Cultural Competence in English Language Teaching: A Systematic Review of Pedagogical Approaches and Outcomes

الكفاءة الثقافية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية : مراجعة منهجية للمقاربات التربوية والمخرجات

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الملخص:

أصبحت الكفاءة الثقافية جانباً مهماً بشكل متزايد في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية ، مما يعكس الحاجة إلى أن يتقن المتعلمون ليس فقط المهارات اللغوية، بل أيضًا القدرة على التنقل وفهم السياقات الثقافية المتنوعة. يستعرض هذا البحث الأساليب التربوية المختلفة المستخدمة لتطوير الكفاءة الثقافية في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية، ويقيّم مدى فعاليتها في تعزيز وعي المتعلمين بين الثقافات، وحساسيتهم، ومهاراتهم في التواصل. يلخص هذا البحث نتائج العديد من الدراسات التي تدمج المحتوى الثقافي في المناهج الدراسية للغة، وتستخدم مهام التواصل بين الثقافات، وتطبيق استراتيجيات التعلم التجريبي مثل برامج الدراسة بالخارج والتبادلات الافتراضية.

يبرز البحث التحديات المرتبطة بتقييم الكفاءة الثقافية والحاجة إلى مقاييس أكثر قوة وموحدة. علاوة على ذلك، يعد تدريب المعلمين على الكفاءة الثقافية أمرًا حيويًا لنجاح تنفيذ هذه الأساليب التربوية.

يختتم هذا البحث بتوصيات للمعلمين وصناع السياسات حول كيفية دمج الكفاءة الثقافية في مناهج تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية، مع التأكيد على أهمية النهج الشمولي الذي يجمع بين التعلم اللغوي والثقافي. كما يتم اقتراح اتجاهات بحثية مستقبلية، لا سيما في مجالات الدراسات الطولية حول التأثير طويل المدى لتدريب الكفاءة الثقافية واستكشاف الأدوات الرقمية لتعزيز التواصل بين الثقافات في الفصول الدراسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكفاءة الثقافية، المناهج التربوية، المهارات اللغوية، التواصل بين الثقافات، استراتيجيات التدريس

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Abstract

Cultural competence has become an increasingly important component of English Language Teaching (ELT), reflecting the importance of students not only being able to develop linguistic skills but also to navigate and understand cultural diversity. This systematic review examines various teaching strategies for cultural competence in ELT and assesses their effectiveness in enhancing students' intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and communication skills. The study integrates findings from several types of research, including those that incorporate cultural contexts into language learning, use intercultural communication activities, and apply experiential learning methods such as study abroad programs and virtual exchanges.

The study highlights the challenges associated with assessing cultural competence and the need for robust and standardized measures. Additionally, teacher training in cultural competence is crucial for effectively implementing these teaching strategies.

This study concludes with recommendations for teachers and policymakers to integrate cultural competence into the ELT curriculum, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that integrates language and cultural learning. Future research directions are also suggested, particularly in the areas of in-depth research on the long-term effects of cultural competence training and exploring digital tools to promote intercultural communication in the classroom.

Keywords: Cultural competence, Pedagogical Approaches, linguistic skills, intercultural communication, teaching strategies.

1. Introduction

Cultural Competence in English Language Teaching: A Systematic Review of Pedagogical Approaches and Outcomes

The ability to communicate effectively across cultures in an increasingly globalized world has become an essential skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. While English continues to be a global language, it is not merely a medium for language consumption. It has gained prominence in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). The cultural competence of language learners is now recognized as critical to success in both professional and personal settings, enabling them to perceive and understand through cultural contexts.

Cultural competence in ELT does not simply mean teaching different cultures to students; It requires the integration of cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills into the language learning process. This includes making sense of how cultural norms and communication styles can influence communication and how students can adjust their attitudes and language use accordingly. Teachers face the challenge of designing lessons and using instructional strategies that develop not only language skills but also intercultural competencies required for real-world communication. Students are also equipped with communication skills.

Over the past few decades, various instructional strategies have been developed and used to enhance cultural competence in ELT. These approaches range from incorporating cultural content into language learning to more reflective and experiential approaches such as study abroad programs and virtual exchanges.

This systematic review aims to fill that gap by comprehensively reviewing the existing literature on cultural competence in ELT. It examines pedagogical strategies for cultural competence, analyzes their effects, and discusses challenges associated with implementing and testing these strategies. In doing so, this research seeks to inform teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers have gained valuable insights to ensure the effective incorporation of cultural competence in English language instruction.

2. The Concept of Cultural Competence in ELT

Cultural competence in English language teaching (ELT) has received increasing attention as teachers recognize the importance of preparing

students to not only communicate effectively in English but also to navigate cultural contexts in which they speak in practice as well. Byram (1997) stated that cultural competence refers to the ability to interact appropriately and effectively with people from different cultures, including the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices that enable such interactions. In ELT, cultural competence does not simply mean teaching different cultures to students; this language curriculum requires the incorporation of intercultural understanding and communication skills, making them essential components of language proficiency.

2.1 Defining Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is a multidimensional concept with many key elements. Byram (1997) identified dimensions of intercultural competence: intercultural attitudes; openness and enthusiasm for other cultures, knowledge (understanding of sociocultural practices); interpretive and relational skills (ability to identify culturally); actions under and interact with each other); power management skills, and critical cultural competence (the ability to critically evaluate cultural practices and products). These factors highlight the complexity of cultural competence, emphasizing that it involves not only the acquisition of authentic knowledge about other cultures but also the ability to meaningfully engage with cultural differences.

Fantini (2000) pointed out that cultural competence in ELT classrooms is often valued as intercultural competence, which extends traditional language skills to include the ability to mediate between different cultural perspectives and communicate in culturally appropriate ways. This comprehensive view of linguistic competence emphasizes the idea that language learning is inherently linked to cultural learning and that effective communication requires linguistic and cultural competency emphasize the meaning of the word.

2.2 Importance of Cultural Competence in ELT

The importance of cultural competence in ELT stems from the recognition that English as a global language is used in different cultures English

learners can use the language to communicate with speakers of different cultures, and to culture interdisciplinary understanding is key to effective communication. Kramsch (1993) concluded that cultural competence helps students navigate this cross-cultural interface, reducing the risk of misunderstanding and enabling more meaningful and respectful interactions. In addition, cultural awareness enhances students' overall language learning experience by providing a rich, context-based understanding of language. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) stated that as students are exposed to different aspects of language culture, they become aware of how cultural norms and communication styles affect language use. This knowledge can lead to deeper language proficiency as students begin to understand language and how meaning is shaped by context and culture.

2.3 Integrating Cultural Competence in ELT

Effectively integrating cultural competence into ELT requires teachers to go beyond traditional approaches that treat culture as an adjunct to language learning. Instead, Sercu (2005) mentioned that cultural learning should be integrated into the language curriculum, focusing on developing intercultural communication skills along with students' language skills. This includes the introduction of culturally relevant terms and materials, interactive activities that engage students with cultural perspectives, and opportunities for students to reflect on their cultural models and biases.

Moreover, the role of the language teacher has to change to acquire cultural competence. Byram and Zarate (1997) stated that teachers must be not only linguists, but also cultural mediators who help students understand cultural differences and guide them in acquiring the skills necessary for intercultural communication. These changes require ongoing professional development for teachers, enabling them to develop the cultural competencies and pedagogical skills necessary to effectively teach cultural competence.

3. Historical Perspectives on Culture in Language Teaching

The integration of culture into language teaching has developed significantly over the past few decades, reflecting widespread changes in educational theory and practice Initially, culture was often considered as a secondary dimension of language teaching, if fully addressed. Over time,

however, the recognition of the link between language and culture led to more sophisticated and integrated approaches, culminating in the current emphasis on intercultural competence as a central goal of language education.

3.1 Early Approaches: Culture as Static Knowledge

In the early stages of language studies, especially in the grammar-semantic period, culture was often regarded as a peripheral element in linguistics while inclusive, often presented as static facts about nations of the target language with little consideration of how these cultural factors interacted with language itself. Byram and Risager (1999) concluded that this approach reflected a view of culture as transferable knowledge rather than an active and necessary component of communication.

 The main goal was to give students the ability to interpret texts accurately without placing too much emphasis on oral communication or cultural understanding. Brooks (1968) mentioned that during this time, culture was often reduced to a 'civilization course' or 'cultural immersion' that provided factual information about the target culture but did not expose students to cultural perspectives.

3.2 The Audiolingual Method: Culture as Behavioral Patterns

In the mid-20th century, the listening approach to language evolved, changing the way cultures viewed language learning. Based on behavioral theory and structural linguistics, the audio-lingual method emphasizes the study of language structure through repetition and application (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In this context, culture began to be viewed as patterns of behavior associated with the target language, especially in terms of normal social behavior and speech acts. Side (1957) argued that cultural instruction during this period focused on teaching students how to behave appropriately in specific social situations in the target culture, such as greeting, asking, or thanking someone.

3.3 The Communicative Approach: Culture as Communication

The emergence of the communicative approach in the 1970s and 1980s marked a fundamental shift in the integration of culture into language teaching. Prioritizing communicative competence defined as the ability to

use language effectively and appropriately in social situations, this approach recognized that language could not be separated from its cultural context (Canale & Swain, 1980).

The communicative perspective emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural beliefs and customs that underlie language use, and the role of culture in shaping meaning. Under the communicative approach, culture began to be taught not only as context for the target culture but also as an integral part of language learning including an understanding of how cultural norms and practices include communication.

Kramsch (1993) stated that this approach encouraged the use of authentic materials, such as films, newspapers, and books, and provided students with real-world examples of language used in that cultural context. Furthermore, it created the assumption that it was not students who needed not only linguistic skills but also sociolinguistic practices.

3.4 Intercultural Competence: Culture as Dynamic and Dialogic

In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition that culture is not a single entity, but rather a dynamic and discursive process of interaction and communication. Byram (1997) mentioned that this approach introduces the concept of intercultural competence, which emphasizes differences in the ability to flexibly and cognitively engage with and understand culture. Intercultural competence includes not only knowledge of the target culture but also the ability to interpret and relate to cultural practices, as well as an open and critical perspective on cultural diversity.

Deardorff (2006) stated that his shift in attitudes is especially important because it encourages students to approach intercultural communication with an open mind, making them more willing to communicate with speakers from other cultures and to adapt across cultures. It also recognizes that culture is not static, but constantly changing, and that students must be prepared to adapt and participate in this dynamic.

Texts and media have focused on providing opportunities for students to experience and reflect on cultural interactions in the ELT classroom, through direct contact with other speakers (e.g. study abroad programs or virtual exchanges) and through cultural enrichment the implementation of

the. The aim is to help students develop the skills and attitudes needed to communicate effectively across cultures, as well as foster a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and culture.

4. Pedagogical Approaches to Developing Cultural Competence

Enhancing cultural competence in English language teaching (ELT) requires deliberate and thoughtful integration of cultural learning into the language curriculum. Cultural perspectives are used to increase cultural intercultural communication to feed the cultural agriculture that forms several key vision components.

4.1 Incorporation of Cultural Content

Traditional but effective approaches to acquiring cultural competence and integrating cultural resources into language learning. It integrates the content of a language curriculum that reflects the cultural practices, norms, and values of the target language group. An introduction to cultural issues through a variety of media, such as literature, film, music, and news, gives students insight into the daily lives, beliefs, and customs of people from diverse cultures (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993).

By being exposed to culturally authentic materials, students not only enhance their linguistic skills but also gain a deeper understanding of the cultural context in which language is used. For example, that with literature using a variety of cultural sources, can help students explore different perspectives and issues. Furthermore, dialogue cultural events such as art or festivals in the classroom can stimulate discussion about cultural similarities and differences, has encouraged students to reflect on their cultural assumptions and biases.

4.2 Experiential Learning and Immersive Methods

Experiential learning, which emphasizes learning through direct experience and reflection, is a powerful alternative to cultural competence. In ELT, experiential learning can include study abroad programs, cultural exchanges, and virtual exchanges, where students interact with native speakers and experience the target culture firsthand. Kolb (1984) stated that these immersive experiences provide opportunities for students to practice their language skills in authentic situations while guiding real-world cultural

interactions. Paige (2006) pointed out that study abroad programs are particularly effective in enhancing cultural competence, as they expose students to new cultural contexts, which require adaptation to social norms, communication styles, and daily routines.

Cohen and Shively (2004) mentioned that not all students have the opportunity to study abroad, which has led to the rise of virtual exchanges and online networks that bring together students from different cultures. O'Dowd (2007) approved that virtual exchanges, facilitated by platforms such as video conferencing or online collaborative workshops, enable students to participate in intercultural interactions without leaving their homeland and facilitate the development of cultural competence. These experiential learning strategies are highly effective because they go beyond theoretical skills, enabling students to apply cultural perspectives in real-time communication, and deepening their intercultural understanding and communication skills.

4.3 Task-Based and Project-Based Learning

Task-based learning and project-based learning are learner-centered approaches that focus on engaging learners in meaningful tasks or activities that require the use of language in culturally relevant contexts. Task-based language learning (TBLT) engages students in projects that reflect real-life activities, such as planning travel, negotiating business, or organizing cultural events. (Ellis (2003) mentioned that Project-based learning (PBL) takes this concept further by engaging students in extended projects, which can last several weeks or months.

Projects often require collaboration, research, and presentation, providing opportunities for students to explore cultural issues in depth. For example, students may undertake a project to compare the educational systems of different countries or conduct research on traditional festivals in different cultures. Such projects encourage students to engage critically and creatively with cultural issues, enhancing their intercultural awareness and communication skills. (Beckett & Slater, 2005).

Both TBLT and PBL encourage an active, inquiry-based learning style, where students are encouraged to explore cultural contexts and apply their

language skills in context, fostering cultural understanding and deeper skills development.

4.4 Role of Technology in Fostering Cultural Competence

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in developing cultural competencies in ELT, especially in today's digitally connected world. Digital tools and platforms provide students with new ways to interact with different cultures and facilitate intercultural communication. For example, social media platforms, language learning apps, and online discussion forums allow students to interact with native speakers and peers from other cultures, providing opportunities for real-time interaction and cultural exchange. (Godwin-Jones, 2013).

Additionally, emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) have begun to transform cultural learning through immersive, simulated experiences of the real-world cultural environment in the picture. For example, VR applications can take students to virtual cultural venues or events, where they can explore cultural practices and interact with avatars representing speakers of the language. Li (2019) provided that this technology not only makes cultural learning more engaging and interactive but also enables students to practice their language skills in context-rich environments that mimic real-life situations. Integrating technology into the ELT curriculum can significantly enhance cultural competence development by providing students with diverse, authentic, and interactive cultural experiences that extend beyond traditional classroom boundaries.

These instructional strategies from cultural inclusion to the use of technology—provide a comprehensive framework for developing cultural competence in ELT. By integrating these strategies into language instruction, teachers can help students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to communicate effectively and respectfully across cultures, preparing them for the challenges and opportunities in a world of it is available all over the world.

   5.   **Outcomes of Cultural Competence Pedagogies**

Integrating cultural competence into English language teaching (ELT) has produced a variety of outcomes that affect students' language proficiency, intercultural understanding, and overall engagement in the language learning process.

5.1 Impact on Language Proficiency and Intercultural Communication Skills

A key outcome of integrating cultural competence in ELT has been to increase students' language skills, especially in the areas of usability and sociolinguistics. Byram (1997) indicated that research has shown that students who engage in cultural competence instruction often develop a more nuanced understanding of how language works in context, resulting in improved communication skills.

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) provided an example, students who engage in task-based learning activities related to real-life situations, such as role-playing or intercultural simulations, demonstrate better performance in language fluency in different cultural contexts.

Ellis (2003) summarized that this exercise helps students understand the nuances of spoken language such as tone, politeness, and style, which are often determined by culture. As a result, Fantini (2000) suggested that students become more adept at cross-cultural communication, reducing the possibility of misunderstandings and increasing their ability to communicate effectively with speakers from different cultures (Kramsch, 1993).

Moreover, the science of cultural pedagogy contributes to the development of intercultural competence or explains cultural practices in the knowledge of prospective teachers of English. Students trained in cultural competence are better equipped to manage cultural differences and communicate with respect and cultural sensitivity, which is increasingly important in today's interconnected world.

5.2 Learner Attitudes and Perceptions

Cultural competence instruction has a significant impact on students' attitudes towards language learning and their attitudes towards other cultures. The main outcome will be a more open and positive attitude towards different cultures. Students who participated in cultural competence

training were more likely to report curiosity about other cultures, greater empathy for people from different cultures, and greater awareness of their own cultural biases.

(Sercu, 2005) stated that this shift in attitudes is especially important because it encourages students to approach intercultural communication with an open mind, and makes them more willing to communicate with speakers from other cultures and to adapt across cultures in (Deardorff, 2006).

Furthermore, the inclusion of cultural contexts in language learning can increase students' motivation and engagement, as language learning is seen as important and relevant to real-world interactions Dörnyei (2001) concluded that by understanding the cultural contexts in which English is used, students are likely to see language as a tool for meaningful communication rather than just a set of rules to memorize. In addition, cultural competence instruction can help students develop critical perspectives on their own culture and the culture they study.

This critical cultural awareness enables students to reflect on cultural norms and values, question stereotypes, and appreciate cultural complexity and diversity (Byram, 1997). As a result, students become informed and critical-thinking global citizens, better able to contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding.

5.3 Challenges in Assessing Cultural Competence Outcomes

Despite the positive outcomes associated with cultural competence instruction, examining these outcomes presents significant challenges. The lack of standardized instruments and frameworks to measure language learners' cultural competence is one of the main challenges. Fantini (2009) stated that although language proficiency can be measured through standardized tests and assessments, cultural proficiency is complex and multidimensional, making it difficult to assess with traditional testing methods.

Cultural competence includes not only knowledge but also attitudes, skills, and behaviors that are all difficult to quantify. For example, how do you measure a student's ability to empathize with someone from a different

culture, or their willingness to interact with different cultures? Deardorff (2006) summarized that any existing studies are based on self-reported data, which can be subjective and may not accurately reflect the student's actual cultural competence.

Moreover, cultural competence is context-dependent, that is, a learner's knowledge in one cultural context should not be transferred to another.

This variability makes it difficult to develop valid and reliable assessment tools across different cultures (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Consequently, new contextual approaches to assessing cultural competence are needed, such as portfolio analysis, reflective journals, and project-based projects in which students develop their intercultural competence in real or simulated situations that feel the need to work.

The effects of cultural competence instruction in ELT are multifaceted, affecting students' language skills, intercultural communication skills, attitudes and concepts. This instruction helps students develop not only English proficiency and rather they are able to navigate the cultural complexities of global communication.

However, the challenges associated with assessing cultural competence highlight the need for continued research and innovation in this area. By continuously exploring and refining instructional strategies and research methods, educators can better help students become effective and culturally competent communicators in an increasingly interconnected world.

6. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Effectively integrating cultural competence into ELT depends largely on teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes Since teachers are responsible for facilitating students' cultural and linguistic development, their ability to teach cultural competency is very important.

However, to do this, teachers need targeted training and ongoing professional development that provides them with the tools they need to navigate the complexity of intercultural instruction. This section discusses the importance of culturally competent teacher training, the challenges facing teachers, and the essential components of an effective professional development program.

6.1 Importance of Teacher Training in Cultural Competence

Teachers are central to the process of developing cultural competence among students, as they guide students through complex intercultural interactions and help them understand the cultural context in which English is used. Byram and Wagner (2018) declared that to play this role effectively, teachers must become culturally competent themselves. This means developing a deeper understanding of cultural aspects of language, recognizing one's own cultural biases, and being able to facilitate sensitive and informed cultural discussions.

(Sercu (2005) suggested that without appropriate training, teachers may struggle to integrate cultural awareness into their lessons, which may result in superficially handling cultural issues or even enacting complex cultural stereotypes. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) concluded that it is therefore important that teacher education programs place greater emphasis on cultural competence, and equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to teach culture as an integral part of language teaching.

This training should help teachers go beyond simply presenting cultural facts and develop deeper intercultural understanding and communication skills in their students.

6.2 Challenges faced by teachers

While the importance of cultural competence is acknowledged, many teachers face significant challenges in incorporating it into their language teaching. Sercu (2005) mentioned that one of the main challenges is the lack of resources and resources to address cultural issues effectively.

Many language learning textbooks still focus primarily on linguistic content, treating cultural aspects as peripheral or complementary. stated that this can make it difficult for teachers to find appropriate resources to promote cultural competence. Another challenge mentioned by Deardorff (2009) is that cultural competencies and experiences exist within the

teachers themselves. Teachers may feel uncomfortable or unprepared to address cultural issues, especially if their own experience is limited in teaching culture

This can lead to a reluctance to engage with cultural products or to rely on outdated or oversimplified images of culture. Furthermore, time constraints and pressures to be part of a broader language curriculum may limit opportunities for teachers to integrate cultural awareness into their lessons. Baker (2011) concluded that in many educational settings, teachers' language skills are given priority, often at the expense of cultural learning. This can lead to a divided approach to language teaching, where culture is viewed as an option rather than an integral part of language teaching.

6.3 Components of Effective Professional Development Programs

To address these challenges, professional development programs should be designed so that teachers develop the theoretical and practical skills needed to integrate cultural awareness into their teaching. Effective professional development in this area should include the following:

6.3.1 Cultural Awareness and Reflection:

Programs should begin by encouraging teachers to reflect on their own cultural identities, biases, and assumptions. Gay (2010) pointed out that this self-awareness is important for teachers to understand how their cultural perspectives affect their teaching and interactions with students. Activities such as cultural autobiography, critical incident analysis, and discussion of personal cultural experiences can help teachers develop greater cultural awareness.

6.3.2 Intercultural Communication Skills:

Teachers need to be equipped with strategies to facilitate intercultural communication in the classroom. Byram (1997) concluded that this includes strategies for addressing cultural misunderstandings, fostering open dialogue, and an inclusive learning environment in which all cultural perspectives are valued role play, analogies, and case studies can be effective tools for developing these skills.

6.3.3 Curriculum Design and Material Development:

Teachers need to be trained in how to design curricula and create content that incorporates cultural awareness as a core component. Sercu (2005) stated that this includes the selection and modification of culturally authentic materials, the creation of culturally relevant projects, and the integration of cultural learning outcomes into language assessments Curriculum development workshops and collaborative content development projects can help teachers in this area.

6.3.4 Ongoing Support and Collaboration:

Richards and Farrell (2005) indicated that professional development can be a one-time event rather than an ongoing process that includes opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share best practices, and receive feedback. Professional learning groups, peer mentoring, and online forums can provide avenues for further education and support.

6.3.5 Engagement with Emerging Technologies:

Given the increasing role of technology in language learning, teachers also need to be trained on how to use digital tools to support cultural competence. This includes using social media, virtual exchange, and digital storytelling platforms to create immersive cultural experiences for students (Godwin, 2013). Training in digital literacy and effectively integrating technology into cultural learning is essential for today's language learners.

Teacher training and professional development are critical for the successful integration of cultural competence in ELT. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and resources, professional development programs can empower teachers to create culturally rich and inclusive language learning environments. Addressing the challenges educators face in this area and ensuring their continued support is key to developing a generation of culturally competent educators who can guide their students through a complex global network.

7. Gaps in the Literature and Future Research Directions

Although the integration of cultural competencies in English language teaching (ELT) has been extensively studied and recognized as important for preparing students to navigate across cultures, there are still many gaps in the literature. Addressing these gaps is important to improve our

understanding of how we can effectively integrate cultural competencies into language teaching and ensure that teaching strategies are effective in different contexts.

7.1 Lack of Longitudinal Studies

An important gap in the literature is the absence of longitudinal studies examining the effects of cultural competence training on language learners. Most existing research focuses on short-term outcomes, assessing students' cultural awareness, attitudes, and language skills soon after the intervention. Deardorff (2006) concluded that cultural awareness, however, is a dynamic and ongoing process that occurs over time.

More detailed studies are needed to observe how cultural competence develops in students over months or years, especially as they continue to interact with different cultures and apply their intercultural skills in the real world Such research would provide valuable insights into the durability of cultural competence and its impact on students' intercultural communication abilities over time.

7.2 Underrepresentation of diverse contexts and learner populations

Existing research on cultural competence in ELT is generally conducted in homogeneous educational contexts, particularly in Western contexts where the focus is on teaching English to students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Examine how cultural competence is developed and taught in a variety of settings in non-Western settings, multilingual classrooms, and diverse student populations such as young children, older students, and language skills Analysis (Byram & Risager, 1999). In addition, research should consider the cultural competence needs of native and non-native English speakers, recognizing that learners from different cultures may require different acquisition strategies for effective intercultural communication skills.

7.3 Challenges in assessing cultural competence

Cultural competence research remains a complex and underdeveloped area in ELT. Although various frameworks and instruments have been proposed,

there is still a lack of consensus on effective methods for assessing cultural competence in language learners.

Fantini (2009) mentioned that current assessment practices are often based on self-report measures, which can be subjective and may not capture students' depth of intercultural understanding or their ability to apply cultural knowledge to real-life situations in the same year. Future research should focus on developing objective, reliable, and contextual assessment instruments that can measure a range of cultural competencies, including attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors.

7.4 Integration of Technology in Cultural Competence Development

Although technology is increasingly being adopted to enhance cultural competence in ELT, there is still limited research on how to effectively integrate digital tools and platforms into cultural competence training. Godwin (2013) illustrated that emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) offer new ways to create immersive and interactive cultural learning experiences, but their potential remains to be seen and examined closely.

Future research should explore how these technologies can be used to map cross-cultural interactions, provide real-time feedback, and personalize cultural lessons to meet the needs of individual students. Additionally, studies should investigate the impact of online and virtual exchange programs that integrate students from different cultures on the development of intercultural communication skills.

7.5 Teacher Training and Professional Development

Deardorff (2006) indicated that while there is a wealth of literature on the importance of cultural competence in language learning, there is little research focusing specifically on teachers' professional development needs in this area, particularly in multicultural classrooms.

Future research should investigate the most effective methods of teacher training, including the use of reflective practices, mentoring, and cooperative learning, and the role of continuing professional development in addition to maintaining and enhancing teachers' cultural competence. In addition, research should consider the challenges teachers face in

incorporating cultural competence into their courses and how these challenges can be addressed through targeted support and resources.

7.6 Impact of Cultural Competence on Specific Language Skills

Although cultural competence is often discussed in terms of its overall impact on language learning, there is little research on how it affects language-specific skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Future research could examine how intercultural communication activities improve discourse the culturally diverse fluency or expression of text and how it affects. O'Dowd (2007) pointed out that such research would help teachers develop more focused and competency-specific cultural competency activities.

Addressing the gap in the literature on intercultural competence in ELT is important to advance our understanding of how to effectively teach and assess intercultural competence in language learners. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies, examining contexts, developing robust assessment tools, integrating technology, enhancing teacher training, and the impact of cultural awareness on specific language skills on the examination. By bridging these gaps, researchers and educators can better help students become culturally competent communicators prepared to participate meaningfully worldwide.

8. Conclusion

Cultural competence has become an important component of English language teaching in an increasingly globalized world, where the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries is increasingly important. This systematic review has highlighted the importance of integrating cultural competence into language learning, highlighting the positive effects on students' language proficiency, intercultural communication skills and overall engagement in the language learning process. Examining a variety of instructional strategies including cultural inclusion, experiential learning, project-based and project-based learning, and the use of technology, this study has demonstrated the effectiveness of these strategies in demonstrating the development of cultural awareness among students.

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However, despite progress in this area, many gaps remain in the literature. More detailed research is needed to assess the long-term effects of cultural competence training, the underrepresentation of students and populations from diverse educational settings, and the challenges associated with assessing cultural competence are all areas requiring further research. In addition, the integration of emerging technologies and the provision of targeted professional development for teachers are important areas that need to be addressed to improve the teaching of cultural competence in ELT.

Educators, researchers, and policymakers must work together to address these gaps, develop new methods for teaching and assessing cultural competence, and ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to use cultural learning will affect their classrooms. By doing so, we can equip students with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to navigate the complexities of intercultural communication and thrive in a diverse and interconnected world.

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