

Exploring ways of assessing intercultural competence: Introducing the bimodal assessment model

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Abstract

Discovering the best solution for assessing intercultural communication is a big challenge all over the world. Thus, the current paper tried to find various ways of intercultural assessment in Iran by introducing a bimodal assessment model. Therefore, the researchers selected thirty Iranian teachers through convenience sampling as the participants of the study. By using a qualitative design, the required data were collected and by using inductive content analysis, the results were analyzed. The data collected and analyzed from interviews and observation sessions revealed that Iranian teachers used a blend of traditional and communicative methods to assess intercultural issues in their classes. Portfolio assessment, performance assessment, dynamic assessment, self/peer assessment, written quizzes, dialogues, and discussion, interview, and presentation are among the methods of assessing intercultural communication in Iran's context. This study is of high importance for language teachers because they can use the findings as tools for assessing intercultural content in their classes and for intercultural experts to introduce these assessment tools to teachers in their training courses. The bimodal assessment model as the final product of this paper could pave the way for Iranian teachers as an assessment model.

Keywords: Bimodal Assessment Model, Dynamic Assessment, Intercultural Assessment, Intercultural Communication, Performance Assessment

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1. Introduction

Intercultural communication and ways of assessing intercultural competence is a hot topic in today's world. Different scholars including Fantini, (2009) and Lussier et al. (2007) examined various ways and tools of intercultural assessment. For example, Lussier et al. (2007) revealed that intercultural assessment could be holistic and analytic or direct and indirect. In intercultural assessment, the teacher has the role of observer and he or she is not the end or product of the assessment process. Thus, the teachers prefers to use self-report and observation checklists, and portfolios, to assess intercultural issues (Skopinskaja,2009). Also, Alkharusi, (2008) asserted that formative assessment worked best compared to traditional assessment methods as they are more motivating and cover all aspects of intercultural communications. Fantini, (2009) expressed that various testing formats such as open-ended and closed-ended questions, role-plays, matching items, interviews, multiple-choice, oral and written tasks, gap-filling, and true-false questions or a combination of these formats could also be used test intercultural issues.

Only a few Iranian scholars have focused on intercultural assessment in their research studies. For example, vajak (2021) believed that there were limitations in intercultural assessments such as lack of empirical evidence, limited focus on practical aspects, insufficient attention to various levels of education, narrow scope of assessment, and limited integration in teacher education. In their studies, Aslanabadi (2016), and Sarkhani et al.(2022) examined the innovative approaches, ranging from technology-based assessments to portfolio evaluations, that offer a more comprehensive way to measure and enhance intercultural skills. The current paper tried to examine and discover various techniques for assessing and testing intercultural communication and introducing a bimodal assessment model as the final solution for intercultural assessment. In fact, by introducing a bimodal assessment model and various test types in this paper, the researchers sought to fill the current gap in Iran and therefore, this paper can be of high significance since the findings will hopefully enlighten the language teachers on how to assess intercultural and cultural content of their books and also guide intercultural experts on what to teach to their trainees in their training courses. In other words, the current paper introduces tools of intercultural assessment based on the Iranian context to help Iranian language teachers have sufficient tools to test cultural and intercultural issues in

their classes.

2. Review of the Related Literature

Spitsberg (2003) described intercultural communication as interaction seen as effective in meeting certain rewarding goals in a context-appropriate manner. He argued that knowledge, motivation, and skills are key elements of intercultural competence. The concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) appears to be clear, widely accepted, and used. However, it has been defined in many ways and lacks comprehensive assessment both within and outside academic settings. In recent years, the assessment of intercultural competence has become a topic of significant interest in Iran, particularly in the context of language learning. The country's rich cultural diversity has highlighted the need for effective tools to measure and enhance intercultural skills across various sectors.

ICC is an ongoing process (Blair, 2017), not a “one-off act of achievement or acquisition” (Blair, 2017), it needs an organized teaching process allowing people to intermediate between cultures (Byram, 2008). Thus, as a needed result of language instruction, intercultural communication with the broad, three-part focus presents a hurdle for the classroom, and teachers need to know how to break it down into specific results. When it comes to assessment, it is vital to create valid and reliable measures of intercultural communication (Griffith et al., 2016), and different methods will fit different educational contexts (Timpe, 2013), different considerations and tools, with different challenges for instructors.

The history of intercultural assessment has shown different methods of assessment including self-reports, surveys, portfolios, and interactive role-plays (Worawong et al., 2017). Lee et al., (2012) viewed intercultural communication as the communication among dissimilar people with dissimilar racial or cultural backgrounds. Sinicrope et al., (2007) found that qualitative methods of assessment are more appropriate and accurate for expression of intercultural issues for assessing and testing intercultural competence compared to quantitative methods such as questionnaires and surveys. Contreras-McGavin and Kezar (2007) also emphasized using qualitative

methods for interpersonal relationships and skills and intercultural communication to understand the complex nature of these phenomena. Huang (2021) explained that there exist various forms of intercultural assessments such as analytic, reflective, expressive, creative, task-based, and observation-based assessments. In fact, in these forms of assessments, students reflect, express, or create their understanding of intercultural issues or try to complete tasks or observe intercultural interactions (Houghton, 2013; Lobb, 2012; Villalobos-Buehner, 2020).

Many scholars believe that the process of intercultural assessment is interactive, dynamic, interpersonal, formative, and cyclical which needs a lot of transpiration over time (Toyoda, 2016; Harsch & Poehner, 2016). Other studies revealed that the nature of intercultural assessment is performative, multimodal, and task-based which needs the combination of various qualitative methods (Chan & Chen, 2021). Intercultural communication is the conscious experience of effective performance in different cultures and intercultural assessment is the missing link in language and culture testing in today's world. (Bennett, 2020; Borghetti, 2017; Scarino, 2017).

Gu (2016) studied intercultural assessment in China and the results revealed that foreign language teachers showed a willingness to assess and test intercultural issues in classes but a lack of knowledge prevented them from doing this. In another study in Taiwan, Huang (2021) revealed that explicit instruction could be conducive to acquiring intercultural knowledge and ways of assessing it. Zheng (2014) maintained that college students should be assessed both formatively and summatively in intercultural communication, especially through performance evaluation and portfolio assessment. Lussier et al., (2007) believed that teachers should use various tools such as observation checklists, surveys, attitudes inventories, journals, portfolios, and so on to assess the intercultural contents. Alkharusi, (2008) asserted that formative assessment worked best compared to traditional assessment methods as they are more motivating and cover all aspects of intercultural communications. Fantini, (2009) expressed that various testing formats such as open-ended and closed-ended questions, role-plays, matching items, interviews, multiple-choice, oral and written tasks, gap-filling, and true-false questions or a combination of these formats could also be used to test intercultural issues.

Performance-based assessment and project-based assessments are among the methods used mostly for assessing intercultural communication as they focus on implementing authentic tasks, problem-solving, discussion, and data collection and presentations (Chu et al. 2011). Assessment is an integral part of the educational system and intercultural assessment focuses on assessing intercultural communication among people with different languages and cultural backgrounds (Mazeikiene & Virgailaite-Meckauskaite, 2007).

Rezaei and Naghibian (2018) and Kazemian et al. (2021) worked on intercultural communication via reading and writing skills. The results revealed that these skills assisted both intercultural instruction and assessment respectively. Clouet (2013) believed that intercultural assessment should be based on behavioral observation and performance. Since intercultural communication focuses on both linguistic and cultural aspects of communication, its assessment also should be based on cultural and linguistic aspects (Lauring, 2011, Allen, 2021).

Griffith et al., (2016) believed that a single method can't be used for assessing intercultural issues and we need a combination of authentic, context-sensitive, and ethnographic methods of assessment for this target (Allen, 2021, Kulich, 2015). Lussier et al. (2007) stated that as intercultural communication is a cognitive, affective, and behavioral process, and its assessment should be formative rather than summative. Also, intercultural assessment is a continuous and lifelong process that is done by teachers or students themselves in different phases of testing such as pre-test or post-test. In the same vein, intercultural assessment could be subjective or objective, and it can be based on evaluative judgment or personal taste. Subjective testing is more applicable rather than objective testing nowadays. Also, Lussier et al. (2007) revealed that intercultural assessment could be holistic and analytic or direct and indirect. In intercultural assessment, the teacher has the role of observer and he or she is not the end or product of the assessment process. Thus, the teachers prefer to use self-report and observation checklists, and portfolios, to assess intercultural issues (Skopinskaja, 2009).

In the Iranian context, it is revealed that the focus is on language teaching rather than intercultural teaching and the missing link is intercultural teaching and assessment

in the Iranian high schools (Vajak, 2021). Vajak (2021) believed that there were limitations in intercultural assessments such as lack of empirical evidence, limited focus on practical aspects, insufficient attention to various levels of education, narrow scope of assessment, and limited integration in teacher education. However, because of globalization, we need new innovative assessment techniques for intercultural assessment and they should be compatible with Iran's educational syllabi and system. In the context of higher education, improved assessment can provide valuable insights into the significance of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching and learning. This can make foreign language education at the tertiary level both intellectually worthwhile and economically viable.

Vajak (2021) also believed that innovative assessment techniques could be used in the form of technology-based assessment, scenario-based assessment, virtual simulations, case studies, and role-plays. Thus, using innovative methods could have different benefits for Iran's education including enhanced cultural awareness, better presentation for global interactions, and promotion of intercultural competence. Implementing innovative assessment techniques, such as domestic intercultural interviews and reflective ethnography approaches, can provide both quantitative and qualitative evidence for improved intercultural competence. These methods can contribute to developing teachers' interest in cultural issues and intercultural communication, potentially leading to their inclusion in syllabi and lesson plans.

Improved assessment techniques for intercultural competence in Iran can yield significant benefits. From enhancing cultural awareness to better-preparing individuals for global interactions, these advancements can contribute to a more culturally competent and globally engaged society. As Iran continues to interact with the international community, the importance of effective intercultural competence assessment cannot be ignored. In other words, the exploration of new assessment techniques for intercultural competence in Iran has a significant impact on educational and professional sectors. These innovative approaches, ranging from technology-based assessments to portfolio evaluations, offer a more comprehensive way to measure and enhance intercultural skills. The challenges in implementing these techniques, such as cultural sensitivity and resource constraints, highlight the need for a tailored approach that respects Iran's unique cultural context while preparing individuals for global interactions. (Aslanabadi, 2016:

Sarkhani et al., 2022).

According to the issues stated above, the researchers tried to answer to the following research questions:

1. Are traditional assessing methods suitable for assessing intercultural communication?
2. Are communicative assessing methods suitable for assessing intercultural communication?
3. What types of assessments do Iranian English teachers use to assess intercultural issues in language classes?
4. What challenges and problems do Iranian English teachers face in assessing intercultural issues?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The current study used an interpretivism paradigm (Nickerson, 2022), accompanied by a qualitative approach to disclose the hidden meaning and new concepts. The interpretivist paradigm is based on the assumption that reality is subjective, multiple and socially constructed. The researchers utilized exploratory qualitative research to probe and discover the answers of the research questions. In other words, Given the nature of both the phenomenon being studied and the research questions, a qualitative approach was adopted, which allowed for a more direct method of gauging the research problem.

3.2. Participants and Sampling

The current study included 30 female and male language English teachers in Iran (F=15, M=15). The ages of the participants ranged from 25 to 50 years old. All the participants had BA or MA in English language teaching and their teaching experience was between 5 to 30 years. The participants taught English at private English institutes in all English levels of proficiency. The researchers used a convenience sampling procedure given the purpose of the study.

3.3. Instruments

The current research utilized two instruments to collect data: structured interview and participant observation. A structured interview was selected to simplify a thorough comprehension of the participants' beliefs, performance, and experiences related to the research topic. Participant observation was used to produce rich and exact qualitative information, allowing for a deeper understanding of the social context and experiences under investigation. Through immersing themselves in the group, the researchers gained valuable insider perspectives on the beliefs, values, and practices of the participants. The interview questions were formulated by the researchers according to the purpose of the study as follows:

1. Do you think we can use traditional assessing methods for assessing intercultural issues in English classes?
2. What communicative assessment methods do you use or suggest for assessing intercultural issues in your English classes?
3. What type of assessments do you use in your classroom to assess cultural and intercultural matters?
4. What challenges do you face while testing cultural and intercultural parts of English books in your classes?

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The current research consisted of two cycles of data collection, that is, the researchers collected data from interview sessions and observation sessions respectively. Interview sessions lasted for 20 minutes for each participant and then the interviews were recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis. It should be noted that the interview questions were formulated by the researchers and the participants could answer the interview questions in English or their mother tongue, Persian. To ensure content validity, all questions in the interview were discussed until agreement was reached. It should be noted that all the interview sessions were audio-recorded and the researchers assured the participants to be remained anonymous and obtained their consent for taking part in interview sessions. The researchers themselves did the interview sessions with the

participants face to face and recorded the interview sessions. Moreover, the researchers were actively involved in participant observation by allocating a total of 30 hours to observe the participant's assessment procedures in their classrooms. The researchers dedicated one-hour observation for each participant. The researchers themselves took part in classroom sessions and observe the assessment procedure of the teachers. Researcher-made checklist were used to record the observation issues and points. It should be noted that all the teachers were familiar with cultural and intercultural content because of their several years of teaching experience.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The researchers used inductive content analysis and thematic analysis to analyze the collected data. A detailed qualitative content analysis of the transcripts and observation field notes was carried out by the researchers. After reading and rereading the transcripts of the interview and observation reports thoroughly, key categories were identified in the corpus of data that reflected teachers' attitudes and practices toward intercultural testing and assessment. The researchers used initial and secondary coding processes (In vivo and descriptive) to extract the required codes and categories and then based on Braun and Clark's (2006) model of thematic analysis, all the categories and themes were extracted. The focus of the study was on finding the following themes:

- a) Teachers' attitudes towards using communicative methods such as performance-based assessment for intercultural testing
- b) Teachers' attitudes towards using traditional methods such as multiple-choice tests for intercultural testing
- c) Test types and challenges that Iranian teachers face in their assessment process

Concerning the observation sessions, the researchers attended the teachers' classes with the permission of the teachers to observe their assessment procedures. All the observation points were written by the researchers without intruding the assessment procedures. The researchers only wrote what they observed. After completing the observation sessions which lasted for 30 hours; that is, one hour for each teacher, the

researchers analyzed the reports to extract the main focus of assessing procedure and compared their practice with what they said in interview sessions to understand whether there existed any consistencies or inconsistencies between their attitudes and practices.

4. Results

This section deals with the analysis of the interview data and observation reports. At first, the analyses of the interview transcripts are presented and then the observation reports are provided. The interview analysis is tabulated and elaborated based on Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis model. The following tables show the codes and themes for each interview question.

4.1. Interview Results

RQ1: Are traditional assessing methods suitable for assessing intercultural communication?

To address this research question, we asked the participants “*Do you think that we can use traditional assessing methods for assessing intercultural issues in English classes?*”? The following table (Table 1) shows the codes and themes for the above-mentioned research question and interview question. All codes and themes were extracted through initial and secondary coding analysis and a careful thematic analysis process. The codes are written in the form of Invivo and descriptive codes.

Table 1.

Codes and Themes for the First Interview Question

Codes	Number of participants	Themes
Not Applicable	15	Traditional methods
Applicable to Some Extent	15	
Applicable If Combined With Innovative Methods	25	

The first interview and research questions focused on whether traditional testing methods could be used for assessing intercultural issues. Table 1 results and codes

revealed that all 30 participants had various viewpoints in interview sessions. 15 participants believed that traditional methods were not applicable and they should not be used. For example, they believed that multiple-choice tests or standardized tests had no application and use in intercultural assessment and they should be disregarded. 15 participants believed that traditional methods could be used partly for some sections of intercultural issues and 25 participants believed that traditional methods could be used for assessing intercultural issues if they were combined with more interactive and innovative methods. These participants believed that if traditional methods were combined with real-life tasks, reflective essays, role-plays, and simulation scenarios, they could be used more effectively for assessing intercultural communication. If they were combined, they would become more authentic and interactive and they would bear more contextual understanding and feedback.

The following table shows the results of the second research question and the interview question:

RQ2: Are communicative assessment methods suitable for assessing intercultural communication? We used “What communicative assessment methods do you use or suggest for assessing intercultural issues in your English classes?” prompt to find the answer to this question. Hence, the following codes and themes were emerged:

Table 2.

Codes and Themes for the Second Interview Question

Codes	Number of participants	Themes
Oral proficiency interview	20	
Role-play and simulation	20	
group discussion	15	
Reflective essays	15	
Intercultural surveys	15	
Intercultural projects	20	Communicative Tests
Observation	25	
Self-and peer assessment	10	
Portfolio assessment	25	
Performance assessment	25	

Table 2 reveals the data about the suitability and use of communicative and

innovative assessment methods for intercultural assessment. The participants suggested a wide range of innovative methods to assess intercultural communication. 20 participants believed that oral interviews, role-play simulations, and intercultural projects were suitable for assessing intercultural issues in English classes. 25 participants believed that observation, portfolio, and performance-based assessment served that purpose. 15 participants maintained that group discussion, reflective essays, and surveys were the suitable methods of assessment. Finally, 10 participants believed that self-assessment and peer assessment could be done to assess intercultural communication. In other words, the participants asserted that teachers could observe students inside and outside the classrooms sporadically to assess their intercultural competence. Or they could give various projects, role-plays, and simulations to check and evaluate their intercultural skill and performances. Also, by using reflective essays, portfolios, etc., teachers could focus on understanding, awareness, and sensitivity to intercultural issues of the students.

Next, the following table shows the codes and themes for the third research question and interview question:

RQ3. What types of assessments do Iranian teachers use to assess intercultural issues in language classes? To elicit the participants' responses, the following prompt was proposed, "What type of assessments do you use in your classroom to assess cultural and intercultural matters?" Table 3 displays the results:

Table 3.

Codes and Themes for the Third Interview Question

Codes	Number of participants	Themes
Written Tests	15	Test Types
Dialogue and Presentation	20	
Cultural Quizzes	20	
Role-Play	20	
Projects	15	
Reflective Journals	15	
Real-Life Tasks	10	

Table 3 shows various types of assessments used for assessing intercultural issues in Iranian English classes. The codes revealed that 20 participants used dialogues

and presentations, cultural quizzes, and role–plays as testing tools in their classes. They believed that by using these instruments they could focus on various topics to raise sensitivity and awareness of tests in different aspects via quizzes and create cross-cultural interaction through dialogues and role-plays. 15 participants used written tests, projects, and journals as testing instruments in their classes because they believed that they could focus on test specific topics and skills regarding cultural skills and knowledge and improve the collaborative skills and critical thinking of their students. 10 participants used real-life tasks to assess and test intercultural issues because they maintained that they could assess intercultural interaction more easily via these tasks such as email writing and intercultural discussions in real-life situations.

Finally, the following research question and interview prompt focused on the challenges that Iranian language teachers faced while testing intercultural issues in their classes:

RQ4. What challenges and problems do Iranian teachers face in assessing intercultural issues? To explore the interviewees’ responses, we asked them, “What challenges do you face while assessing cultural and intercultural parts of English books in your classes?”

Table 4 summarizes the results.

Table 4.

Codes and Themes for the Fourth Interview Questions

Codes	Number of participants	Themes
Cultural Diversity	20	Challenges and problems
Topic Sensitivity	25	
Language Barrier	20	
Cultural Stereotypes	15	
Limited Resources	25	

Table 4 reveals that Iranian teachers faced various problems while designing tests for assessing intercultural issues. 20 participants maintained that cultural diversity and language barriers could be challenges they encountered while testing intercultural issues. 25 participants believed that limited resources and topic sensitivity created challenges and problems while testing intercultural issues. And finally, 15 participants expressed that

cultural stereotypes caused challenges for them.

4.2. Observation Results

The researchers actively took part in 30 hours of teachers' English classes conducted in Iran, Tehran city. Before reporting the findings of observations from these classes, it is important to provide an overview of the classrooms. Each class consisted of 25 students and lasted one hour. The teachers talked both in English and Persian languages. The reports are presented as follows:

The results of the observation revealed that most of the teachers preferred to use teacher-made tests for different reasons and more importantly they tried to use the teacher-made tests in the form of formative, summative, and dynamic assessment cycles. They tried to use the teacher-made tests in a way to reflect the cultural context of Iran and specific intercultural skills and issues.

While designing and writing teacher-made tests, the Iranian teachers took into consideration various factors such as cultural sensitivity, cultural relevance, language sensitivity, and feedback and reflection. In other words, they designed their tests to focus on culturally relevant, sensitive, and linguistically relevant content, and the students received enormous reflection and feedback via teacher-made tests. More importantly, the teachers used their teacher-made tests as ongoing formative tests during the educational semesters and as summative tests at the end of the semesters. In some cases, teachers resorted to using dynamic assessment to mix cultural and language learning together. When teacher-made tests were used as summative tests, the purpose was to check and assess the overall intercultural skill and understanding of intercultural competence among language learners. When they were used as formative tests, the purpose was to assess the ongoing development of students in intercultural communication and to discover the weaknesses and strengths of the students in intercultural skills learning.

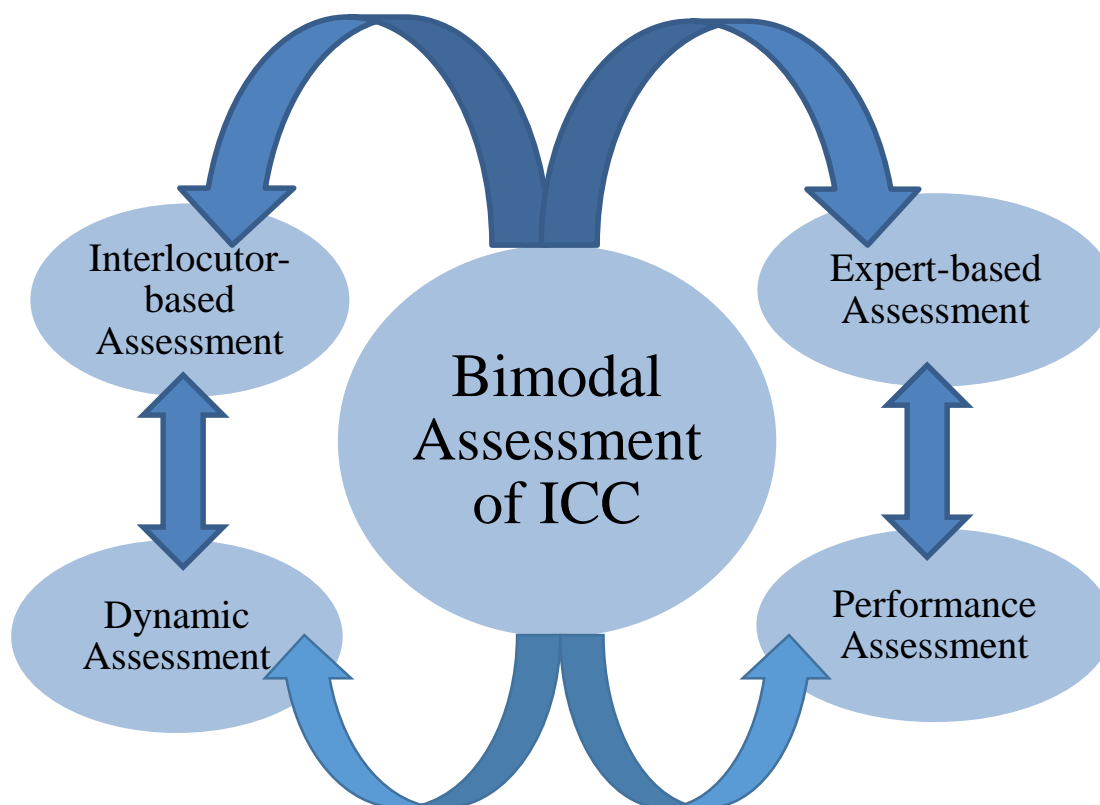
Also, giving ongoing feedback and reflection to enhance students' intercultural competence over time was another consequence of formative assessment. When teacher-made tests were used as dynamic assessments, the purpose was to create more interactive and responsive intercultural learning in language classes to help students adapt to new intercultural settings easily, and show more flexibility and adjustment in

intercultural skills. It should be noted that Iranian language teachers tried to use a combination of formative, summative, and dynamic assessments during a semester based on their knowledge and skills.

Another point that researchers frequently noticed from observation sessions was that teacher-made tests appeared in various forms including written essays, interviews, discussions and dialogues, journals and diaries, observations, portfolios, and role-plays. Most of the assessments were in the form of performance-based and observation-based assessments in which dynamic assessment happened in both of them. Based on the interview results and observation results, the researchers devised the following model of assessment for intercultural assessment in Iran's English classes which can work best: bimodal assessment model of intercultural communication.

Figure 1.

Bimodal Assessment Model of Intercultural Competence (Ghorbani & Kiani Fard, 2024)



The bimodal assessment model of intercultural competence is an Iranian assessment model specific to the Iranian cultural context. Based on the results of the

current study, the bimodal assessment model is a two-way assessment model that consists of dynamic assessment and performance assessment. Insider assessors can do this assessment process; that is, language teachers and students as interlocutors of intercultural interaction in the form of self-assessment and peer/teacher assessment in dynamic assessment circle or by outsider assessors; that is, intercultural experts as observers of intercultural communication in performance assessment circle. In other words, language teachers and students themselves can assess and evaluate their intercultural skills and understanding in the classroom by giving feedback and reflection in the form of dynamic assessment or asking intercultural experts in the field of intercultural communication as observers to observe their intercultural competence and assess and evaluate their intercultural skills, understanding, and achievement. This model is a mutual model in which dynamic and performance circles are interrelated and there should be cooperation between insider assessors and outsider assessors to bear a fruitful assessment.

In fact, in Iran's English language classrooms, we need not only English teachers but also intercultural experts to have an accurate intercultural testing and assessment. At least our language teachers should be trained by intercultural experts on how to test and assess intercultural content of their English textbooks. It should be noted that all test types from traditional tests to innovative tests discovered in this study such as journals, written tests, interviews, portfolios, quizzes, and so on could be utilized by both insider assessors (dynamic assessment circle) and outsider assessors (performance assessment circle) to assess the level of intercultural competence and skills.

The other point is that the bimodal assessment model can be implemented in all assessment phases, that is, in the pre-assessment phase, while-assessment phase, and post-assessment phase. In the pre-assessment phase, the focus is on pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of students and motivating them via performance assessment. In the assessment phase, the focus is on reinforcing the intercultural skills and competence of the students to improve their intercultural learning and acquisition via dynamic assessment, and in the post-assessment phase, the focus is on the evaluation of what has been learned through the dynamic assessment phase.

The result of the bimodal assessment model could be presented both quantitatively through marks and grades and qualitatively through descriptions and explanations. The bimodal assessment model could be marked both subjectively and objectively since various test types could be used via this model. However, based on the purpose of the intercultural assessment the assessor determines which assessment type should be used and the result assessed subjectively, objectively, or both. Given the nature of intercultural communication, the bimodal assessment model serves the purpose if it is used subjectively. More precisely, subjective assessment is more applicable by using the bimodal assessment model. It should be noted that the bimodal assessment model is language-based but it could be also used in other fields for assessment purposes such as management and psychology.

5. Discussion

Iran is culturally a diverse country, which can be a big challenge for teachers. Also, some cultural topics are taboo or sensitive in Iran or there are no sufficient resources for assessment. Also, some cultural issues may be stereotypes in some parts of Iran which could cause challenges for Iranian teachers.

Thus, The current paper tried to find new methods for assessing intercultural communication in Iran. Through in-depth qualitative research, the researchers found that intercultural assessment in Iran is a complex procedure that consists of traditional and innovative methods. In other words, the results disclosed that Iranian English language teachers used formative, summative, and dynamic assessment procedures to assess intercultural competence. Also, it was shown that various types of assessment including written essays, group discussions, dialogues and presentations, portfolio and observation tests were utilized to test intercultural issues. Accordingly, the researchers designed a new assessment model based on the findings of the current study called the “*bimodal assessment model of intercultural competence*” which consisted of dynamic and performance phases.

The current study findings are in line with Sinicrope et al., (2007) and Contreras-McGavin and Kezar (2007) since all these studies focused on the use of qualitative

methods such as interviews to assess intercultural communication. Also, this study substantiated that intercultural assessment is a dynamic and formative process that is in harmony with other scholar's findings such as Huang (2021), Houghton (2013), Lobb (2012), Villalobos-Buehner (2020) and Toyoda (2016).

Consistent with Chan and Chen (2021), the current study substantiated that intercultural assessment is a performance-based and task-based process. Besides, the bimodal assessment model showed that intercultural assessment is a dynamic and performance-based process. Zheng (2014) asserted that intercultural assessment could be done formatively and summatively which is compatible with the findings of the current study.

Lussier et al., (2007) and Fantini, (2009) described a list of various test types such as portfolio, observation, and written tasks which match with the current study findings as this study also elaborated on different test types such as written tasks, journals, interview and so on. Our findings also showed that intercultural assessment should be authentic and context-sensitive which supported the results of Griffith et al., (2016), Allen (2021), and Kulich, (2015).

Further, the current study focused on challenges of testing intercultural competence and lack of resources. Aslanabadi (2016), Vajak (2021), and Sarkhani et al. (2022) found that innovative methods such as portfolios and technologies could be used in intercultural assessment. They also stated some limitations such as lack of resources and lack of integration of intercultural assessment in educational courses. Hence, it is suggested that intercultural experts should train teachers in assessment courses.

Finally, Lussier et al. (2007) and Skopinskaja (2009) stated that intercultural assessment is more subjective process than objective and teachers could have the role of the observer which is in harmony with the bimodal model developed in this study as it is also a more subjective model as it suggests that teachers and experts can take the role of observers.

6. Conclusion

This paper tried to develop a collection of new techniques and ways of assessing intercultural competence in Iran's context. The results could be useful for language teachers, intercultural experts, and institute managers. The current study findings state that language teachers should try to use various test types in assessing the intercultural content of their books and try to implement a bimodal assessment model in their language classes. Also, intercultural experts could teach the bimodal assessment model in their training sessions to language teachers and other intercultural trainees. Institute managers could improve the intercultural skills of language teachers by holding intercultural teacher training courses and helping their teachers to become familiar with intercultural assessment and bimodal assessment models.

Also, teachers should keep in mind that one method or test type does not fit all the intercultural situations and various assessment methods should be tried to gain mastery over the intercultural assessment process. In other words, language teachers should first learn the basics of dynamic assessment and performance assessment and then try to use them mutually in the form of a bimodal assessment model. It should be stated that the current study was done in Iran and it may yield different results in other contexts. Another suggestion is that the number of participants in this study was limited and a similar study should be conducted with larger groups of participants. Finally, the design of the current study was qualitative, other researchers can replicate this study by employing a quantitative or a mixed-methods design to compare the results.

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