

Original Article

The Role of “Instruction” in the Development of Intercultural Communication among Iranian Language Teachers

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Abstract

This paper explored the effect of instruction on the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) level of Iranian language teachers in four dimensions: skills, attitude, knowledge, and awareness. One hundred language teachers were chosen through convenience sampling and divided into two groups of experienced and novice teachers based on their teaching experience. All participants were chosen from state schools in Golestan province and they all taught English at English institutes and high schools. Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and ICC questionnaire were used to find the language proficiency level and ICC level of language teachers respectively. ICC questionnaire was carried out before and after instruction to determine the effect of instruction on ICC. The instruction lasted for 20 hours across ten sessions. The results of the study disclosed that the teachers' level of language proficiency was upper-intermediate. Also, it was revealed that instruction was effective as the ICC level of the teachers was below average before instruction and was improved after instruction. Therefore, the results of this study showed that instruction had an eye-catching effect on improving four dimensions of intercultural communicative competence of language teachers.

Keywords: Attitude, Awareness, Intercultural Communicative Communication (ICC), Knowledge, Skills.

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1. Introduction

Intercultural communicative competence or ICC referred to communicating efficiently and appropriately with people from various cultures (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2006). Jackson (2014) also defined intercultural competence as a concept entailing transcendence from a monocultural standpoint to an intercultural perspective. Bouchard (2017) regarded IC as the ability to deal with differences in case of confronting differences with the own ones. ICC included four dimensions: knowledge, attitude, awareness, and skills (Deardorff, 2006, Byram, 2000). According to Vez and Gonzalez (2004), language teachers should have proficiency in the target language, a positive attitude towards the target culture, language, and knowledge of the language as a social construct. Many studies examined the status of ICC teaching in language classes and they concluded that language teachers gave a low priority to ICC teaching and their students gained only cultural knowledge instead of skills and attitudes in ICC (Gu, 2016, p. 267). Fantini (2006) stated that language teachers should develop all four dimensions of ICC especially if they developed attitudes, skills, and knowledge, the awareness dimension would improve, too. Sahragard et al. (2014) asserted that ICC was the neglected part of English language syllabus and education in Iran and also along the same line Tafaraji et al. (2014) examined the ICC dimensions in Iran's teaching practice and found that Iran's teachers focused more on the cultural awareness rather than cultural attitudes or skills. Erfani (2014) found that Iran's language teachers emphasized the teaching of intercultural dimensions in English language classes and tried to enable their learners to comprehend cultural concepts.

Jalali and Sa'd (2013) and Rashidi and Soureshjani (2011) discovered that Iranian language teachers were aware of the importance of culture teaching in language classes and they asserted that culture-based texts could have a fruitful and conducive effect on the reading comprehension of Iranian language learners. Thus, these two studies showed that Iranian language teachers knew the value and status of intercultural communication teaching in English language education. The other area which caught the eyes of the researchers where the comparison of Iran's English textbooks with other textbooks. Khanshir and Mahammdifard (2015) examined the *Prospect Series* based on cultural concepts and found that the *Prospect Series* didn't develop intercultural competence in Iranian learners. In another study, Alimorad (2015) compared the dialogues of *Right Path to English 1*, and 2 and also *Prospect 1* and 2 in terms of the intercultural and intracultural points and concluded

that none of these books could lead to the development of intercultural competence in Iranian learners. The other area which was investigated by researchers was the perception of language teachers toward culture teaching and they found miscellaneous results. Nemati et al. (2014) examine the attitude of language teachers toward ICC teaching and culture teaching and they found that Iranian language teachers had a positive attitude toward culture teaching, however, they didn't integrate culture teaching into their English language teaching. Therefore, as above-mentioned, many studies examined various aspects of ICC teaching and culture teaching but the main gap is the status of ICC dimensions among Iranian English language teachers which is the focus of this study. This study tries to examine whether culture-based instruction can have a fruitful effect on the attitude, skills, knowledge, and awareness of Iranian language teachers and the rest of the paper is going to fill this gap.

2. Literature Review

2. 1. Theoretical Backgrounds: Intercultural Communication (ICC)

ICC referred to one's capability to communicate appropriately and efficiently with people from various cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Dearsdorff, 2006). Jackson (2014) also defined intercultural competence as a concept entailing transcendence from a monocultural standpoint to an intercultural standpoint. Bouchard (2017) defined IC as the ability to deal with differences in case of confronting differences with the own ones. Therefore, language teachers must not only enable learners with language skills but should foster ICC among them so they can develop the ability to interact successfully with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in cross-cultural contexts. Having ICC as a key objective of language teaching, language teachers must position themselves as "language and intercultural competence teachers" (Sercu, 2006, p. 56).

However, it has often been observed that language teachers generally give ICC low priority in teaching, or simply regarded it as a natural side-effect of target culture education (Gu, 2016; Young & Sachdev, 2011). Although they might prioritize the transmission of target cultural knowledge, teachers didn't necessarily promote students' intercultural attitudes or skills in their teaching (Gu, 2016; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008). In other words, language teachers often simplistically equated ICC to "a constant and steady body of cultural realities connected with the TL aspect" (Gu, 2016, p. 267).

Intercultural competence was an intricate concept and too difficult to describe.

Although no sheer common definition was available (Perry & Southwell, 2011), most of the extant definitions of ICC had four common aspects: “knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behavior” (Perry & Southwell, 2011, p. 455). Each of these four aspects of ICC was pertinent to someone's capability to communicate efficiently with others from various cultures. In the meantime, Lloyd and Härtel (2010) recognized three subsets of ICC, that is, cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The cognitive dimension describes someone's capability to grasp and render information; the affective dimension explicates feelings, attitudes, and personality traits; the behavioral dimension is related to behaviors that people reveal when communicating with people from other cultures (Lloyd & Härtel, 2010).

Deardorff (2006) could be seen as the first researcher who offered a complete definition of ICC. She used a Delphi study to judge that ICC could be described as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 247). Therefore, she said that the amount of a language user' ICC level relied on one's attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Deardorff (2011) touched upon that various dimensions could be deemed as vital elements in her model. At first, it should be remembered that the growth of intercultural competence was a continual and lifetime process, so “it is a must for individuals to be given opportunities to think on and assess the development of their intercultural competence over time” (p. 68). Secondly, she accentuated the significance of critical thinking in the acquiring and evaluating of critical knowledge. Finally, she offered attitude as the major part of the model, as attitude acted as the basis of expanding ICC and had a deep effect on all facets of the model. According to Fantini (2006), a pack of capabilities including awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge was required to act efficiently and appropriately when communicating with people who were miscellaneous from linguistic and cultural aspects (p.12). He stated awareness (of self and others) as the most vital part of efficient and suitable ICC communications as he maintained that awareness resulted from the knowledge pertinent to skills, attitudes, and knowledge of ICC. Concurrently, the improvement of knowledge, skills, and attitudes increased awareness as well.

Intercultural competence was an individual ability that was used in a multicultural circumference to develop and expand cross-cultural instruction or even communicatively teaching language. This intercultural competence, as an ability of a person, played a serious role in applying the person's experiences which worked as a means of a multicultural

perimeter to create and establish cooperation among multicultural people (Lasonen, 2005). It was expressed that "intercultural communicative competence (ICC), i.e., the knowledge, motivation, and skills required to talk efficiently and suitably with members of different cultures, was the highly preferred type of competence after the sequential dominance of grammatical (linguistic) competence and communicative competence" (Wiseman, 2002, p. 208).

Intercultural competence was not a new concept in education or language teaching anymore. Five elements were included in its definition (Byram, 2000) which encompass attitude, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. In another study, Vez & Gonzalez (2004, p.374) believed that the professional profile of the new teacher should encompass the following certain features, that is, proficiency in the target language, knowledge of the target culture, and positive attitude to target culture and knowledge about language as a social construct and system.

2. 2. Empirical Backgrounds: The Status of Culture and ICC in Iran's Context

It became obvious that Iranian teachers focused more on instructing the aesthetic meaning of culture (Adaskou et al., 1990) to their learners and they neglected the reality that culture and knowledge of culture were effective in the improvement of learners' communicative skills. Therefore, the importance of ICC came to the fore here as how it could be of great help for second language learners to understand the meaning transmitted by native speakers and this aspect (ICC) was greatly neglected in the syllabus design and instruction process of foreign language teachers in Iran. (Sahragard et al., 2014).

Tafaraji et al. (2014) attempted to throw light on the status of culture in secondary schools in Iran. Two hundred and ninety-one teachers from three provinces gathered to express their views based on a Likert scale. The findings showed that teachers had positive attitudes to include culture in the content of teaching. However, between their belief and practice was observed a schism. Another result was that teachers paid more attention to the development of cultural awareness rather than cultural skills. The commonest way was to compare the learner's culture with the culture of the target language to increase cultural awareness. One of the major obstacles in teaching culture was the shortage of time in classes.

Erfani (2014) probed the Iranian teacher's perception about which cultures should be

taught in foreign language classrooms. Though teaching sources and values of the target language was important, most teachers emphasized intercultural teaching and training to enable learners to comprehend some cultural concepts such as perception, thinking, feeling, and acting.

Jalali and Sa'd (2013) probed Iranian foreign language teachers' viewpoints on culture teaching in the language classroom. They discovered that Iranian language teachers, heedless of their academic qualities, were completely and squarely cognizant of the fruitful and inspirational effect of culture on language learning. Rashidi and Soureshjani (2011) also discovered that teaching culture-based texts had a noticeable impact on Iranian foreign language learners' motivation and performance on reading comprehension.

The study of Khanshir and Mohammadifard (2015) was the sole experiment that paid attention to culture in the *Prospect Series* (the newly published book in Iran's Ministry of Education). However, culture was probed restrictively in the study and it didn't provide us with a comprehensive assessment of the book to explore its usefulness in developing the learners' intercultural competence. Alimorad (2015) evaluated the dialogues of *Right Path to English 1*, and 2 and also *Prospect 1* and 2 in terms of the intercultural and intracultural points they deliver. Results revealed that the *Right path* provided the learners with consensual, inauthentic, and cooperative dialogues, while *Prospect 1, and 2* contained consensual dialogues which lacked negotiation of meaning. The study did not assess the books in terms of their possibility to develop Iranian foreign language learners' intercultural competence.

Gholami Pasand and Ghasemi (2018) investigated *Prospect 1&2* (a newly published book by Iran's Ministry of Education) from an intercultural perspective. Findings of the analyses disclosed that the set of cultural topics presented in the series is fairly limited. The results also revealed that the series was severely restricted in its presentation of intercultural components, and it was only limited to local matters. These results showed a demand for the inclusion of more cultural issues in the course books and it emphasized that more attention should be paid to growing the students' intercultural competence by the inclusion of tasks or activities aimed at other cultures and communities.

Badrkhani (2017) studied the female and male foreign language teacher's inclinations and attitudes toward intercultural education and the carry-over of culture in foreign language classrooms. The finding of the study revealed that Iranian foreign language male and female

teachers' areas of interest were different, while this domain and area could be wider. Moreover, foreign language teachers needed to get more knowledge about how to interact perfectly with various cultures need to gain more understanding about different cultural matters as well. Thus, more communication brought about gaining more cultural knowledge and teachers were able to carry any kind of cultural knowledge to their students in the foreign language context.

Maghsoudi (2020) compared the ICC level in Iranian and Indian textbooks at high schools. According to content analysis findings, the entire content of the Iranian and Indian high school English course books, 12 volumes in all, were examined and the examples of intercultural communicative competence were quantitatively recorded, categorized, and argued. The findings evinced that Standard English, the textbook developed in the outer circle in India, to a little extent, encompassed intercultural communicative competence, particularly, critical cultural awareness. It was also indicated that the Iranian high school English textbooks were lacking intercultural communicative competence elements.

Asadi et al. (2016) criticized the developed textbooks in Iran for their pitfalls in terms of cultural literacy instruction, such as over-localizing textbook content. Salehi and Amini (2016) also found that, as mentioned by the participants of their study, Iranian high school English textbooks had to include some examples of cultural values which improved learning target culture. Along the same line, adopting a semiotic analysis approach, Baghermousvai and Nabifar (2016) showed that *Prospect* and *Vision* utilized Iranian cultural elements such as attire, and Islamic concepts and traditions whereas they ignored the target culture. Ahamdpour and Kuhi (2019), investigating high school teachers' attitudes toward *Prospect* and *Vision* concluded that they held negative attitudes toward the way both Iranian and target cultures were presented in these textbooks. Khodabandeh and Mombini (2018), probing Iranian teachers' attitudes toward *Vision* 1, argued that the participants were desirably satisfied with different aspects of the textbook except for its cultural dimension and criticized the book for lacking target cultural values.

Considering foreign language instructors as main agents of language to be cross-culturally competent and sensitive to be able to expand their learners' ICC, Mostafae Alaei and Nosrati (2018) conducted a study to investigate the interrelationships between these two constructs and explored Iranian EFL teachers' means on different parts of ICC and intercultural sensitivity (IS). The results of correlational analysis on the EFL teachers

working in Iran revealed that the relation between ICC and intercultural sensitivity was statistically significant. Furthermore, the data analysis showed that the participants had high levels both in ICC and IS. According to this study, the main barriers to developing ICC were teachers' lack of cultural knowledge and interaction confidence. The article concluded by giving suggestions such as exchange programs, asking teachers to partake in abroad conferences, or asking experts from other countries to take part in shared seminars, workshops, etc., to increase language teachers' level of intercultural competence.

Estaji and Rahimi (2018) investigated foreign language teachers' perceptions of intercultural encounters and the factors which influenced them. To do so, over 100 teachers within a mixed-method research design were randomly selected to explore the degree to which EFL teachers' level of instruction, education, and experience influenced their perceptions of ICC, and in turn, their practices of teaching culture. The data analysis showed no significant effect of the level of experience, education, and instruction on the teachers' ICC perceptions. However, the way teachers taught cultural aspects was found to be under the influence of their ICC perceptions, implying those EFL teachers' beliefs about culture impacted their pedagogical practices.

Sotoudehnama et al. (2012) explored Iranian EFL University teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning the target culture in their classes; they also aimed to formulate a definition of culture based on the teachers' insights. The participants of the case study were twenty full-time and part-time teachers of the English Language and Literature. The data were gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Further, the results showed that the teachers supported the idea of teaching culture in the ELT context.

Alavinia and Qadermazi (2013) investigated 40 Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward integrating IC in their teaching and the effect of factors such as gender, age, and teaching experience on their attitudes toward IC. To collect the data, the researchers administered a questionnaire developed by Sercu et al. (2009). The multiple regression analysis demonstrated that both teaching experience and age of the EFL teachers had, respectively, negative and positive effects on the teachers' attitudes toward intercultural competence. The findings further showed that younger teachers tend to practice ICC in their classes more than older teachers. The results also revealed that IC was not an important objective for Iranian EFL teachers.

Nemati et al. (2014) investigated the ideas and attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers on

intercultural competence teaching (ICT) and its effect on their teaching practices. The study attempted to find out Iranian foreign language teachers' perception of the aims of foreign language education, teachers' ideas and attitudes about the role of ICC in foreign language teaching, and the extent teachers included cultural teaching in their classroom. The participants of the study were 50 school teachers from Mazandaran Province. The participants were asked to fill out an ICC questionnaire drawn up by Sercu et al. (2005). The results showed that Iranian foreign language teachers perceived the purposes of foreign language education more than the expected mean ($M= 3.85$). It was revealed that Iranian foreign language teachers had positive attitudes towards the instruction of culture. The result of the *t*-test disclosed that language instructors appeared to be cognizant of the role of the culture in FLT; however, they seemed usually not to integrate culture into their teaching.

Although lots of research studies had been done in the field of ICC in Iran, the results showed that the cultural and intercultural knowledge of language teachers was not sufficient and most of the teachers lacked sufficient knowledge. One reason might be the textbooks which had been used at Iran's guidance and high schools ignored the cultural and intercultural aspects of language in their content (Badrkhani, 2017; Jalali & Sa'ad, 2013; Maghsoudi, 2020; Tafaraji et al., 2014). Thus, this study tried to find the effect of culture-based instruction on the ICC level of language teachers to fill the gap on whether instruction could be an effective tool in improving the intercultural level of Iranian teachers or not. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated for the current study.

1. What is the effect of culture-based instruction on the skills dimension of ICC among Iranian language teachers?
2. What is the effect of culture-based instruction on the attitude dimension of ICC among Iranian language teachers?
3. What is the effect of culture-based instruction on the awareness dimension of ICC among Iranian language teachers?
4. What is the effect of culture-based instruction on the knowledge dimension of ICC among Iranian language teachers?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design and Context of the Study

As this study contained one group of English language teachers, the researchers of this study

applied a one-group pretest-posttest design along with quantitative measures such as descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the language proficiency and intercultural communicative level of language teachers. The setting and context of the current study were Iran, Golestan province, and Minoodasht City.

3.2. Participants

The population of this study was Iran's English language teachers and the target population was the English language teachers in the Golestan province of Iran. To select the sample, the researchers took into account factors such as availability, accessibility, and willingness of the participants, and therefore, one hundred (100) English language teachers in Minoodasht City were selected through a convenience sampling procedure. The age range of the participants was between 22 and 40. It was worth mentioning that this study contained both experienced and novice teachers based on their teaching experience. All teachers had BA and MA in English language teaching and they have been teaching English in both language institutes and high schools.

3.3. Instrument(s)

The instruments of the current study were the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) which included 60 items and an ICC questionnaire developed by Kazykhankyzy (2019) comprising 52 items. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was .958 which revealed the questionnaire had high reliability (Kazykhankyzy, 2019). It is worth mentioning that lots of correspondence between the researchers of the study and the designer of the questionnaire, i.e., Kazykhankyzy (2019) is done to take the required permissions to use the questionnaire.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

To collect the required data, the researchers put the participants in one group. Therefore, the group of participants contained both experienced and novice language teachers. To be on the safe side, the researchers decided to examine the English language level of teachers to see whether their language levels were the same or not. Therefore, the researchers utilized the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), which included 60 items, to discover the participants' English level and homogenize them. Then, the researchers used the ICC questionnaire to collect the requisite data about the intercultural communicative competence level of the participants

before and after instruction. Therefore, the Kazykhankyzy (2019) ICC questionnaire was used which addressed the four dimensions, i.e., the attitude, skill, knowledge, and awareness components of ICC. It was worth mentioning that the questionnaire consisted of 52 items based on a five-point Likert scale. The options corresponding to the items and point responses were edited as follows 5 = totally agree; 4 = agree; 3 = undecided; 2 = disagree; 1 = totally disagree. Tables 4 and 5 show the results of the ICC questionnaire before and after instruction sessions respectively. To instruct the participants, the researchers used the SAGE handbook of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009). The instruction period lasted for 20 hours in ten sessions and each session lasted two hours.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

To analyze the data collected from the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), the researchers used descriptive and inferential statistics. The researchers used descriptive statistics to calculate the mean and standard deviation along with the minimum and maximum scores of OPT. Also, the researchers used inferential statistics to analyze the data collected from OPT. Since the data weren't normally distributed, the researchers used the Mann-Whitney U test to find the language proficiency level of the participants. SPSS 21 was used to serve these purposes right. After pinpointing the language proficiency of the participants, the researchers distributed the ICC questionnaire to the participants to fill out before the instruction (the pretest). After filling out the questionnaire, the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of ICC dimensions were calculated and then the participants went through instruction sessions (the treatment). After finishing the instruction sessions, the participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire again to find the effect of instruction on the ICC dimensions (the post-test). After instruction, the researchers recalculated the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of ICC dimensions, and finally the researchers used the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to check whether there is a significant difference between before-instruction (pre-test) and after-instruction (post-test) and also whether instruction is an effective tool in improving the ICC dimensions among language teachers or not.

4. Results

This section dealt with the analysis of the results of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to find the English level of language teachers by using inferential and descriptive statistics. The

following tables show the results of the descriptive statistics along with the inferential statistics for the Oxford Placement Test (OPT).

Table1.

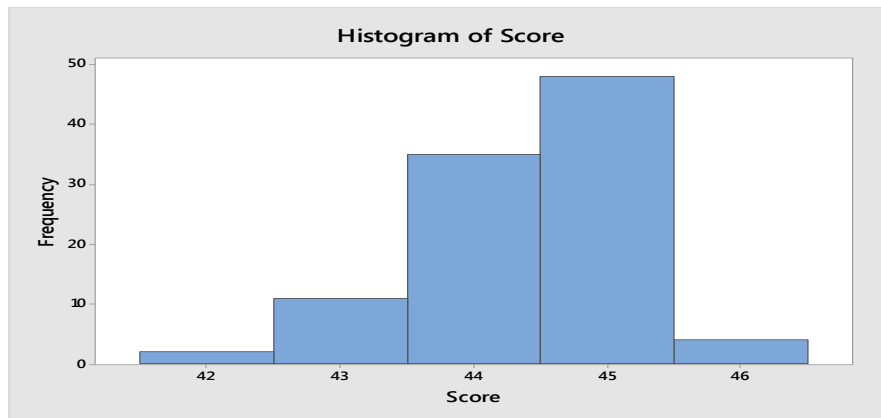
Descriptive Statistics for OPT

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Score	100	42.0	46.0	44.410	.8177
Valid N (listwise)	100				

According to Table 1, the teachers' scores ranged from 42 to 46. The mean of the scores was 44.41(M=44.41) which meant that the teacher's English proficiency level was upper-intermediate. Also, the standard deviation equaled 0.82 (SD=0.82) which signified the homogeneity of teachers' answers to the questions. In the meantime, Figure 1 showed that the score 45 was the most frequent score and the score 42 was the least frequent score.

Figure 1.

Histogram for Frequency of the OPT Scores



4.1. Inferential statistics

This section dealt with teachers' language proficiency levels. At first, the normality of the OPT data was examined by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. As a statistical rule, in case of normality of the data, *t*-test was used and if the data weren't normally distributed, the Mann-Whitney U test should be used.

Table 2.

Normality Distribution for OPT

	N	Test Statistic	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		N	Test Statistic	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Q01	100	.470	.000 ^c	Q31	100	.503	.000 ^c
Q02	100	.502	.000 ^c	Q32	100	.486	.000 ^c
Q03	100	.462	.000 ^c	Q33	100	.519	.000 ^c
Q04	100	.491	.000 ^c	Q34	100	.491	.000 ^c
Q05	100	.461	.000 ^c	Q35	100	.478	.000 ^c
Q06	100	.475	.000 ^c	Q36	100	.482	.000 ^c
Q07	100	.485	.000 ^c	Q37	100	.441	.000 ^c
Q08	100	.483	.000 ^c	Q38	100	.444	.000 ^c
Q09	100	.440	.000 ^c	Q39	100	.430	.000 ^c
Q10	100	.450	.000 ^c	Q40	100	.466	.000 ^c
Q11	100	.497	.000 ^c	Q41	100	.481	.000 ^c
Q12	100	.485	.000 ^c	Q42	100	.495	.000 ^c
Q13	100	.460	.000 ^c	Q43	100	.453	.000 ^c
Q14	100	.444	.000 ^c	Q44	100	.478	.000 ^c
Q15	100	.502	.000 ^c	Q45	100	.505	.000 ^c
Q16	100	.492	.000 ^c	Q46	100	.484	.000 ^c
Q17	100	.493	.000 ^c	Q47	100	.483	.000 ^c
Q18	100	.488	.000 ^c	Q48	100	.469	.000 ^c
Q19	100	.473	.000 ^c	Q49	100	.485	.000 ^c
Q20	100	.447	.000 ^c	Q50	100	.486	.000 ^c
Q21	100	.486	.000 ^c	Q51	100	.450	.000 ^c
Q22	100	.510	.000 ^c	Q52	100	.500	.000 ^c
Q23	100	.469	.000 ^c	Q53	100	.465	.000 ^c
Q24	100	.491	.000 ^c	Q54	100	.465	.000 ^c
Q25	100	.481	.000 ^c	Q55	100	.489	.000 ^c
Q26	100	.436	.000 ^c	Q56	100	.486	.000 ^c
Q27	100	.495	.000 ^c	Q57	100	.463	.000 ^c
Q28	100	.480	.000 ^c	Q58	100	.417	.000 ^c
Q29	100	.482	.000 ^c	Q59	100	.491	.000 ^c
Q30	100	.473	.000 ^c	Q60	100	.473	.000 ^c

According to Table 2, the significance level of the test was smaller than 0.05. Therefore, the researchers concluded that the data weren't normal and the Mann-Whitney U test should be used. The mean of the answers for the two groups of teachers was compared by using the Mann-Whitney U test to find whether there was a significant difference between the means.

Table 3.

Results from the Mann-Whitney U test

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Q01	1247.000	2522.000	-.031	.975
Q02	1248.000	2523.000	-.023	.982
Q03	1178.000	2453.000	-.726	.468
Q04	1163.000	2438.000	-.917	.359
Q05	1202.500	2477.500	-.543	.587
Q06	1214.000	2489.000	-.363	.717
Q07	1158.000	2433.000	-1.052	.293
Q08	1204.000	2479.000	-.526	.599
Q09	1181.000	2456.000	-.815	.415
Q10	1246.000	2521.000	-.040	.968
Q11	1250.000	2525.000	.000	1.000
Q12	1247.500	2522.500	-.027	.978
Q13	1068.000	2343.000	-1.874	.061
Q14	1069.500	2344.500	-1.784	.074
Q15	1162.500	2437.500	-1.001	.317
Q16	1219.000	2494.000	-.327	.744
Q17	1228.000	2503.000	-.245	.807
Q18	1103.000	2378.000	-1.681	.093
Q19	1166.500	2441.500	-.902	.367
Q20	1223.500	2498.500	-.279	.780
Q21	1149.500	2424.500	-1.086	.277
Q22	1201.500	2476.500	-.593	.553
Q23	1081.500	2356.500	-1.871	.061
Q24	1131.000	2406.000	-1.254	.210
Q25	1247.500	2522.500	-.026	.979
Q26	1139.000	2414.000	-1.119	.263
Q27	1194.500	2469.500	-.600	.549
Q28	1152.000	2427.000	-1.059	.289

Q29	1239.500	2514.500	-.108	.914
Q30	1180.000	2455.000	-.777	.437
Q31	1233.500	2508.500	-.183	.855
Q32	1225.000	2500.000	-.252	.801
Q33	1207.500	2482.500	-.520	.603
Q34	1213.000	2488.000	-.390	.697
Q35	1246.500	2521.500	-.035	.972
Q36	1179.000	2454.000	-.716	.474
Q37	1072.000	2347.000	-1.758	.079
Q38	1162.500	2437.500	-1.001	.317
Q39	1116.500	2391.500	-1.319	.187
Q40	1159.500	2434.500	-.978	.328
Q41	1177.500	2452.500	-.805	.421
Q42	1177.000	2452.000	-.770	.441
Q43	1111.000	2386.000	-1.432	.152
Q44	1191.000	2466.000	-.622	.534
Q45	1232.500	2507.500	-.207	.836
Q46	1202.000	2477.000	-.494	.621
Q47	1241.500	2516.500	-.088	.930
Q48	1232.000	2507.000	-.200	.842
Q49	1216.500	2491.500	-.353	.724
Q50	1170.000	2445.000	-.824	.410
Q51	1248.500	2523.500	-.018	.985
Q52	1223.000	2498.000	-.300	.764
Q53	1113.000	2388.000	-1.481	.139
Q54	1247.500	2522.500	-.027	.978
Q55	1219.500	2494.500	-.322	.748
Q56	1244.000	2519.000	-.065	.948
Q57	1246.000	2521.000	-.040	.968
Q58	1137.000	2412.000	-1.096	.273
Q59	1232.500	2507.500	-.177	.860
Q60	1162.500	2437.500	-1.001	.317

a. Grouping Variable: Group

According to Table 3, the significance level of the test was more than 0.05 which showed that there was no significant difference among the mean of the answers in both groups of the teachers. Therefore, the researchers concluded that teachers were at the same

level of language proficiency. As above-mentioned, The ICC scale consisted of four dimensions: skill, attitude, awareness, and knowledge. The frequency, mean, and standard deviation for the dimensions of ICC were shown below.

Table 4.

Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation of ICC Dimensions

Question	Frequency					Mean	Stdev
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Q01	37	25	38	0	0	2.01	0.87
Q02	26	39	35	0	0	2.09	0.78
Q03	29	34	37	0	0	2.08	0.81
Q04	37	36	27	0	0	1.90	0.80
Q05	37	39	24	0	0	1.87	0.77
Q06	33	32	35	0	0	2.02	0.83
Q07	36	30	34	0	0	1.98	0.84
Q08	36	28	36	0	0	2.00	0.85
Q09	26	36	38	0	0	2.12	0.79
Q10	45	30	25	0	0	1.80	0.82
Q11	36	33	31	0	0	1.95	0.82
Q12	24	36	40	0	0	2.16	0.79
Q13	36	26	38	0	0	2.02	0.86
Q14	32	37	31	0	0	1.99	0.80
Q15	34	31	35	0	0	2.01	0.83
Q16	37	33	30	0	0	1.93	0.82
Q17	32	33	35	0	0	2.03	0.82
Q18	27	35	38	0	0	2.11	0.80
Q19	35	30	35	0	0	2.00	0.84
Q20	30	29	41	0	0	2.11	0.84
Q21	33	42	25	0	0	1.92	0.76
Q22	35	36	29	0	0	1.94	0.80
Q23	31	43	26	0	0	1.95	0.76
Q24	32	31	37	0	0	2.05	0.83
Q25	33	33	34	0	0	2.01	0.82
Q26	38	33	29	0	0	1.91	0.82
Q27	42	28	30	0	0	1.88	0.84

Question	Frequency					Mean	Stdev
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Q28	35	35	30	0	0	1.95	0.81
Q29	41	26	33	0	0	1.92	0.86
Q30	28	39	33	0	0	2.05	0.78
Q31	28	38	34	0	0	2.06	0.79
Q32	31	40	29	0	0	1.98	0.78
Q33	39	35	26	0	0	1.87	0.80
Q34	30	34	36	0	0	2.06	0.81
Q35	25	34	41	0	0	2.16	0.80
Q36	38	39	23	0	0	1.85	0.77
Q37	31	33	36	0	0	2.05	0.82
Q38	35	39	26	0	0	1.91	0.78
Q39	37	29	34	0	0	1.97	0.85
Q40	24	34	42	0	0	2.18	0.80
Q41	37	35	28	0	0	1.91	0.81
Q42	36	33	31	0	0	1.95	0.82
Q43	42	29	29	0	0	1.87	0.84
Q44	35	36	29	0	0	1.94	0.80
Q45	29	33	38	0	0	2.09	0.82
Q46	29	29	42	0	0	2.13	0.84
Q47	38	32	30	0	0	1.92	0.82
Q48	31	35	34	0	0	2.03	0.81
Q49	28	38	34	0	0	2.06	0.79
Q50	46	37	17	0	0	1.71	0.74
Q51	28	35	37	0	0	2.09	0.81
Q52	35	33	32	0	0	1.97	0.82

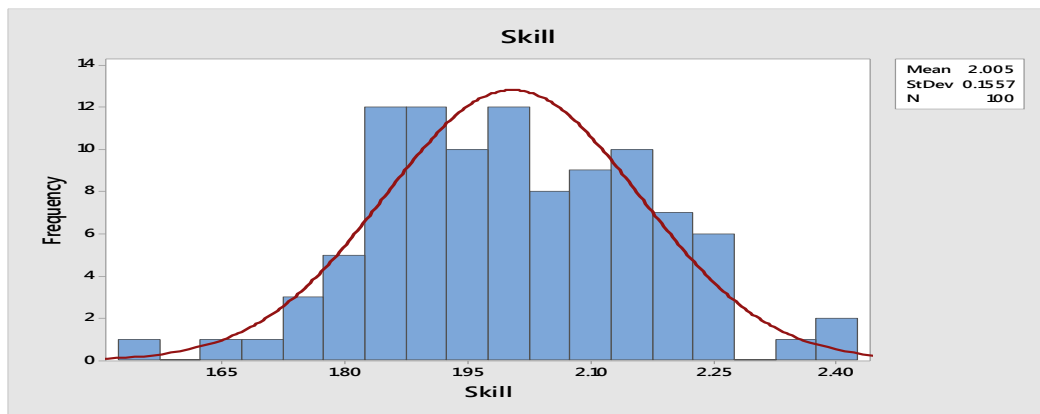
The results of Table 4 revealed that most of the answers ranged from "strongly disagree" to "undecided" and the mean of the answers was below or smaller than three (3). Also, the standard deviation of the answers was below or smaller than one (1). As the mean and standard deviation were below 3 and 1 respectively, the researchers concluded that the answers enjoyed little dispersion.

Answers to questions "one to twenty-one (1-21)" were related to the skills dimension.

The histogram for the skills dimension was shown in Figure 2. The mean value or average value for answers ranged from 1 to about 3 and the mean value for this dimension (skills dimension) was 2.005 which was smaller than 3 and this signified the low level of ICC skill among the participants.

Figure 2.

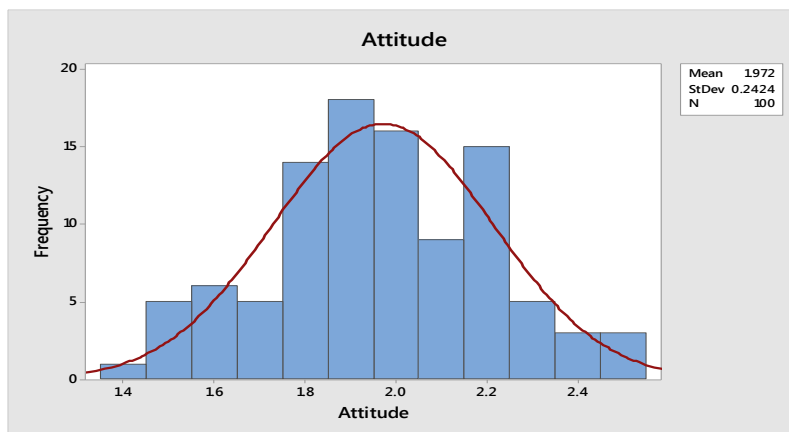
Histogram for Skill Dimension



Answers to questions "twenty-two to thirty-four (22-34)" were related to the attitude dimension. The histogram for this dimension is shown in Figure 3. The mean value for answers ranges from 1 to about 3. The mean value for this dimension was 1.97 and was smaller than three which showed the low level of ICC attitude among the participants.

Figure 3.

Histogram for Attitude Dimension

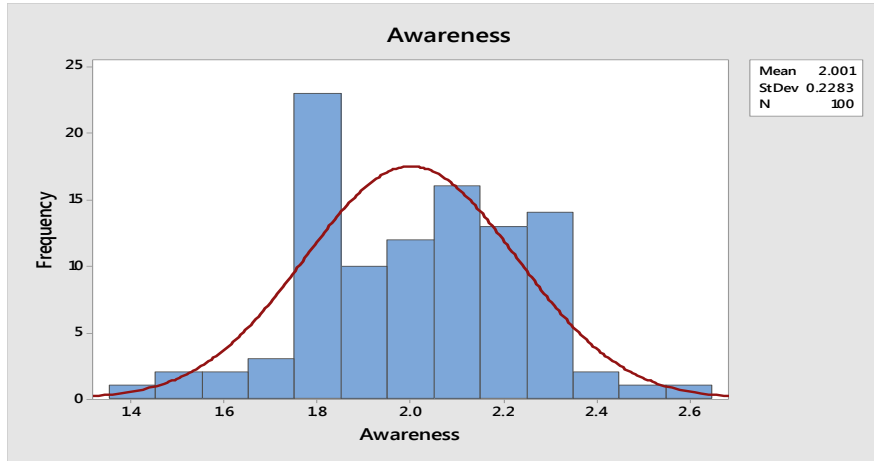


Answers to questions "thirty-five to forty-six (35-46)" were related to the awareness dimension. The histogram of this dimension is shown in Figure 4. The mean value for the

answers ranged from 1 to about 3. The mean value for this dimension was 2.001 and was smaller than 3 which showed the low level of ICC awareness among the participants.

Figure 4.

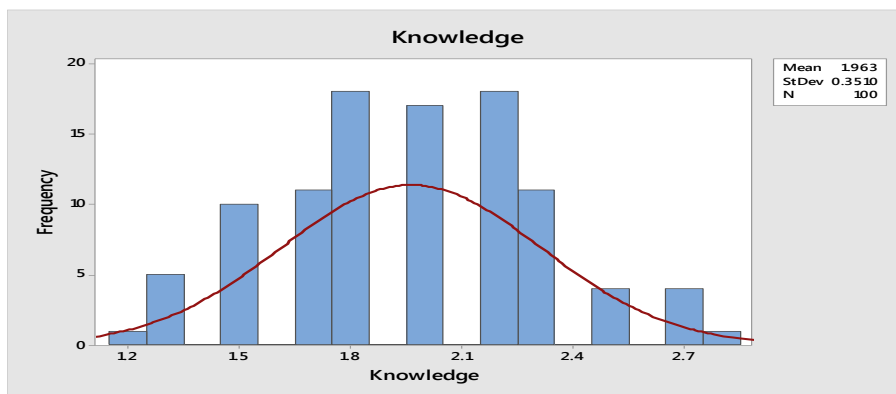
Histogram for Awareness Dimension



Answers to questions "forty-seven to fifty-two (47-52)" were related to the knowledge dimension. The histogram for this dimension is shown in Figure 5. The mean value for answers ranged from 1 to about 3 and the mean value for this dimension was 1.96. Therefore, it was smaller than 3 which showed that participants had a low level of ICC knowledge.

Figure 5.

Histogram for Knowledge Dimension



Given the results, the ICC level among the participants (here language teachers) was below average in all four dimensions of skill, attitude, awareness, and knowledge. And this meant that the language teachers' ICC level was low and below average and the participants had to go through training sessions to increase their ICC levels. Therefore, the participants

(novice and experienced teachers) went through training sessions for 20 hours, that is, ten sessions and each session lasted for two hours and then they were asked to fill out the ICC questionnaire for the second time. The analysis of the questionnaire's data revealed the following results.

The participants went through the instruction sessions for 20 hours, i.e., ten sessions and each session lasted for 2 hours. During the instruction sessions, the participants were acquainted with the models and concepts of intercultural communications by using various sources including a handbook on intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009) and miscellaneous papers. Different issues including the concept of ICC, the role of identity in ICC, intercultural conflicts, methodological issues in ICC, theories, and research in ICC, and many other aspects of intercultural communication were explained and taught in these instructional sessions by the researchers. Since it was impossible to have face-to-face interactions because of Covid-19, the researchers used Skype and WhatsApp soft wares to hold the classes and send the audio-recorded files to the participants and were in contact with participants via these soft wares. It was worth mentioning that all participants took part in these online classes enthusiastically and studied the issues carefully and argued them with the researchers through the Skype and WhatsApp soft wares. After finishing the instruction sessions, the participants were asked to fill out the ICC questionnaire for the second time. Table 5 showed the frequency, mean, and standard deviation for ICC dimensions.

Table 5.

Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation of ICC Dimensions after Instruction

Question	Frequency					Mean	Stdev
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Q01	0	0	34	25	41	4.070	0.868
Q02	0	0	37	29	34	3.970	0.846
Q03	0	0	42	29	29	3.870	0.837
Q04	0	0	42	27	31	3.890	0.852
Q05	0	0	37	40	23	3.860	0.766
Q06	0	0	41	36	23	3.820	0.783
Q07	0	0	32	38	30	3.980	0.791
Q08	0	0	35	35	30	3.950	0.809
Q09	0	0	29	34	37	4.080	0.813

Question	Frequency					Mean	Stdev
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Q10	0	0	36	30	34	3.980	0.841
Q11	0	0	28	39	33	4.050	0.783
Q12	0	0	41	29	30	3.890	0.840
Q13	0	0	34	29	37	4.030	0.846
Q14	0	0	33	33	34	4.010	0.823
Q15	0	0	34	36	30	3.960	0.803
Q16	0	0	32	29	39	4.070	0.844
Q17	0	0	37	31	32	3.950	0.833
Q18	0	0	34	28	38	4.040	0.852
Q19	0	0	27	31	42	4.150	0.821
Q20	0	0	28	37	35	4.070	0.795
Q21	0	0	30	28	42	4.120	0.844
Q22	0	0	29	34	37	4.080	0.813
Q23	0	0	42	27	31	3.890	0.852
Q24	0	0	33	31	36	4.030	0.834
Q25	0	0	25	38	37	4.120	0.782
Q26	0	0	35	38	27	3.920	0.787
Q27	0	0	34	32	34	4.000	0.829
Q28	0	0	33	25	42	4.090	0.866
Q29	0	0	32	32	36	4.040	0.828
Q30	0	0	28	47	25	3.970	0.731
Q31	0	0	46	26	28	3.820	0.845
Q32	0	0	31	35	34	4.030	0.810
Q33	0	0	26	33	41	4.150	0.809
Q34	0	0	37	33	30	3.930	0.820
Q35	0	0	35	30	35	4.000	0.841
Q36	0	0	35	34	31	3.960	0.816
Q37	0	0	43	33	24	3.810	0.800
Q38	0	0	36	36	28	3.920	0.800
Q39	0	0	33	31	36	4.030	0.834
Q40	0	0	26	39	35	4.090	0.780
Q41	0	0	29	27	44	4.150	0.845
Q42	0	0	37	32	31	3.940	0.827

Question	Frequency					Mean	Stdev
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Q43	0	0	31	27	42	4.110	0.852
Q44	0	0	37	30	33	3.960	0.840
Q45	0	0	35	32	33	3.980	0.829
Q46	0	0	37	30	33	3.960	0.840
Q47	0	0	33	35	32	3.990	0.810
Q48	0	0	30	35	35	4.050	0.809
Q49	0	0	24	29	47	4.230	0.815
Q50	0	0	29	31	40	4.110	0.827
Q51	0	0	37	31	32	3.950	0.833
Q52	0	0	22	40	38	4.160	0.762

The results showed that most of the answers ranged from "undecided to strongly agree" and the mean of the answers was higher than three ($M \geq 3$). As the standard deviation of the answers was below or smaller than one ($SD \leq 1$), it was concluded that the answers enjoyed little dispersion. This meant that the participants' level of ICC improved and instruction had a positive effect on the ICC level of the participants. To examine whether there was a significant difference among the participants' ICC level before and after instruction sessions, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used.

Table 6.

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results

	Skill	Attitude	Awareness	Knowledge
Z	-8.684 ^b	-8.688 ^b	-8.685 ^b	-8.688 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on positive ranks.

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results showed that there was a significant difference among the participants' ICC levels between before and after instruction sessions as the significance value was below 0.05. According to the values of the four dimensions of ICC after instruction, the researchers concluded that the participants' (language teachers) ICC levels increased significantly.

5. Discussion

This study tried to discover the impact of instruction on the ICC level of Iranian language teachers in all four dimensions of ICC, that is, skills, knowledge, awareness, and attitude. Therefore, 100 teachers were chosen via convenience sampling and an OPT was run to check their language proficiency to homogenize them based on their language ability. The result of the OPT showed that teachers were homogeneous based on their language ability and their proficiency level was upper-intermediate. Then, the ICC questionnaire was distributed to be filled by the teachers to find their level of ICC. Before the instruction sessions, the results of the current study showed that most of the answers ranged from "strongly disagree" to "undecided" and the mean of the answers was below or smaller than three ($M \leq 3$). Also, the standard deviation of the answers was below or smaller than one ($SD \leq 1$). As the mean and standard deviation were smaller than 3 and 1 respectively, it was concluded that the answers enjoyed little dispersion.

The mean value for the skills dimension was ($M=2.005$) which was smaller than 3 and this signified the low level of ICC skill among the teachers. The mean value for the attitude dimension was ($M=1.97$) and was smaller than three (3) which showed the low level of ICC attitude among the teachers. The mean value for the awareness dimension was ($M=2.001$) and was smaller than 3 which showed the low level of ICC awareness among the teachers. The mean value for the knowledge dimension was ($M=1.96$) and was smaller than 3 which revealed that teachers had a low level of ICC knowledge. Thus, the researchers concluded that the participants' level of ICC in all four dimensions was low before instruction. After instruction sessions, the results showed that the ICC level of language teachers was improved since the mean of the answers was higher than three ($M \geq 3$). As the standard deviation of the answers was below or smaller than one ($SD \leq 1$), it was concluded that the answers enjoyed little dispersion and this meant that instruction had a positive impact on the ICC level of the participants; that is, language teachers. To examine whether there was a significant difference among the participants' ICC level before and after instruction sessions, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results evinced that there was a significant difference among the participants' ICC level between before and after instruction sessions as the significance value was below 0.05. According to the values in four dimensions of ICC after instruction, it was construed that the participants' (language teachers) ICC levels increased significantly and to answer the research questions based on

collected and analyzed data, the researchers concluded that instruction is an effective tool in improving all four dimensions of intercultural communication.

Based on the means of all four dimensions of ICC, it was concluded that Iranian language teachers had a low level of ICC before training and one reason for this could be a lack of paying attention to cultural and intercultural matters in English textbooks at guidance schools and high schools. The results of the current study were in harmony with Gu (2016) which stated that language teachers generally gave ICC low priority in teaching, or simply regarded it as a natural side-effect of target culture education. Young & Sachdev (2011) stated that language teachers gave low priority to ICC in their teaching which was in sync with the findings of the current study.

Sahragard et al. (2014) showed that culture and ICC were the neglected parts of syllabus design and instruction which supported the results of the current study. On the other hand, the results of this study were compatible with Tafaraji, et al. (2014) since Tafaraji, et al. (2014) showed that teachers had a positive attitude to culture and paid more attention to awareness. The current study also showed improvement in the dimension of awareness and attitude after training sessions.

Khanshir and Mahammadifard (2015), Gholami Pasand and Ghasemi (2018), and Alimorad (2015) investigated the ICC aspect of textbooks and concluded that textbooks had restrictive domains of culture and ICC. Lack of cultural and intercultural content and exposure in English textbooks led to low levels of ICC in language teachers which supported the findings of the current study as this study revealed that language teachers had low levels of ICC before instruction sessions.

Maghsoudi (2020) compared Iranian and Indian textbooks and concluded that Iranian textbooks lacked ICC elements and content. This finding was in sync with the current study which asserted Iranian language teachers had low levels of ICC before instruction. Asadi, et al. (2016), Salehi and Amini (2016) and Baghermousvai and Nabifar (2016) examined the Iranian English textbooks and found that most of them tried to over-localize the books and contents and ignored the target culture and ICC and this led to lack of ICC improvement in language teachers. Also, the current study teachers revealed that language teachers had a low level in ICC dimensions before going through instruction sessions and one of the causes was books which these teachers taught at schools for a long time.

Ahamdpour and Kuhi (2019) and Khodabandeh and Mombini (2018) investigated the

teachers' attitudes toward textbooks and found negative attitudes among Iranian teachers. This finding was in sync with the results of the current study before instruction and at odds with the extant results after instruction. In the current study, teachers had a negative attitude towards ICC before instruction but after instruction, they had a positive attitude.

Mostafae Alaei and Nosrati (2018) in their study showed that teachers should partake in seminars and workshops to gain the necessary ICC level and this finding was in harmony with the current study because this study also evinced that instruction had a positive impact and led to improvement in ICC levels. Estaji and Rahimi (2018) stated that instruction had no significant effect on ICC and this finding was at variance with the current study. The findings of both studies were the opposite. This study showed that instruction had a conducive impact on ICC. Sotoudehnama, et al. (2012) showed that teaching culture was effective in ICC courses and classrooms which was in consonant with the finding of the current study because both studies showed the importance of instruction in the improvement of ICC levels.

Alavinia and Qadermazi (2013) and Nemati et al. (2014) showed in their studies that teachers believed that instruction and practice of ICC were important but ICC was not objective in their teaching practice. These findings were somehow ambivalent with the finding of the current study. In conclusion, the results and statistical analyses of the current study showed that language teachers had a low level of ICC before instruction and their ICC levels improved after instruction. This meant that training and instruction in ICC had a positive effect on ICC levels. At the same time, the cultural aspects of textbooks should be improved, too. These findings could be of great help to language teachers, curriculum developers, and syllabus designers. Because they could design and write more in their syllabi and books about various aspects of culture.

6. Conclusion

This study tried to explore the effect of instruction on the ICC level of Iranian language teachers. The researchers used convenience sampling to choose participants and divided them into two groups of novice and experienced teachers. Oxford placement test and ICC questionnaire were used to determine the language proficiency level and ICC level of language teachers respectively. The results of the current study showed that instruction was effective in the improvement of ICC levels of language teachers in all four dimensions of

ICC, i.e., skills, awareness, attitude, and knowledge. The results of the ICC questionnaire showed that participants had a vague and undecided approach toward the elements of ICC before instruction sessions but after instruction sessions, they found a clear and vivid view. To conclude, the results and statistical analyses of the present study revealed that language teachers had a low level of ICC before instruction and their ICC levels were enhanced after instruction. The findings of the current study signified that instruction in ICC had a positive effect on ICC levels. It was worth mentioning that all the materials used for instruction sessions had intercultural content which meant that the cultural aspects in textbooks should be improved, too. These findings had various implications for language teachers, textbook writers, curriculum developers, university professors, and syllabus designers as these findings enlightened them about the importance of intercultural teaching and intercultural content in their courses, books, and teaching materials, and finally, in developing their syllabi and curricula. The researchers of the study suggested other researchers doing this study with various designs of quantitative approach and with more groups of participants. Also, it will be interesting to repeat this study qualitatively or in a mixed-methods design to gain an in-depth understanding of the effect of instruction on language teachers' ICC level. Also, this study can be done comparatively between Iranian teachers and other countries' teachers to find to what extent there is a difference between Iranian teachers' level of ICC with other teachers from other countries. Also, the other area which needs research is to find the level of ICC based on the gender of the participants, i.e., examining the level of ICC between female and male language teachers or probing their attitudes and knowledge in intercultural communications.

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