicative Competence and Its Application by Iranian EFL Male and Female Writers

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Abstract

The influence of globalization on applied linguistics has recently generated considerable debate. With the advent of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) at the start of the twenty-first century, many theoreticians and practitioners have accentuated the ICC perspectives and its incorporation into teaching language skills. This mixed methods research study tries to verify whether instruction on ICC encourages Iranian advanced EFL learners to incorporate ICC in their writings, and whether gender plays any role in the tendency to use that competence. To this end, 33 male and female Iranian advanced EFL learners were chosen via an Oxford Placement Test and then placed in two experimental classes. All the participants received a five-week instruction on ICC in a writing class at a private language institute in Rasht, Iran. The data analyzed via T-tests, content analysis technique, and η revealed that instruction on ICC assisted learners in coping with intercultural issues differently in their writing; however, gender did not play any role in using the ICC in writing. This study can shine a light on the writing course and language teaching in general and teaching how to incorporate ICC in writing in particular.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, instruction, gender, assessment, Iranian advanced EFL learners, writing.

Формирование межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции и ее применение иранскими студентами в ходе выполнения письменных работ в курсе английского языка как иностранного

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Аннотация

Глобализация последних лет ставит новые задачи перед прикладной лингвистикой. С появлением в начале XXI века межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции (МКК) многие теоретики и практики акцентировали внимание на перспективах ее включения в обучение языкам. Настоящее исследование проводилось с применением смешанных методов. Его цель – проверить, насколько освоение МКК иранскими студентами, изучающими английский язык как иностранный (АКИ) на продвинутом уровне, стимулирует их включать МКК в письменные работы. Кроме того, определялось, играют ли гендерные различия студентов какую-либо роль в использовании этой компетенции. На основе результатов Oxford Placement Test были отобраны 33 студента обоих полов, изучающие АКИ на продвинутом уровне. В дальнейшем студенты были случайным образом распределены в два экспериментальных класса. Все участники прошли пятидневное обучение по МКК на уроках письма в частном языковом институте иранского города Решт. Данные, проанализированные с помощью Т-тестов, контент-анализа и η , показали, что развитие МКК помогает учащимся по-разному справляться с межкультурными проблемами при выполнении письменных заданий; гендерные различия не играли при этом никакой роли. Данное исследование поможет улучшить курс письменной речи, обучение языку в целом и обучение тому, как включить МКК в письменную речь, в частности.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, обучение, пол, оценивание, иранские студенты, изучение АКИ на продвинутом уровне, письмо.

Introduction

The impact of globalization has become a controversial issue in applied linguistics over the last decade (e.g., Chen, 2011; Sharifian, 2013). In the twenty-first century, we are living in a world which is akin to a global village. No matter what our religion, ethnicity,

culture, and language are, we can communicate with one another via the English language in the world. People from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds have brought together through globalization (Chen, 2011, as cited in Estaji & Rahimi, 2018).

In the context of globalization, English as an international language, lingua franca, and global language is utilized as a means of communications in multicultural circles (Tran & Duong, 2018). Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) gives students a chance to improve linguistic knowledge and cultural communication of the target language (Haerazi, *et al*, 2018).

Byram (1997) points out that ICC is an umbrella term that includes many features such as: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and Intercultural competence (IC). He adds that the term ICC pertains to the ability that enables individuals to interact in a foreign language effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures. Thus, ICC will be used consistently throughout the paper.

Byram (1997) states that ICC contains knowledge, interpretation skills, discovery and interaction skills, and cultural awareness. Some other researchers define ICC as “the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts” (Lazar, *et al*, 2007, p.9). The aforementioned definition focuses on two crucial points: skills and attitudes. The first deals with development “in the areas of observation, interpreting and relating, mediation and discovery” (*ibid*, p.9). The second is “to increase respect, empathy and tolerance for ambiguity, to raise interest in, curiosity about, and openness towards people from other cultures, and to encourage a willingness to suspend judgment” (*ibid*, p.9). From among different definitions, Tran’s definition (2015, p.30) seems to be closest to the purpose of the current study:

“ICC is the ability which enables one to effectively and appropriately interact in a language other than one’s native language with others from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It consists of language competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence) and intercultural competence (attitudes, knowledge, skills, and awareness) that help one to be able to successfully integrate in a multicultural society.”

UNESCO (2013) states that ICC apparently plays a pivotal role in learning to live together due to globalization throughout the world, consequently, cultural homogenization and fragmentation are at risk.

In this study, writing is a central variable through which the role of instruction on ICC is explored in inspiring Iranian advanced EFL male and female learners to incorporate intercultural issues in their writings or not. As writing is a sophisticated activity, that is a social act which demonstrates writers' communicative skills, it is an arduous task and a challenging problem which arises in the domain of EFL context (Shokrpour & Fallahzadeh, 2007). In fact, it may be the most demanding and time-consuming skill to instruct because of its complexity; nevertheless, it is one of the most worthwhile skills (Weigle, 2014).

Furthermore, having the linguistic knowledge alone does not guarantee an effective and fluent writing in this day and age (Atay *et al.*, 2009). By the same token, the current final goal of all cultural and cross-cultural education is to assist learners in becoming successful in an international community, in the global economy, and across national boundaries (Hinkel, 2014).

Statistically speaking, more than one-third of the world population can speak English either as their native language or as a second/foreign language which has affinity with the World Englishes phenomenon. Likewise, there is a paradigm shift in the English language learning and teaching towards espousing non-native varieties of English (Ahan, 2014). Thus, having knowledge about ICC should be plausible in the Iranian applied linguistics context.

With the advent of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) at the outset of twenty-first century, many theoreticians and practitioners have been accentuating the ICC perspectives and their incorporation into teaching language skills (Ahmed, 2018; Atay *et al*, 2009; Chinaka, 2010; Lin & Shie, 2017; Metzler Verlag, 2018; Rezaei & Naghibian, 2018; Scarino, 2017; Soodmand Afshar, *et al*, 2018; Tsenkova, Yordanova, & Kiryakova, 2018; UNESCO, 2013).

Despite a considerable number of publications on ICC perspectives throughout the world, there is still room for research on the ICC in EFL writing because it seems that there is a scant attention to its role. Research on instruction of ICC and its application by Iranian EFL male and female learners in dealing with intercultural issues in writing by applying a mixed methods research design seemed to be necessary. The overall goal of this work may illuminate the degree of intercultural competency development of the learners in writing, through instruction by the means of mixed methods research paradigm.

Literature Review

Intercultural Competence Dimensions and Models

Chen and Starosta (1996) describe an ICC communicator as a chameleon who can adapt themselves to the new situation based on the context. An individual's inclination to engage in various cultures is due to their elasticity and broadmindedness.

According to Chen and Starosta (1996) ICC has three conceptual dimensions:

1. The first deals with affective or intercultural sensitivity or acknowledging and admiring cultural discrepancies, cognitive or intercultural awareness or self-awareness of one's own personal cultural identity and understanding how cultures are different.

2. The second-dimension tackles cultural sensitivity. This term is defined as a person's capabilities to experience and respond to the individual characteristics of various cultures (Hammer *et al.* cited in Chen & Starosta, 1996).

3. The third relates to awareness. It is reflective and introspective which encompasses deeper cognition, skills, and attitudes about the self in relation to other or others (Fantini, 2009).

There are five ICC models:

1. Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) ICC framework which necessitates individuals' already having or acquiring knowledge of their own and others' cultural system.

2. The second characterizes ICC as knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Hamilton, Lopes, McNamara, & Sheridan, 1993). Knowledge refers to awareness of knowledge of self as it relates to cultural identity, commonalities and discrepancies across cultures. Skills refer to awareness or ability to engage in self-reflection, identity and articulate cultural similarities and differences. Attitudes refer to awareness or one's own values group and group equality.

3. The third is a relational model of ICC. Imahori and Lanigan (1989) propose a model which is derived from Spitzberg and Cupach's 3-D framework of ICC that included knowledge, skills, and personality or motivation elements.

4. The fourth is a co-orientational model of ICC. According to Matveev (2017), ICC happens when people coming from different cultures endeavor to understand one another by means of referencing toward the common referential construct.

5. The fifth is intercultural interlocutor competence. Fantini (1995) describes the relationship between the output of interlocutor one and the input of interlocutor two as mediated by the external environment through a system of selective perception, semantic clusters, morphology and syntax, phonology, and signs.

According to Byram's ICC Model (Matveev, 2017), an individual differentiates between "bicultural" and "intercultural" communicators. In fact, based on Scarino's perspective (2017), Byram (1997, pp.50-53) used it with dimensions of the model of Canale and Swain (1981) with the set of *savoirs* (abilities, see Figure 1) that defined ICC:

1. Intercultural attitudes: showing curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

2. Knowledge: acquiring information about social groups and their products and practices in learners' country and in one's interlocutor's country, and societal and individual interaction.

3. Skills of interpreting and relating: the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.

4. Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

5. Critical culture awareness: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

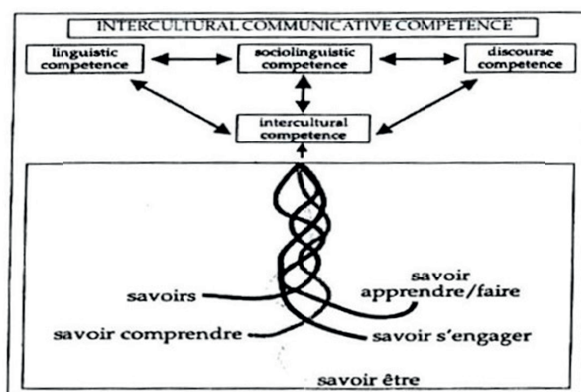


Figure 1. Model of ICC (Byram, 1997, p. 73)

Despite the fact that theoreticians have clarified and elaborated on a number of models and approaches in ICC (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta (1996); Fantini, 1995; Hamilton et al. 1998; Imahori and Lanigan, 1989; Spitzberg and Cupach, 1984), this study is in line with Byram's ICC Model (1997) as one of the leading theoreticians in this field.

Byram's (1997) model is one of the most comprehensive to foster and evaluate learners' ICC in different settings. As Figure 1 depicts, he notes that linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence, comprises five components such as attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. According to this model, he develops particular educational purposes which are designed for language and culture learning and provide guiding criteria to foster and assess learners' ICC in the foreign language instruction (Tran & Seepho, 2016). Byram's model has been utilized as the theoretical skeleton of the current study.

Intercultural Communicative Competence Studies

Scant attention has been given to ICC in writing and here is no extensive body of literature. Haerazi et al. (2018) investigated English materials based on ICC for writing

classes. The result of their study showed that students were keen on cultural topics, that is, historical buildings, wedding ceremonies, and traditional music. However, they had paid little attention to how ICC should be taught in writing.

Rezaei and Naghibian (2018) conducted research on ICC via short stories. They followed the models of Byram (1997) and Chinaka (2010). It includes four components, that is, linguistic, social, technological, and religious structures within the world view perspective. The results revealed that literary texts are highly effective in teaching culture. The point of strength of this study was the incorporation of ICC in reading.

Soodmand Afshar et al. (2018) studied the recently developed local textbooks, *Prospects and Vision1*, used for teaching English at Iranian junior and senior secondary schools. The results indicated that some local features of the Iranian culture were involved in these books; nevertheless, the major focus was still on grammatical structures and functions of the language.

Osman (2015) carried out a mixed methods study of ICC by English teachers in the preparatory year program at King Saudi University in Saudi Arabia. It was based on Byram (1997) and Fantini and Tirmizi (2006). He carried out both quantitative and qualitative research to recognize patterns and trends of teachers' understanding about ICC purposes and their relationships between curriculum context, classroom activities, focus group discussions, and classroom observations respectively. The results demonstrated that there was a gap between English teachers' understanding of ICC purposes and their current practices in the classroom. The point of strength of this study was the incorporation of ICC among English teachers via applying a mixed methods research procedure.

Holm, Nokelainen, and Tirri (2009) explored the intercultural sensitivity (IS) of 549 Finnish 12-16 year-old secondary school students with a 23-item IS scale questionnaire. Their questionnaire was based on Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of IS. In fact, one of the aims of the study was to verify if there were any differences in the IS between girls and boys. The results indicated that assessment of girls on IS was higher than the boys. The interesting point in this study was that girls showed better IS than boys.

Sarwari and Abdul Wahab (2016) studied the relationship between the English language proficiency (ELP) and ICC among International students in Malaysian Public University. A mixed-method research design was utilized and 120 postgraduate students from 17 different countries took part in this study. Twelve participants were interviewed. The results demonstrated that ELP was the main factor for an impact on interactions among international postgraduate students. The students' ELP assisted them in ameliorating their ICC. Although studies have been conducted by these researchers, the role of ICC on writing is still insufficiently explored.

The literature studies reviewed above focused on a range of areas including teachers' ICC knowledge, the role of ICC on textbooks, the effect of ICC on reading, the role of ICC and writing material; however, scarce attention has been given to instruction on ICC and its application especially in writing. To our knowledge, no prior studies have examined the effect of instruction of ICC and its application issues by Iranian EFL male and female writers via applying the mixed methods research procedure. Thus, the present study seemed to be unique in the EFL context.

The study therefore, addresses the following research questions:

1. Does instruction on ICC help learners cope with intercultural issues more effectively in writing?
2. Does gender play any role in using ICC among learners in writing?

Method

Design

This research used as explanatory sequential design as part of mixed methods research (Creswell, 2014). That is, firstly quantitative, quasi-experimental design, and secondly qualitative, content analysis technique, were applied. In the quantitative section, the design was quasi-experimental. Pre-test, treatment, and post-test were used for illustration.

Participants

In order to conduct this study, thirty-four male and female advanced Iranian EFL learners out of a pool of 100 were chosen using the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) at a private language Institute in Guilan province, in the north of Iran. All participants spoke Persian as their mother tongue and were chiefly from the middle socio-economic background. Their age range was between 17 to 30.

It should also be noted that they had been already identified as advanced learners through a placement test at the outset of learning English at that institute. Thus, in this study the participants were divided into two groups: Iranian advanced EFL male and female learners. The method of sampling was purposive sampling, thirty-four learners were placed in two experimental classes comprising only males and females.

Materials and Instruments

The materials for this study were the Iran Language Institute (ILI)'s ACT series. The ILI is one of the most prestigious English teaching institutes in Iran. ACT series (2017) are one of the latest conversation books published by the ILI. The culture flash excerpts from the books were chosen so that learners could cope with intercultural issues effectively in writing. The rationale for choosing the series was that the ILI experts, a group of Iranian distinguished applied linguists, developed the books based on IC perspectives. A writing rubric (Jacobs, *et al*,1981) was used with some modifications to meet the ICC's requirements.

To carry out the psychometric analysis, the researchers sent the modified rubric to six TEFL assistant professors in Mazandaran, Shahid Beheshti, Sharif, Allameh Mohades Nouri, and Azad university branches in Iran. The associate and assistant professors were chosen via an interview involving some key questions in terms of ICC. Hence, they were fully aware of ICC and had some contributions in this field.

It should be noted that the researcher-teacher piloted the rubric after the modification by using it to rate ten learners' writing to make sure of its reliability. The inter-reliability index was 0.83. The OPT, additionally, was administered to make sure the learners were homogenized, one above the mean and one below the mean, in their linguistic proficiency. As discussed earlier, the learners were randomly given the culture flash reading excerpts from the ACT books. Inasmuch as one of the important theoretical underpinnings for writing instruction is the affinity between reading and writing, this arrangement ensures that the two skills are inextricably intertwined.

In fact, "reading and writing are complementary elements of literacy rather than separate, discrete skills. This connection between reading and writing has received a great deal of emphasis in recent years." (Weigle, 2014, p.226).

Due to the fact that policy makers in Iran are zealous in teaching English via Iranian-Islamic culture (Dahmardeh,2009), a many interesting and suitable topics were compiled to be included in the ACT series, which indicates the cross-cultural comparisons in order to provide the chance to write about Islamic-Iranian cultural issues as well as those of the English-speaking world. For the sample of writing tasks see Appendix 2.

Procedure

All the participants took part in this research study voluntarily and they were informed that the information obtained during the instruction and testing would be used for research purposes. For the purposes of research questions, the advanced EFL male and female learners both received an intervention by one of the researchers so that he could ameliorate the learners' ICC awareness, attitudes, and skills regarding how to cope with the target community's culture. The researcher instructed both the experimental advanced male and female classes. The researcher was aware of the ICC perspective through his academic background and knew what to do during the intervention procedures.

As the nature of ICC is cross-cultural, the type of writing was to compare- and-contrast. An intercultural syllabus provided for writing classes, discussed in Table 1, reflects cultural topics. The intercultural syllabus followed Kraft's cultural pattern described by Chinaka (2010).

Kraft (1998) recognized four elements which are of paramount importance in defining culture (see Figure 2). The components include Linguistic, Social, Technological, and Religious Structures with the world view in the center (Rezaei & Naghibian, 2018). Social and Technological structures were utilized in the syllabus of current study such as: cell phone manners by country, gift giving, meals and foods, sightseeing in different countries, and spare time activities.

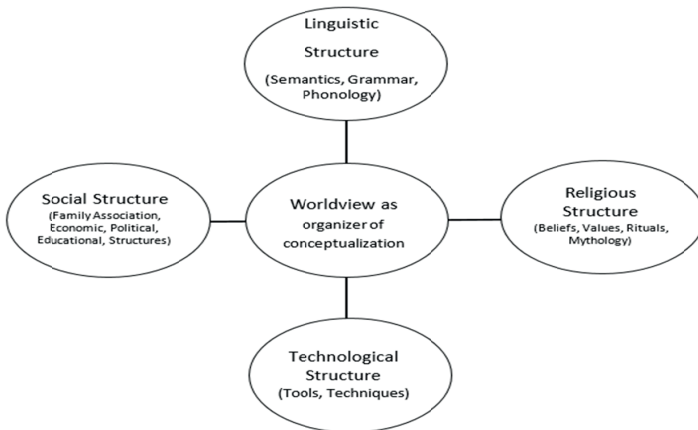


Figure 2. Kraft's Cultural Patterns (Chinaka, as cited in Rezaee and Naghibian, 2018, p.82)

Topics including life changes at 18, types of family, addressing people in different places were featured during the pilot study in the spring of 2017 for the writing course on ICC; however, the main treatment was carried out in the summer of 2017. The pilot study provided the researchers with further information on how to teach ICC in the writing course and how to make some modifications on the topics and the methodology of the course. As a result of this, the aforesaid topics in the pilot study were excluded from the main syllabus owing to the lack of time and the probable lack of interest on the part of learners to write on repetitious topics.

In order to meet the needs of EFL learners, a theoretical framework, Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching Model (ICLT), was utilized in the treatment procedures (see Figure 3). The ICLT framework is a continuing process of ICC acquisition. Figure 3 has three sections: Language-culture, the main training process

(i.e. Input-Notice-Practice-Output), and the ICC. These are integrated systematically (Tran & Seepho, 2016).

The following steps which were presented by Tran and Seepho (2016) were followed in the present study:

– Language-culture: Considers the view of language and culture which is closely interwoven, and underpins the ICLT model.

– Input: This instruction step is specified to providing learners with language knowledge and intercultural knowledge by exposing them to a wealth of authentic materials. Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) is combined in this teaching step.

– Notice: According to their former knowledge of language and interculture, learners are assisted to notice and make comparisons between unfamiliar points and known ones. Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 2001) is used in this stage.

– Practice: learners have many chances to practice short, supported and guided communicative tasks about the elements of the novel knowledge in the past phases. Long's Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) is employed in this stage.

– Output: In this phase, learners are able to produce the earlier input components, in the new language and intercultural features, effectively and appropriately. The underpinning learning theory is Swain's Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2000).

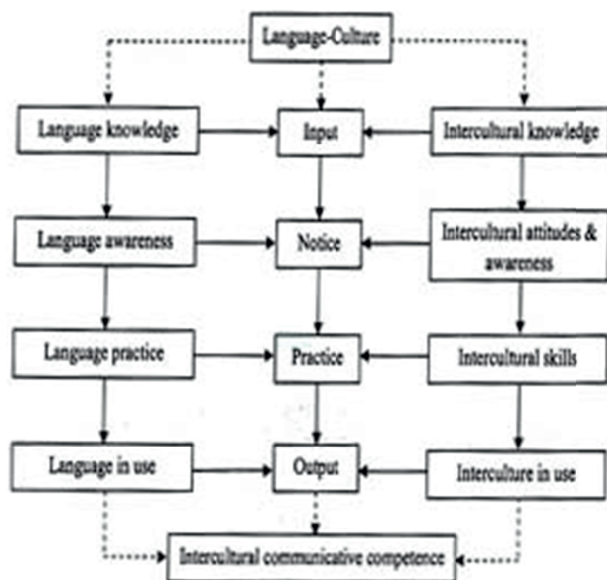


Figure 3. ICLT model (Tran, 2015, p. 205)

As this study used mixed-methods research, to verify the quantitative part of the study a pre-test was utilized in the early summer of 2017 to pinpoint the current status of the advanced EFL learners in respect of ICC. To this end, five aforementioned writing topics (Table 1) were given to the advanced EFL learners. The writing samples were rated by two of the researchers of this study.

Table1. Course Syllabus

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Materials</i>
1 st	Introduction	the philosophy of the course and defining basic concepts of ICC
2 nd	cell phone manners by country	the ILI ACT series
3 rd	Gift Giving	the ILI ACT series
4 th	Meals & Foods	the ILI ACT series
5 th	sightseeing in Tehran and Kuala Lumpur	the ILI ACT series
6 th	spare time activities	the ILI ACT series
7 th	summing up the course	

As Table1 shows, the first session was the introduction of the writing course which gave some information regarding ICC concepts and its philosophy. Sessions 2 - 6, covered five different topics to trigger the cross-cultural comparisons and the learners wrote some paragraphs for each topic; each session lasted 90 minutes. It should be noted that a special writing class was specified for advanced EFL learners.

Some of the young learners did not have enough schematic knowledge about some of the topics. To activate and boost their schematic knowledge, a Wikipedia site on the topics was introduced so as to enrich their general knowledge and provide interesting food for thought. "Teaching schemas involves helping students develop the interconnected meanings and relationships that make up schemas" (Richards, 2015, p.36). Furthermore, the researcher encouraged the students to get the gist of the idea from the Wikipedia pages and other useful websites, but he asked them not to copy the paragraphs from the aforesaid sources. Nonetheless, one of the female learners did so and her writing samples were excluded from the analysis in this study. Finally, the post-test was administered after each session of instruction in the summer of 2017. The writing topics of the post-test were the same as in the pre-test and the participants did not have access to their previous submissions, yet their weaknesses were emphasized during treatment.

Classroom Activities

The classroom activities in this course of study were based on some recommendations of Weigle (2014, p.227) as well as the researchers' pedagogical experiences:

Pre-writing: Structured language practice, readings, discussions, brainstorming, webbing, and outlining

Writing: Focus on content, getting ideas on paper

Response: peer review, partners or small groups, teacher conferences, written feedback

Revising: Reorganizing, adding details, adding support for arguments

Post-writing: Display.

Results

Data Analysis Methods

The writing samples were rated by two raters on a scale of 0-100, based on a modified version of a writing rubric by Jacobs *et al.* (1981). To score the participants' ICC, intercultural aspects were incorporated into the rubric and were evaluated by experts.

Considering both inter-rater and intra-rater reliability with indexes of .80 and .78, the scores were computed and then the mean score of each participant was inserted into the SPSS software.

For the first research question, a mixed-methods procedure was applied. Dependent Paired Samples T-test and a content analysis technique were run to determine if instruction on the ICC had helped learners cope with intercultural issues differently in their writing. Second, η was employed to verify if gender plays any role in using the IC in writing or not.

Research Findings

Does instruction on ICC help learners cope with intercultural issues more effectively in writing?

Qualitative Research

A mixed methods procedure was utilized to verify the research inquiry. The first verification of this inquiry is the qualitative paradigm. An in-depth content analysis procedure based on Byram's model (1997) was applied. For the sake of brevity only a few writing samples are provided here.

For instance, Elmira, an advanced EFL learner, displays her ICC perceptions such as intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills of interpreting and relating of *spare-time activities in some countries*, writing: *Greek people do a lot of activities in their free time. Activities, depending on their location, include walking, climbing, diving, sailing, fishing, flying, playing golf, horse riding, bowling, going gym and going dancing. on the other hand, people in Iran have different hobbies regarding their culture. Therefore, they spend their free time watching TV, going on the picnic with family members, surfing the net and logging on different social networks or going on a mall and going window-shopping...*

Another advanced EFL learner, Barbed, expressed his knowledge of ICC- intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction- in sightseeing in Esfahan and Istanbul: *Opposite the Sheikh Kofola Mosque is the towering, sixty-story Ali Qapu palace, a royal residence used by Shah Abbas to host visiting dignitaries.....while the Istanbul Archaeological Museum is actually one of the most important museums in Turkey. It has three museums: the Archaeological Museum, the Ancient Orient Museum and the Tiled Kiosk Museum.....*

Golnaz displays her skills of ICC- intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical culture awareness- after treatment of ICC: *The global etiquette of gift giving with the end of showing love and happiness seems to be convincing enough as to why following traditions is not always a bad idea. But when different cultures introduce rules of gift giving and simply announce special dates for flattering our loved ones with gifts....*

Soha expressed her critical culture awareness of ICC: *In most European countries, the weekend is on Saturday and Sunday, but in some other countries like Iran, the weekend is on Thursday and Friday. People in different countries engage in different indoor or outdoor activities during the weekend. In many European countries such as in France, people like to do sports like running or riding a bike. In other countries, indoor activities such as listening to music or radio, reading books, watching televisions, or playing board games are more popular. These are especially popular in some parts of Russia. In other countries such as Malaysia and Turkey, many people prefer to spend their weekend on the beach, playing games like beach volleyball or soccer. However, some people would rather visit their relatives and spend their time indoors.....*

Hence, based on Byram's model (1997) instruction on ICC helped learners cope with intercultural issues (i.e., attitudes towards different cultures, awareness, and skills) effectively in writing.

Quantitative Research

The second verification of the research inquiry took a quantitative approach. Table 2 shows an increase in the mean scores of 70.31 to 81.72 and 69.76 to 80.23 of the post-tests for both females and males. It should be noted that the assumptions of normality were considered.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of males and females on ICC instruction

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Male-post	80.23	17	1.94	.47
	Male-pre	69.76	17	1.00	.24
Pair 2	Female-post	81.71	16	2.75	.68
	Female-pre	70.31	16	1.16	.29

Table 3 demonstrates that an increase is significant and both genders showed some improvement over the course of research.

Table 3 Paired Samples Test (males and females on ICC instruction)

		Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Male-post – Male-pre	10.47	20.4	16	.000
Pair 2	Female-post – Female-pre	11.40	16.1	15	.000

Tables 4 and 5 indicate that without considering the gender and by considering all the learners as a unit population, the result was akin to the Tables 3 and 4. The total mean increased from 70.03 to 80.95. We can conclude that instruction on ICC helps learners cope with intercultural issues effectively in writing. In fact, instruction on ICC assists the learners with attitudes towards different cultures, awareness, and the skills in which they tackle new challenges from the target community’s culture.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the pairs without considering the gender

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Total post	80.95	33	2.45	.42
	Total pre	70.03	33	1.10	.19

Table 5. Paired Samples Test

		Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Total-post – total-pre	10.92	25.25	32	.000

Does gender play any role in using ICC among learners in writing?

According to Table 6, η was 0.19 which was near zero and the difference was not significant from 1. Thus, we conclude that gender does not play any role in using ICC among learners in writing.

Table 6. Directional Measures

			Value
Nominal by Interval	η	Increases skill Dependent	.191

Discussion

This study endeavored to explore the role of instruction on ICC and its use by Iranian EFL male and female writers via a mixed methods study. The results now provided evidence to instruction on ICC assisted learners in coping with intercultural issues in writing more effectively; the instruction on ICC perspectives was fruitful and led to a rise in the means of scores from pre-test to post-test of both genders. The means of scores were significant. A part of their writings can partially meet Byram's (1997) definitions of abilities, that is, intercultural attitude, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Elmira, as one the participants, was aware of cultural sensitivity and critical cultural awareness in Iran and displayed it in her writing by not mentioning *going dancing* in her writing. However, it is by no means meant to disrespect the target culture. This concealment represents their skills and attitudes towards the target community based on Byram's model (1997) in a foreign educational context. By the same token, it seems that instruction on ICC assists advanced learners in dealing with intercultural issues in writing; as an example, Elmira was quite successful in this regard.

Golnaz and Soha explicitly indicated glocalization of English-thinking globally, acting locally (Sharifian, 2010) which is one of the underpinning assumptions of ICC, and Byram's (1997) definition of ICC is to some extent conspicuous. Indeed, there is scant research on ICC perspectives towards writing in both Asian and Iranian contexts. Nevertheless, from theoretical viewpoints, the current study is in line with Byram (1997), Fantini and Tirmizi (2006), and Metzler (2018).

Correspondingly, from practical standpoints this study is in keeping with Atay et al. (2009), Osman (2015), Haerazi et al. (2018), Rezaei and Naghibian (2018), Sarwari and Abdul Wahab (2016), and Soodmand Afshar et al (2018). This research contradicts Holm et al.'s (2009) study. In fact, in the current study gender did not have any role in using ICC in the writing, while in Holm et al. (2009) girls' performance on IS (which is one of the ICC theoretical underpinnings) was higher than boys. Nevertheless, there is a commonality between Rezaei and Naghibian's (2018) and the current study in terms of using Byram's model (1997) as the skeleton and Kraft's cultural patterns. In fact, they enjoyed identical benefits.

Conclusion and Implications

In summary, this study endeavored to verify if instruction on ICC and its application through Iranian EFL advanced learners helps in dealing with ICC perspectives in writing, and whether gender plays any pivotal role in using ICC among learners in writing. The results revealed that treatment on ICC procedures was effective for both genders, and gender did not play any key role in using ICC among learners in writing.

This study seems to be novel from the vantage point of ICC for the writing course and it can shed new light on language teaching in general, and teaching how to incorporate ICC in writing in particular. There are three implications of this study: The first deals with language instructors who are expected to lead learners to acquire different skills of understanding of target the culture(s) and to glocalize it in its community (Atay et al. 2009). The second tackles the need for holding some workshops to ameliorate teachers' perceptions on ICC and its importance to the language teaching, together with its testing

and assessment (Banafsheh, Khosravi, & Saidi, 2016). The third implication relates to language supervisors who can share their knowledge of ICC in language teaching with English teachers in teacher training courses so that the novice English language teachers put the theory into practice. As a consequence, policy makers can pave the way to familiarize students and learners with glocalization perspectives and put them into practice for language skills.

The current study suffers from a number of drawbacks:

1. Based on pedagogical experiences of Iranian EFL teachers in Iran convincing Iranian people to write something is cumbersome; therefore, the number of topics for writing was limited.

2. The study was conducted in one place, Rasht, so the results cannot be generalized validly.

3. The number of students was not huge owing to the fact that finding them and convincing them to participate in a writing course based on ICC was really an arduous task.

4. Due to time constraints, this study focused on just writing not the speaking. For example, further research about ICC perspective can be the role of ICC on EFL speakers.

Further research is needed to shed more light on these issues.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this article. The study was carried out without funding from any institution.

Ethics

In data collection, in all stages of the study, ethical issues have been considered. The data gathered and used in this study are available and can be accessed via email to m_kazemiansanati@yahoo.com.

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Appendices

Jacobs, Hartflel, Hughey, & Wormuths' (1981) Scoring Profile
Adapted version based on Byram's Model (1997)

ESL COMPOSITION PROFILE			
SCORE	LEVEL	CRITERIA	COMMENTS
CONTENT & INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE	30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable, substantive, thorough development of thesis, relevant to assigned topic, demonstrates intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness	
	26-22	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject, adequate range, limited development of thesis, mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail, occasional intercultural attitudes, occasional knowledge& skills of interpreting and relating, occasional skills of discovery, and occasional cultural awareness	
	21-17	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject, little substance, inadequate development of topic, partial intercultural attitudes, partial skills of interpreting and relating, partial skills of discovery and interaction, and partial cultural awareness	
	16-13	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject, non-substantive, not pertinent, OR not enough to evaluate, no mastery of intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness	
ORGANIZATION	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression, ideas clearly stated/ supported, succinct, well-organized, logical sequencing, cohesive	
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing	
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: non0-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lacks logical sequencing and development	
	9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate, no organization, OR not enough to evaluate	

VOCABULARY	20-18 17-14 13-10 9-7	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range, effective word/ idiom choice and usage, word form mastery, appropriate register GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range, occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage <i>but meaning not obscured</i> FAIR TO POOR: limited range, frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage, <i>meaning confused or obscured</i> VERY POOR: essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form, OR not enough to evaluate	
LANGUAGE USE	25-22 21-18 17-11 10-5	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions, minor problems in complex constructions, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions <i>but meaning seldom obscured</i> FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions, <i>meaning confused or obscured</i> VERY POOR: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by errors, does not communicate, OR not enough to evaluate	
MECHANICS	5 4 3 2	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: demonstrates mastery of conventions, few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing GOOD TO AVERAGE: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing <i>but meaning not obscured</i> FAIR TO POOR: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor handwriting, <i>meaning confused or obscured</i> VERY POOR: no mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, handwriting illegible, OR not enough to evaluate	
TOTAL SCORE READER COMMENTS			

Writing Tasks

Spare-Time Activities in Some Countries

In some western countries like England, Canada, and the U.S.A., Saturday and Sunday are the weekend. People do different indoor and outdoor activities on the weekend. Some people watch television, listen to the radio, or read books at home. Other people go outside for shopping, eating, or doing sports. In France, sport is very important. People do different sports in their free time. Skiing and ice-skating are popular in winter, and playing tennis and riding bikes are popular in summer.

In Russia, the most popular free-time activities are walking and eating out with friends, playing computer games, and doing sports like tennis, soccer, and ice hockey. Many people go on a picnic and have fun on weekends. Other people stay home and watch TV.

In some countries like Morocco, Malaysia, and Turkey, Saturday and Sunday are the weekend, too. People listen to music, watch videos or television, go to the beach to play soccer and beach volleyball, and visit friends and relatives in their free time. Soccer is the most important sport in these countries.

In Iran, Friday is the weekend. Iranian people especially like to spend time with their families on the weekend. They usually visit their relatives and friends, go shopping, go to the movies, go to the park, and eat out. Like other countries, most young people watch soccer games at the stadium or on TV, too.