



Exploring Iranian Pre-service English Teachers' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Identities and the Role of Mentor Teachers

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Abstract

This longitudinal study based on mixed method sequential design, and random sampling procedure strived to investigate male and female Iranian pre-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence with participation of 49 pre-service teachers (M= 29, F=20) who were in the last year of their teacher education program in Farhangian University of Isfahan, one of the biggest teacher training centers in Iran. It also tried to assess the effect of mentor teachers on pre-service teachers' ICC and to see how and to what extent those perceptions are reflected in their classroom practices. The second group of the participants was four mentor teachers (M=2, F=2). Results revealed that the first group of participants achieved an acceptable level of ICC, with higher mean scores in the attitude dimensions and lower levels in skill and knowledge components respectively. The results also indicated negative correlation between the attitudes and skill components of mentor teachers and pre- service teachers. The results of triangulation indicated an apparent disparity between teachers' ICC perception and practice. Concurring the influence of globalization, the findings of the study may help curriculum developers and educational policy makers to take into account specific elements of intercultural concepts to cultivate pre-service teachers' and accordingly EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence, Mentor Teachers, Pre-service Teachers

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1. Introduction

Language and culture as two inextricably related concepts which have mutual effects on each other (Kramsh, 1998), are means of communicating and making sense of social system which are dynamic, multifaceted and dialogic (Bhabha, 1994). To construct communication and international communication specifically, understanding the counterparts' cultural differences seems to be very important, but it does not necessarily mean marginalizing the persons' own culture. Language is used as a tool to make people feel free to be acquainted with.

Colonialism and its side effect which is global spread of English (Pennycook, 2001), reminds us the slogan proposed by Crystal (2000) that "no one owned English now" and English has no single center of influence (p.117). Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) proposed that today's world is not one people with one speech world. To them, in an imminently foreseeable future, people will communicate across different cultures and languages, i.e., intercultural awareness to find common purposes. Globalization and the need for a unified international language cannot be viewed as hegemony of single language and its culture over other or controlling of "west" over the "rest" (Ashcroft, 1989), but it can be viewed through post-colonial theory that enables deconstructing of ICC and rejecting the depicted notion of dominant or dominated to fit into other countries such as Iran as non-western context. This means that the first language and culture of the learners cannot be marginalized, but the needs of the learners can be met through localizing and appropriating western knowledge (Canangarajah, 2002). According to Byram (1997), to have a successful interaction people should anticipate and resolve dysfunctions which occur both in interaction and behavior. Peoples' perspective on their own culture should be decentered and taken up. Due to outnumbering of the speakers of outer circle countries than inner circle countries (Canagarajah, 2006), native speakers' norm cannot provide authoritative standards (Ives, 2010). By considering English as lingua franca, it is expected that the learners' ICC should be developed by language education systems (May, 2011). The ability to act linguistically, sociolinguistically, and pragmatically in an appropriate way becomes the objectives of language teaching (Council of Europe, 2001, cited in Atay & Ece, 2009).

In other words, nowadays allowing language learners to gain ICC to communicate interculturally (Beker, 2011; Biswaloo, 2015) and to let them reflect on their own culture and the culture of others (Byram et al., 2002; Biswaloo, 2015; McKay, 2003) can be considered as part of paradigm shift in ELT worldwide. Beker (2011) proposed that teaching English should focus on enhancing ICC. In the same vein Bennet (2009) noted that learners' frame

of reference should be distanced. Hismangolo (2011) noted that for enhancing and promoting ICC of the learners, a language teachers' significant task is to have comprehensive knowledge of language and culture. They should enable their learners to have intercultural communication across cultural boundaries.

Despite different ideas about the reasons, the contents, and the ways of teaching cultures, teachers have different notions about themselves, and about how, and what they teach about cultures (Chen et al., 2016; Sercu et al., 2005; Wette & Barkhuizen, 2009). So understanding teachers' claim about their individual, political, professional, and cultural identities or the same identities which are assigned to them is of great importance (Varghese et al., 2002). In this regard Bennett et al. (2003) proposed that for protecting teachers from the risk of "becoming a fluent fool" acquainting with values, beliefs and cultural dimensions of pre-service teachers to see how ICC development is influenced by sociocultural and individual forces such as their gender and their relation with mentor teachers is necessary.

Despite the rather widespread studies related to significance of the role of ICC in teacher education in EFL contexts, it seems that more research efforts are needed to probe the ICC dimensions in Iranian EFL context. It seems that profound understanding of intercultural communicative competences will enhance the educational reforms and reduce cultural differences.

Considering recently global shift of attention from access to education to qualified education and to satisfy the needs and goals of qualified teachers prescribed in the UN targets by 2030 it seems that this field deserves international cooperation for teacher training (UN, 2015, cited in Isotalo, 2017). Arguably the role of teacher educators as integral part in teacher education programs seems to have a notable effect on training qualified student teachers as prospect teachers (Izadnia, 2014). In the era of communication, teachers as one of the agents of cultural transfer need to be equipped with intercultural concepts. Pre-service education with the goal of training teachers before graduation needs special courses in order to prepare student teachers to cope with the probable class problems in future and to update their knowledge based on new advancements. It is deemed that to optimize language teaching and learning in Iran, proliferating and integrating cultural dimension as a result of the growing development of globalization (Han & Song, 2011) into language syllabi is an inevitable matter and English language teachers' ICC as a mirror of their professional identity is not the matter of ignorance (Sercu et al., 2005).

Despite giving marginal part to intercultural teaching in Iran, the issue perplexed some practitioners (Atai et al., 2017). Some researchers agree upon implementing cultural dimensions in to language teaching pedagogy. Birjandi

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and Khatib (2018) and Mirzaii and Forouzandeh (2013), and many others in between assert that the importance of implementing intercultural competence should not be overlooked. It seems that scarce knowledge about culture and intercultural points hinder the process of teaching and learning explicitly or implicitly. Bearing in mind that there are some conflicts between English language teachers' cultural views and Iranian culture, it seems that considering ICC from the mentor teachers' view is helpful in distinguishing the probable differences. Considering the embryonic stage of ICC issues stage (Zarate et al., 2004), the current study aimed to shed further light on Iranian pre-service teachers' perception of ICC. It attempted to investigate the knowledge, skill and attitudes of male and female pre-service teachers of English as well as their mentor teachers on intercultural competence teaching and learning to see the relationship between mentor teachers' perception of ICC and their mentees' intercultural behaviors reflected in their practicum. Notwithstanding well-structured teaching practices centered on the accomplishment of predicted goals of learning about teaching as the heart of teacher education in Iran, the issues related to ICC issues are disregarded. The objectives of the study are to investigate pre-service teachers' ideas relating to ICC implementation in their career journey. This study tried to bridge the gap between what mentor-teachers teach pre-service teachers theoretically to what they can do practically in their classes.

Referring to the above mentioned concepts, this study was an attempt to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the Iranian pre-service English teachers' levels of intercultural communicative competence?
2. Is there any difference between male and female pre-service teachers' ICC level and its components?
3. Is there any relationship between mentor teachers' ICC level and their mentees in improving their ICC level?
4. What are the Iranian pre-service EFL teachers' opinions considering the role of intercultural competence in teaching English as a foreign language?
5. What are the types and frequency of cultural activities used by Iranian EFL pre-service teachers in their practicum?

2. Literature Review

Language teaching and learning witnessed some most significant changes during the past decades. One of these changes is considering cultural dimensions in EFL contexts. Acquiring a language refers to behave appropriately and flexibly when confronting different beliefs, and attitudes of foreign cultures (Meyer, 1991). This is in line with Byram (1997), who

asserted that successful interaction implies both exchanging of information to fulfill the communicative language teaching goals and decentering and taking up the cultural perspectives of others on their own to decrease dysfunction in communication (Atay et al., 2009). Globally occurring changes in an ever-shrinking world also acknowledge the goal of making effective communication between people with various cultural backgrounds (East, 2012; Jin, 2014; Kramsh, 2013; Zheng, 2014) and hence the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in EFL context respectively.

2.1. Intercultural Communicative Competence

The notion of ICC dated back to the concept of communicative competence developed by Hymes (1972), as a complimentary concept of linguistic competence proposed by Chomsky (1965). By emphasizing the importance of sociocultural knowledge and prevailing ideas of globalization, integrating cultural dimensions in language teaching seems to be of vital importance.

Despite different definitions of ICC and its troubled and controversial history (Becker, 2011; Haung, 2014), some scholars tried to provide a comprehensive definition for it. Mayer (2011) claimed ICC is a proper reaction and behavior of people to the various confronted actions, attitudes, and expectations of people of other cultures. He emphasized the flexible manner for providing a situation for mutual understanding. Bennet (2011) also emphasized the importance of interaction of people from different cultural context. To him this interaction should be cognitively, effectively, and appropriately plausible. Jokikokko (2005) considered the ethical aspects of ICC. He acknowledged the "morally right ways of being, thinking and acting" as cornerstones of ICC definition (p.79).

To Byram et al., (2002) ICC refers to the ability to provide a situation for more shared understanding of people with different social identities by preserving their individuality. Moreover, effective and appropriate communication needs intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Deardorff, 2006). Each of these components requires special conditions. For intercultural knowledge, individuality and cultural awareness as well as cultural and linguistic knowledge improvement is of great importance. To Deardorff (2006) skill needs the ability of providing effective communication across cultures and attitude needs having a positive and open attitude toward different cultural concepts of people with different cultures to cherish and endure ethnocentric differences.

Kramsh (2009) proposed two perspective of ICC from modernists and post- modernist views. He proposed modernist viewed culture as literature and art. According to late modernist, also known as post-modernist, culture is interactional which is dynamic and content based. In this perspective the aim

is empowering people to raise their voices, and to promote their interaction with people from other countries and other culture.

Accordingly, different models of ICC are proposed by different scholars. The model proposed by Byram et al. (2002) is divided in to five components such as knowledge, skill of interpreting and relating, skill of discovery and interaction, intercultural attitudes, and critical cultural awareness. The model proposed by Bennet known as Developmental Model of Intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) focuses on the development of intercultural competence and practical use of skill. Bennet and Allen (1999) proposed a continuum with two ends of ethnocentrism as departure point and ethno relativism as the outcome point, and number of stages in between. Sercue's Model emphasizes the EFL teachers' implementing ICC in their teaching (Sercu, et al., 2005). He proposed two different labels for those teachers, who integrate ICC in EFL teaching; 'the favorable and unfavorable disposed of foreign language teacher. The last model by Deardorff's (2006) is of two kinds; pyramid model and process model. In the pyramid model higher levels are enhanced by lower levels. He considered skill and knowledge as lower levels which presupposes attitude. The outcomes of these three components of ICC are both internal and external. The second model of Deardorf (2006) is the same as the pyramid model but it is continual and ongoing. This model outlines the processes of ICC development that occur between various elements.

Noticeably, inevitable paramount significance of ICC implementation in EFL context due to globalization (Han & Song, 2011) leads to different research projects. Rsager (1998) considered the relationship between teachers' perception of ICC and the practice in real time classes. Similarly, Sercue et al., (2005), investigated ICC perception of different teachers from different countries. Both researches indicated that there was no clear relationship between teachers' perception of ICC and ICC implications in real life teaching practices. Karbinar and Guler (2013) enhanced the importance of ICC injection in EFL classes. But in their conclusion they asserted that ICC has marginal role in EFL education.

Similarly, the same studies in Iran considered the importance of ICC in EFL education. Banafsheh et al. (2016) for example considered the prominence of ICC in teacher education. They revealed a number of commonalities and discrepancies among Iranian teachers' perception and conceptualization of ICC. In a similar vein Zamanian and Seidi (2017) explored the EFL teachers' perceptions, practices, and problems regarding raising students' ICC awareness. They pointed to some difficulties in this regard.

2.2. Mentor Teachers

Teacher education as a process of shaping teaching manifestation of student teachers needs a complementary stage such as mentoring. Mentoring as a dialogical and dynamic process provides a chance for mentor teachers to mature their mentees through processes such as collaboration and scaffolding to become a professional practitioner (Cheng et al., 2010; Kemmis et al., 2014; Nalumansi 2011). Mentors can help mentees by providing emotional and professional supports. Acting as a model, they can convey their skill, knowledge and expertise to mentees to help them practice what they theorize (Doppen, 2007). Mentors can have a great contribution in forming the attitudes and beliefs of their mentees through exposing different training techniques and strategies (Nalumansi, 2011; Ximena & Mendez, 2008). In the same vein Cheng et al., (2010) and Kemmis et al., (2014), asserted that acquainting mentees with different needs and expectations of their prospect classes in future helps them to identify the gap between what they have taught theoretically to what they can practice actually.

2.3. Pre-service Teacher Training Program in Iran

Before Iran's 1979 revolution, most of language teachers were native English speakers who lived in Iran. After the revolution the need for language teaching impelled the education system to hire more university graduate in this field. Teacher training centers started accepting students to receive association degree of art/ science. But a few years later the ministry of education accepted students from national wide university exams to get BA or BS. These students were employed from the beginning (Nezakat-alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013).

The professors who taught courses in teacher training centers held either MS or MA degrees who were employed by the ministry of education or they were university professors. Since the courses in pre- service program were mainly theory oriented the need for practicum courses were detected to bridge the gap between theory and practice. So in pre-service teacher training programs more practical aspects are included.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were 49 BA students (n = 49; 29 males and 20 females) majoring in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at two universities in Farhangian university of Isfahan, Iran. There are two branches of this University in Isfahn. One of them is Shahid Bahonar which is specialized for men, and the other is Fatemeh-al-Zahra for women. After passing Konkour exam as a university entrance exam in Iran, the teacher candidates will be interviewed directly according to different physical

and psychological criteria such as physical appearance, gestures, and tone of voice, etc. to meet the needs of teacher qualifications. The accepted students as pre-service teachers or teacher students will be eventually employed as teachers in different school centers in Iran.

Based on simple random sampling, the participants of the study took part in different phases of data collection. The time of data collection coincided the participants' passing 4th year of their bachelor teacher education program.

The second group of the participants was four mentor teachers (2 males and 2 females). They held Ph.D. degrees in TEFL. These four mentor teachers supervised the student teachers during their methodology and practicum courses.

3.2. Instruments

The data of this mixed-methods sequential design study came from different sources. For enriching the depth of findings and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of research questions different data were collected quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.2.1. Questionnaires

A five Likert scale questionnaires from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) were used to measure different aspects of teaching culture in EFL context such as the participants' ICC level, their opinion regarding ICC implication in EFL context and intercultural activities they prefer to use in their classes. The result of piloted questionnaire with 15 randomly selected pre-service using Cronbach's alpha enjoyed an acceptable reliability of ($R = 0.71$).

The first part of the questionnaire consists of 20 items to assess knowledge, skill, and attitudes of pre-service teachers. The first 10 items assessed intercultural knowledge. The next 5 items related to the participants' skill, and the last 5 items related to the participants' attitude. The second questionnaire related to pre-service teachers' opinion regarding ICC implementation. The last section of 15 items quantitative assessment relates to the participants' types of cultural activities they were willing to use in their prospect classes.

3.2.2. Class Observation

To provide more detailed and precise evidence of implementing ICC concepts in EFL classes and to see the current statues of pre-service teachers for evaluating the fidelity or degree of implementation of ICC in their classes, the participants were observed directly during their practicum. For this purpose, a checklist based on the questionnaire which had already been

used to investigate the participants' willingness to use cultural activities in their prospect classes was implemented.

3.2.3. Interview

An interview was conducted for two pre-service teacher groups over 4 weeks in 2018. Each interview lasted approximately ten to fifteen minutes. The interviews were audio-taped. The interviews were semi-structured and each participant was interviewed once. According to the recommendation of Merriam (1998), the language used during the interview was participants' first language to give them the chance of expressing their ideas freely. Through one question, the interviewer tried to ask the participants possible reasons for implementing and not implementing intercultural activities in their practicum.

3.3. Procedure

3.3.1. Data Collection and Data Analysis

To collect data, the researchers employed both quantitative and qualitative instruments. For the beginning, both groups of the participants i.e., pre-service teachers and mentor teachers were given the ICC questionnaire survey consisting of statements referring to participants' intercultural knowledge, skill, and attitude (appendix 1). The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires and bring them back in a week. Participants reported that completing the statements of the first questionnaire took approximately 25 to 30 minutes. The second questionnaire related to the pre-service teachers' opinion regarding ICC was given to the student teachers simultaneously. They also reported completing it lasted approximately 15 minutes. The gathered data were then fed into the computer. For conducting statistical analyses SPSS Statistics were used. The only demographic question used in the questionnaires was participants' gender to be assessed for probable gender differences regarding ICC components.

Because of the university limitations, getting permission to have contact with the students and taking their time to fill the questionnaires lasted two weeks. After two weeks the participants were then given another questionnaire about their ideas about implication of ICC activities, such as using posters illustrating foreign culture, in their classes. It aimed to investigate the pre-service teachers' priority in using ICC activities in their classes. The questionnaire consisted of 15 teacher-centered and student-centered activities. They were asked later to report their own suggestion for using intercultural activities they are willing to use in their prospect classes. Then the frequency of the suggestions was computed.

To check any possible mismatch between participants' perception and practice in their classes, they were observed during their practicum. A

checklist was used to find out any relationship between their perception and practice. The checklist was the same questionnaire which was used to investigate the pre- service teachers' priority in using ICC activities.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the data member check and triangulation method were used. The participants were asked to check if the transcribed notes reflect their opinions correctly. For the purpose of triangulation, different sources of data at different times through different methods were used. For the same purpose, the participants then took part in semi-structured interviews to confirm the data gathered through different phases of the study. The participants were invited to reveal their ideas regarding their weaknesses in implication of ICC activities and also their mentors' attributes. They talked about their expectations, needs and wants of mentors. They also provided some suggestions for improving the quality of ICC implication and future mentoring experiences.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

For determining the normal distribution of the test, using parametric or non- parametric test, and revealing possible errors in the data, Smirnov (K-S) test was performed. The following table is the results of appropriate statistic test used to analyze the data.

Table 1

One Sample Kolmogrove-Smirnov Test

	Sig.
Knowledge	.383
Skill	.095
Attitude	.549

The results of table 1 revealed normal distribution of the scores, hence parametric tests were used to analyze the data.

To assess the participants' ICC level, the researchers divided the levels into three categories of high, middle, and low. Table 2 presents the conventional mean for categorizing the participants' ICC level.

Table 2

Criteria of Intercultural Communicative Competence Level

ICC level	Mean	Option
	4.5-5.0	Strongly agree
High	3.5-4.4	Agree
Moderate	2.5-3.4	Neither agree or disagree
Low	1.5-2.4	Disagree
	1.0-1.4	Strongly disagree

According to the above table if the participants' scores were in upper third of self-developed cut-off points of normative distribution, the ICC level of the participant was considered high and low if the scores were in lower third, it was low. The rest in middle third were considered as moderate.

To determine the ICC level of the participants for detail the median of the scores as a kind of descriptive statistics were used. The results of the analysis of the ICC components are presented in table 3.

Table 3

Medians for ICC and its Components

	Knowledge	Skill	Attitude	Total ICC
Female	3.45	3.3	3.6	10.35
Male	3.5	3	3.8	10.3

As shown in table 3, the results of descriptive analyses revealed that the male and female participants achieved approximately a high level of knowledge component ($M = 29$; $M = 3.5$); ($F=20$; $Md= 3.45$). The results of comparing median of the participants score for determining ICC components indicated that the male attitude component ($M=29$; $Md= 3.8$) was more than the skill and knowledge components. The skill component for male was ($M= 29$; $Md = 3$) and knowledge component of them was ($M=29$; $Md=3.5$). The results of female participants indicated the higher level of attitude component than skill component ($F=20$; $Md= 3.3$) which is labeled as moderate and knowledge component ($M=20$; $Md=3.45$) respectively.

To determine the relationship between ICC components mean scores and their significant effect on overall ICC, Spearman (Rho) Correlation Coefficient test was applied. Table 4 presents the correlation between the components of ICC.

Table 4

Correlation Matrix for ICC and its Components

	Mean	1	2	3	4
1.ICC	513.6	1			
2.Knowledge	173.36	0.521**	1		
3. Skill	158.6	0.534**	0.001	1	
4.Attitude	181.4	0.796**	0.25	0.11	1

As represented in Table 4, positive and strong correlations between ICC and its three components can be detected. The correlation coefficient for Knowledge component is, $r (49) = .521, p < 0.01$, for skill Component is, $r (49) = .534, p < 0.01$, and for attitude component is, $r (49) = .766, p < 0.01$. But Component 1 - Knowledge was not associated with Component 2 – Skills, $r (49) = .001, p < 0.01$, and Component 1 – Knowledge was not associated with component 3- attitude, $r (49) = .025, p < 0.01$. Component 2 – Skills

was not also correlated with *Component 3 – Attitudes*, $r(49) = 0.11$, $p < 0.01$).

To identify Iranian pre-service male and female pre-service teachers' levels of ICC, and to explore whether there was any significant difference between female and male participants' ICC levels, ANOVA and the Spearman (Rho) correlation coefficient test was conducted. Table 5 represents the results of the correlation and descriptive statistics of gender differences.

Table 5

Correlation Matrix for ICC and its Components by Gender

	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.ICC	10.47	1						
2.Knowledge (Male)	3.57	0.758**	1					
3.knowledge (female)	3.45	-0.136	-0.092	1				
4.Skill (Male)	3.09	0.434	0.224	-0.447*	1			
5.Skill (Female)	3.44	-0.102	-0.40	-0.280	0.203	1		
6. Attitude (Male)	3.75	0.773**	0.387*	0.041	-0.026	-0.174	1	
7. Attitude (Female)	3.63	-0.178	0.052	0.11	0.001	0.454*	-0.392	1

The results of comparing male and female showed that the differences between two groups of the participants were low and they did not perform differently on ICC questionnaire. So gender differences had not a significant effect on ICC level.

To identify the effect of mentor teachers' ICC level on pre-service teachers' ICC components ANOVA and the Spearman (Rho) correlation coefficient test was conducted. Table 6 represents the results of the correlation and descriptive statistics of mentor teachers and mentees' ICC components.

Table 6

Correlation between Pre-service Teachers' and Mentor Teachers' ICC (Pared Sample Correlation)

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Knowledge M & Knowledge MM	2	1.000	.000
Pair 2	Knowledge F & Knowledge MF	2	1.000	.000
Pair 3	Skill M & Skill MM	2	-1.000.	.
Pair 4	Skill F & Skill MF	2	-1.000	.000
Pair 5	Attitude M & Attitude MM	2	-1.000	.000
Pair 7	Total & Total2	2	1.000	.000

According to the above table there were positive correlation between knowledge component of male pre-service teachers and knowledge component of their mentors. There was also a positive correlation between female pre-service teachers' knowledge component and the same component of their

mentor teachers. The results also indicated negative correlation between female pre- service teachers' skill and the same component of their mentor teachers. Finally, the table results showed the correlation between attitudes of male pre- service teachers and the attitude of their mentor teachers was negatively correlated.

To identify any significant difference between mentor teachers' ICC components and pre-service teachers ICC components the mean score of both groups of the participants were compared. Table 7 represents the results of mean comparison of mentor teachers and pre-service teachers.

The results of comparing means of ICC components of mentor teachers and student teachers indicated that except the knowledge component of female mentors and knowledge component of female pre- service teachers (Sd.= .035; Sig.= .034) there was no significant difference between other ICC components of the participants.

In the second section, through a questionnaire the opinions of pre-service teachers regarding envisaging intercultural teaching in EFL context were explored. The Likert- type questionnaire included 14 statements. Table 8 presented each statement's mean score and the standard deviation.

Table 7

Mean Comparison of Mentor Teachers' and Pre-service Teachers' ICC Components (Paired Sample Test)

	Paired Differences				t	f	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper			
Knowledge M – knowledge MM	-.20000	.21213	.15000	-2.10593	1.70593	-1.333	.410
Knowledge F – knowledge MF	-.46500	.03536	.02500	-.78266	-.14734	-18.600	.034
Skill M – Skill MM	.53000	.18385	.13000	-1.12181	2.18181	4.077	.153
Skill F – Skill MF	1.30000	1.55563	1.10000	-12.6768	15.27683	1.182	.447
Attitude M – Attitude MM	.30000	2.12132	1.50000	-18.7593	19.35931	.200	.874
total - total2	1.29000	.22627	.16000	-.74299	3.32299	8.062	.079

According to the obtained mean score for the first statement, both group of the participants had no significant difference in their opinion (M=4, M= 4.2; Sig. 0.189) regarding the relation between knowledge of ICC and their tolerance level. Both groups completely agreed that larger familiarity with ICC and more knowledge about it will lead to a more tolerant attitude of their learners.

The results of table 8 indicated that pre-service teachers had the highest amount of mean score for items "2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 14" for male participants and the highest mean score for items "1, 8, and 14" for the female participants. The mean scores of the statements 8 revealed male and female pre-service teachers are undecided about integrating language and culture at the time of teaching. They are even undecided about teaching culture to all students. The results of comparing the means of statements "5, 6, and 11" revealed that the difference between male and female was significant.

In order to identify the general opinion of male and female pre-service teachers about implementing ICC concepts in EFL classes another t-test was used to compare the total mean score of both male and female participants. The results of comparing their means are presented in table 9.

Table 8

Pre-service Teachers' Opinion in ICC Implementation

Items	Mean (M)	D	Mean (F)	SD	Sig.
1. Providing additional cultural information makes pupils more tolerant towards other cultures and people Promote the ability to handle intercultural contact situations.	4.28	591	4	.858	.189
2. I would like to promote the acquisition of intercultural skills through my teaching	4.1	923	3.8	1.08	.647
3. Provide information about shared values and beliefs.	3.93	923	3.75	1.02	.521
4. Provide information about the history, geography and political conditions of the foreign culture(s).	4.1	618	3.65	.988	.054
5. Provide experiences with a rich variety of cultural expressions (literature, music, theatre, film, etc.).	4.3	614	3.7	1.25	.032*
6. culture teaching is important, but has to give way to language teaching when one only has a limited number of teaching periods available	4.4	733	3.7	1.3	.018*
7. Foreign language teaching should not only touch upon foreign cultures. It should also deepen pupils' understanding of their own culture	3.7	823	3.6	1.00	.530
8. Promote the ability to empathize with people living in other cultures	4.2	726	4.1	.999	.302
9. In a foreign language classroom, teaching culture is as important as teaching the foreign language skills.	3.7	978	3.9	.1.07	.719
10. All pupils should acquire intercultural competence.	3.2	951	3.6	1.04	.161
11. Language and culture cannot be taught in an integrated way. You have to separate the two	2.3	32	3.2	1.58	.042*
12. A foreign language teacher should present a realistic image of the foreign culture and society.	3.8	939	3.9	1.16	.991
13. Promote the acquisition of a level of proficiency in the foreign language that will allow the learners to use the foreign language for practical purposes.	3.9	944	3.8	1.00	.560
14. Enhance pupils' motivation to learn the foreign language	4.3	731	4	1.02	.891

Table 9*Comparison of Pre-service Teachers' Opinion Means Score*

	Mean	SD	Sig.
Female	3.76	22.	.348
Male	3.87	.55	

As it can be detected from table 9, there was no significant difference in male and female pre- service teachers' opinion in applying ICC concept in their prospect classes. Both groups clearly agreed on intercultural competence teaching in their prospect classes.

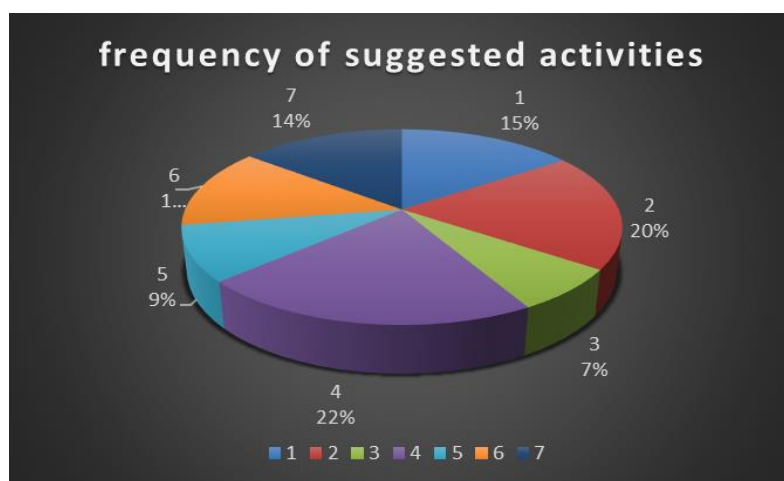
Another questionnaire was used to investigate the participants' preferences regarding types of ICC they want to use in their prospect classes. They were given 15 examples of cultural practices applicable to classroom context which were either teacher centered or student centered activities. The participants were asked to indicate their preferences of these practices in their classes.

The results of the above table revealed the participants' favorite ICC activities to be used by them. Male subjects' preferences are statements 1, 3, 6, 10, and 12, which refer to decorating their classes with posters illustrating foreign cultural concepts, asking their students to explain some of their own culture in the foreign language, and asking their pupils to think about the image which the media promote of the foreign country. The results of females' preferences indicated they are much willing to choose statements 6 "part of decoration of my classroom will be posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture", and then "posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture will be used for classroom decoration".

The participants were then asked to think about their own cultural activity examples. Through an open ended question, they pinpointed more examples of other cultural activities they will practice in their prospect classes. Their suggested activities are as using 1) videos or photos of famous sights and people (15%), 2) TV programs (not films) and power point and posters (19%), 3) songs (7%), 4) web site and social networks i.e. facebook, MSN, twitter, instagram, telegram, skype, (21%), 5) current events (social or political issues) (9%), 6) cultural differences discussions(lifestyles, values, and social habits, etc.(13%), 7) short workshop sessions for teaching rituals of greeting and leave-taking, different ways of criticizing/ complaining, expressing nonverbal gratitude, etc.(14%)

Table 10*T-test of Types of ICC Activities of Pre-service Teachers' Activities*

Items	Mean (male)	Rank	Mean (Female)	Rank
1. I ask my pupils to think about the image which the media promote of the foreign country.	4.2	1 st	3.8	5 th
2. I tell my pupils why I find something fascinating or strange about the foreign culture(s).	3.7	5 th	3.6	6 th
3. I tell my pupils what I heard (or read) about the foreign country or culture.	4.2	1 st	3.1	7 th
4. I ask my pupils to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture.	3.7	5 th	2.8	8 th
5. I use videos, CD-ROMs or the Internet to illustrate an aspect of the foreign.	3.8	4 th	2.8	4 th
6. I ask my pupils to think about what it would be like to live in the foreign culture.	3.8	4 th	3.9	4 th
7. I talk to my pupils about my own experiences in the foreign country.	3.3	8 th	3.6	6 th
8. I ask my pupils about their experiences in the foreign country	3.4	7 th	3.6	6 th
9. I invite a person originating from the foreign country to my classroom.	3.5	6 th	3.6	6 th
10. I ask my pupils to describe an aspect of their own culture in the foreign language.	4.2	1 st	4	3 rd
11. I ask my pupils to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet.	4.1	2 nd	3.8	5 th
12. I decorate my classroom with posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture.	4.2	1 st	4.6	1 st
13. I comment on the way in which the foreign culture is represented in the foreign language materials I am using in a particular class.	3.2	9 th	3.8	5 th
14. I ask my pupils to compare an aspect of their own culture with that aspect in the foreign culture	3.9	3 rd	4.1	2 nd
15. I talk with my pupils about stereotypes regarding particular cultures and countries or regarding the inhabitants of particular countries.	2.6	10 th	2.5	9 th

Figure 1*Frequency of Pre-Service Teachers' Suggested ICC Activities*

Surprisingly, most of the subjects indicated they preferred teacher-centered approaches which are in line with social-constructivists approaches (Vygotsky, 1987). When they were asked about the reason of their preferences for teacher-centered activities, they reported that since they had the same experience of not having enough contact with foreign culture, the need for awareness from their mentor teachers seems to be very important. Their preferences for teacher-centered activities seem to provide their students a kind of scaffolding to increase their knowledge of ICC.

Despite the pre-service teachers' valuable suggestions and their ambitious for implementing and cultivating ICC concepts and activities in their prospect classes in future, in reality the result of class observation showed that, they were not master or even eager to do so. The checklist of ICC activities of table 8 along with the suggested ICC activities proposed by the pre-service teachers was used to check the pre-service teacher applying intercultural activities in their practicum.

4.1.1. Interviews

To check pre-service teachers' reasons for not applying intercultural competence teaching activities in their classes, an interview consisted of 6 questions took place approximately a month after their class observation. The core questions are presented in appendix II.

The interviews were conducted in Persian and then they were translated in to English. The most important restriction that was mentioned by most of pre-service teachers refers to the fact that prior to this project they did not attend

courses related to ICC and they were not aware of such concepts, so their failure in implementing intercultural competences in their practicum is indisputable.

One of the examples of the interviewees' answer to the first question was that:

"... In my opinion we need some courses to teach us the ways we can appropriately and effectively equip ourselves to ICC concepts. We need experienced mentor- teachers in this regards to help us and train us to further our mastery on such issues "

Another male pre- service teacher proposed that:

"Although I am aware of the importance of ICC concepts in the era of communication, I am not very much involved in this issue. Actually I myself have a very little knowledge about the proper ways of applying ICC activities in my prospect classes in future."

One of the female teacher students who had strongly emphasized applying ICC activities in her classes mentioned that:

" ...honestly after my first real teaching experience, I noticed there was a big difference between theory and practice. Although I was reminding myself to apply ICC activities at the time of teaching, practically I was not very much perfect in applying them at the moment."

She then added that:

".... The most important factor which hindered me to put my opinion in to practice was lack of my knowledge and experience about the way I could insert such activities in my teaching schedule. I was not previously informed how to apply my ICC knowledge in to practice.

Another reason for not applying their ideas related to intercultural teaching in their real teaching classes referred to the reason that the teaching tasks are packed in each lesson and achieving this goal i.e., intercultural teaching, is difficult to some extent. One of them proposed that:

"At the time of teaching I focused on teaching English words and grammar. Since teaching EFL learners how to grasp English words and basic grammar and structure is time consuming, it's difficult for EFL teachers to have a lot of time to improve their learners' intercultural communication competence simultaneously"

There were still other reasons for such failure. The participants of the study also referred to the prevailed unified teaching methods in Iran. One of the participants noted that:

"The compulsory unified teaching method which focuses on teaching unsystematic arrangement of grammar and vocabulary may causes overlooking the cultivation of EFL learners' intercultural communication

competence. This in turn forces teachers to focus only on teaching EFL learners' English language, which affect the improvement of EFL learners' intercultural communication competence."

The same reason was mentioned by one of female pre-service teachers. She said:

"Since the syllabus and teaching materials in Iran do not explicitly require improving EFL learners' intercultural communication competence, teachers are obliged to attach great importance to grammar and structure and reading comprehension test based on the outline of the requirements. Therefore, practically I put little emphasis on cultivating ICC level of their learners.

According to the insights of the participants of the study Iranian pre-service teachers are eager to learn vast arrays of teaching task and activities in order to enhance their own and their L2 learners' ICC. They need some experienced mentor teachers to accelerate the pre-service teachers' ability and proclivity to deal with some issues such teachers are faced during their practicum or their prospect classes in future.

4.2 Discussion

The present study was an attempt to assess the ICC of Iranian pre-service EFL teachers in their final year of their teacher education program. The findings of the study are discussed here to reveal the answer to the proposed research questions.

The results of assessing ICC indicated the satisfactory level of ICC among Iranian pre-service teachers. Three components of ICC including knowledge, skill, and attitude correlated to each other. In this study the knowledge component was the weakest component, and skill component and attitude components were stronger than knowledge component. It seems that the participants' weakness in the first component of ICC refers to lack of openness to other cultures and lack of communication across different cultures due to cultural and political boundaries of the country. Moreover, weakness in ambiguity tolerance can also be considered as another reason for such results. Similar to the findings of this study Saricorban and Oz (2014) explored pre-service English intercultural components in Turkish setting. They reported highly positive correlation among three components of ICC, but verse to the findings of the present study, the results of their study was in favor of knowledge component. They reported that the levels of skill and attitude as two other components of ICC were relatively low.

In the present study, the results of the correlation matrix indicated that there was no correlation between male and female participants regarding assessing ICC level components. The results of the research conducted by

Mirzaii and Forozande (2013) to assess different levels of ICC among Iranian female and male L2 learners indicated homogeneous level of ICC among male and female L2 learners. Demonstrating approximately the same levels of ICC among different genders can lead us to conclude that gender differences is not determining factor in ICC level.

To check the effect of mentoring as a prominent stage in teacher education, ICC components of mentor teachers were checked to compare with the same components of pre-service teachers. Notwithstanding that mentor teachers were considered as source of knowledge in language education and those who are skilled in their profession, the low level of knowledge and skill component in both groups of pre-service teachers can be an indicator of weakness of mentor teachers' ability in transferring their knowledge and skill to their student teachers. It is also unclear how mentor teachers affected the attitude of their learners to have a positive attitude toward ICC concepts, and whether pre-service teachers' attitude component was affected by factors other than their mentor teachers, such as media and conditions of surrounding environment. In his study, the negative correlation between mentor teachers' and pre-service teachers' attitude and skill components of ICC can be seen as disparity between mentors and student teachers in their perspectives toward ICC concepts.

The results of the study regarding pre-service teachers' opinion in implementing ICC in EFL classes revealed their positive views on ICC integration in their classroom. The results of the study by Göbel and Helmke (2010) revealed that positive opinion in implementing ICC concepts in EFL classes will improve the ability and experience of teachers to integrate intercultural topics. They also showed ICC implementation intensified the quality of teachers' intercultural instruction.

Karabinar and Guler (2013) highlighted the effect of culture in EFL classes. They lamented that despite the importance of injecting cultural concepts in the body of foreign language education, its proper place in EFL education is not clearly distinct. They pointed out that cultural concepts received marginal role. So despite most of pre-service teachers' awareness of the vital role of intercultural concepts in language education, they are captive of the overloaded syllabus and exam-oriented curriculum. They seemed they overlooked incorporating cultural dimension in their classes to not fall behind their pre-planned syllabus. Furthermore they assumed EFL learners need to master language knowledge, so the teachers ignore intercultural background knowledge enhancement, and it can be considered as the main culprit for teachers' neglecting of cultivation of EFL learners' intercultural communication competence. This seems to be problematic as if students in Iran should learn English mostly for academic achievements. Moreover, since teachers' evaluation is based on their students' performance and their success in

their students' final exams and finally in entrances exam, also known as "konkooor", they are forced to teach for examinations not for cultivating ICC.

The findings of this study can be considered as a testimony that teachers' tension is to fulfill their commitments of school and government expectations. They are apparently needed to train students who can successfully pass their final exams at the end of educational year. Aliakbari (2004) also referred to some shortcomings of ELT materials and syllabus design in Iran for unsuccessful implication of ICC concepts. He reported that Iranian high school textbooks do not contain intercultural competence concepts. They cannot be considered as a suitable source of improving intercultural competence. Not only they do not propose intercultural concepts, but also they distract the students' attention from intercultural points. He added that topics of the lessons are mainly based on scientific issues which are culturally neutral, and poor depicted cultural concepts are vivid in reading passages.

Another problem which was notified by the participants of the study was their contact with foreign countries and their cultures. Of 49 pre-service teachers, only three of them reported they travelled to a foreign country, and it was less than one week. Unfortunately, 95% of the participants indicated that their contact with foreign culture through exposing to movies lacked awareness and attention to cultural factors embodied on the plots. In addition, they reported that not only the materials used in the classes but also their mentor teachers also could not meet their intercultural competence needs. Despite the participants' positive attitude and their enthusiasm toward implementing cultural concepts, most pre-service teachers indicated their knowledge about foreign cultures is low. By referring to the importance of learning cultural points they asserted that they are not very much interested in learning language points, rather they are willing to get cultural concepts to improve their ICC. Only two pre-service teachers had negative attitude toward consciously cultivating EFL learners' intercultural communication competence. Their defensive notion toward their negative viewpoint refers to the lack of any intercultural communication competence tests in Iran. They asserted it is not necessary concept to be taught. To them it is a time consuming concept which affect teaching process. Five pre-service teachers also paid a little attention to increasing the intercultural communicative competence of EFL learners, so they did not attach great importance to it. In a study in line with the present study, Zamanian and Seidi (2017) listed three reasons of 40 Iranian teachers for unsuccessful implication of ICC activities in their classes. These are limitation of training, shortage of time, and lack of support.

In this regard, Serucu et al. (2005) and Reisager's (1998) investigations related to the hazy relationships between EFL teachers' beliefs about ICC and the actual implication of these concepts in their classes reflect their weak

perception of ICC and its place in foreign language education. Similarly, Liddicoat et al. (2003) also pointed to the problem of limited implication of ICC in EFL education. They attributed the problem to the unclear perception of EFL teachers of cultural and intercultural concepts in foreign language education.

The results of class observation for checking the adopted intercultural communicative competence activities indicated that despite pre-service teachers' support and their willingness to implement ICC in their foreign language classes, their practices cannot be considered as based on ICC development.

The results of the investigation of the status quo of Iranian EFL teachers' ICC perception and their practical implication of such concepts in their classes done by Zamanian and Saidi (2017) revealed that the results were not satisfactory. They also asserted that verse to EFL teachers' positive attitude toward the necessity of increasing learners' awareness of ICC, and their practices were far from satisfaction. Similarly, in the study of Sercu et al., (2005) teachers from Britain, Denmark and Flemish teachers were reported as those who were unwilling to improve their students' ICC knowledge. To them cultural diversity of their students was not a superiority to be developed, hence they paid little attention to it. He furthers that despite teachers' readiness to teach ICC around the world; in actual teaching they seemed not move beyond traditional information-transfer pedagogy. Lack of teachers' clear perception of the way of integrating ICC into foreign language teaching was mentioned by Aleksandrowicz-pedich et al. (2003) as a conclusion of his study of unsuccessful implication of ICC concepts in EFL teaching.

The findings of the present study are inconsistent with Atay et al., (2009) and Young and Sachedv (2011) who proposed that despite expressing positive views on ICC integration in their classrooms, EFL teachers are unable or unwilling to put it into practice.

Unanimous voice of pre-service teachers of the present study for implementing ICC in EFL classrooms confirms the need of them for observing, accepting, and incorporating the cultural dimensions systematically. It seems that to equip pre-service teachers as prospective teachers with intercultural competence, curriculum designers, teacher trainers, mentors and authors and material designers should include cultural aspects and pedagogical approaches in their curricula. In a similar vein, Risager (1998) also found that there is no clear relationship between practical teaching of teachers in real classes and their perceptions of ICC. The importance of injecting ICC concepts in EFL context is also distinct in the study of Göbel and Helmke (2010). They demonstrated that the quality of

intercultural instruction is directly affected by the intercultural experiences of EFL teachers. Karabinar and Guler (2013) pointed to the paramount significance of injecting culture in foreign language classes. But then they lamented that it received not a vital role but a marginal role in EFL context.

As to the insights offered in the study of Mirzaii and Forouzande (2013), for enhancing the ability and proclivity of dealing with different ethno- linguistic communities with their intercultural differences which may impede the processes of learning and communication, teachers need to use different tasks and instructions. (p. 312).

Taken together, these findings pinpoint that pre-service teachers need special training and instructional time to be equipped with intercultural concepts and tasks to appropriately and effectively deal with intercultural differences. In language learning and teaching, ICC training enables the pre-service teachers to become familiar with sociocultural variation and become more knowledgeable about them. It would also help such teachers to probe and foreground their preconceived notions of different learning groups with various cultural tendencies and diversities, and evaluate and probably accommodate and ameliorate the sociocultural appropriateness of the methodology used by them for special group of learners.

Since ICC teaching needs special experience and expertise, training programs for pre-service teachers is a basic invaluable and irrefragable concept (Biswaloo, 2015). The necessity of mentoring programs is distinct to train student teachers as prospect teachers. According to Wang (2001) training in observation, providing effective feedback, supporting and counseling the student teachers are conscious process of induction into different teaching context that are considered as responsibilities of mentor teachers that does not take place automatically. To Orlando (2001) this process is a gradual process of knowledge and belief development and construction which can only be achieved through systematic and ongoing training opportunities. So mentors' understanding of the academic, professional, social, and intercultural communicative competence can develop awareness of pre-service teachers in these concepts and also can develop a deeper understanding of the importance and contribution a mentor teacher can make to the development of student teachers.

5. Conclusion and Implication

Iran has witnessed a revolution which leads to the political and cultural fierce between Iran and the United States and unwillingness in communicating with English speaking others cause changes in EFL curriculum (Mirzaie & Forouzande, 2013). After passing four decades, some changes in the perceptions and attitudes of people toward the need to maintain intercultural communication with the world and toward the English

language can be detected perspicuously (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008). Consequently, two unhealthy and opposite attitudes of 1) pedantic cultural attitude-determining L2 as the only correct and prestigious way to view the world- and 2) quaint nativism attitude- determining everything in native culture as more beneficial, interesting, desirable, and correct- proposed by Lado (1988), has given their places to intercultural respect and tolerance which can be can be improved through educational system generally and mentor teachers specifically as leaders of the system to make a balance between such views.

So this research calls for inclusion of different steps for heightening mentor teachers' awareness of their roles and responsibilities for supporting pre-service teachers professionally to be able to imply intercultural concepts in their prospect classes in future. It is not enough for pre-service teachers to be ill-prepared for their role in future; ascertaining about fulfilling their expectations, needs and wants. It can be concluded that it is mentor teachers' responsibility to boost pre- service teachers' ability to practice what they theorize.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire (ICCQ)

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5
Statements				
1. When I am uncertain about cultural differences, I take a tolerant attitude				
2 I believe that intercultural experiences can add some information to my previous knowledge.				
3. I am eager to read articles on foreign language culture.				
4. I cannot easily deal with ambiguities during the communication in L2.				
5. I don't make any effort to discover the norms of L2 culture that I am communicating with.				
6. The rights of people from other cultures to have different values from my own are respectable.				
7. I try to encounter well with different dress customs of people in their countries.				
8. When I meet adolescents, I cannot open the conversation in a culturally appropriate manner.				
9. I really accept the others' values and norms during the communication in L2.				
11. I can take part in any L2 conversation with daily life issues.				
12. Most of the time when I am communicating in L2 I try to learn through discovery during actual experiences.				
13. I believe that marriage between different cultures is wrong.				
14. I am often motivated by curiosity to develop my knowledge of my own culture as perceived by others.				
15. I watch more national news than international news.				
17. I believe that social system of where the person is from has effect on the decision making processes.				
18. I am able to deal tactfully with ethical problems, while communicating with L2.				
19. I take pleasure in listening to music from another culture.				
20. Religious arrangements in different cultures are not fascinating me.				
22. I think we are responsible for people of other races as our people.				

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

1. Do you think the presented ICC activities need special mastery to be practically applied?
2. Why you did not try out most of the intercultural activities you have already mentioned?
4. Has your perception of teaching culture in EFL classes changed since the beginning of your real teaching in any way?
5. How important do you think it would be to incorporate intercultural communication training in language teacher education?
6. Do you think your mentor teachers' role in improving your ICC knowledge, skill and attitude is effective?

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