

**INCORPORATING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
TEACHING IN A LEBANESE UNIVERSITY INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM  
CONTEXT: AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There is a need to go beyond the goals, content and methods that have been followed in English Language teaching in Lebanon. Awareness of teaching language from an intercultural perspective is lacking. Intercultural communicative competence is needed to deal effectively and appropriately with cultural diversity, in particular in volatile situations on the local and on the global level. The aim of this study is to incorporate intercultural competence in the Intensive English Program (IEP) at an English-medium Lebanese university to develop the learners' intercultural competencies and help them avoid stereotyping and otherization. I draw on Byram's (2006) model and Holliday et al.'s (2004) non-essentialist view of culture along with a critical socio-cultural approach to teaching English, using an action research methodology which fits the purpose of this study. The methodology is tested in three cycles over three semesters. The intervention consists of a supplementary course that draws on theoretical input and practical exercises. To get evidence and evaluate the outcome of my action, I explore the IEP Reading Skills 003 course students' attitudes towards the English language/culture, and the effect of intercultural teaching on those attitudes. I also examine the extent to which the stakeholders i.e. administrators, teachers and students are likely to approve or disapprove of intercultural teaching/learning. Following the interventions, I use focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and a diary to find evidence of realization of objectives, using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that teaching English from an intercultural perspective can: develop intercultural competence, promote language proficiency, allow discussion of sensitive issues without triggering tension and conflicts in the classroom, and increase motivation and engagement. Although the results are specific to a particular setting, the findings might encourage other English language teachers and course designers to review their teaching practice and promote intercultural competence that helps students to avoid otherization, engages them, and prepares them for the intercultural world. It generates results which could be of interest to other professionals and researchers in the context of Lebanon, and perhaps in similar contexts in the world.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Intercultural communicative competence	ICC
Intercultural competence	IC
Native Speaker	NS
Intercultural Speaker	IS
Socio-cultural theory	SCT
Communicative competence	CC
English language teaching	ELT
First language	L1
Second language	L2
Focus group discussion	F
Student	S
Action Research	AR
Intensive English Program	IEP
Intercultural Language Teaching	ICLT
Extract (Diary)	E

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background**

I am a full-time English language lecturer at the University of Balamand (UOB), a private English-medium university founded in 1988 in North Lebanon. UOB attracts students from Tripoli, Al-Kura, other cities in Lebanon, and Syria. As its environment is mainly rural but also urban, the students come from average to low-income families. North Lebanon, like the rest of Lebanon, suffered from the civil war (1975-1990). The Muslims in the area tend to lean towards Syria and its socialist system, while the Christians look towards the West in general and Europe in particular. Students come to UOB greatly politicized, following local leaders, and with highly charged religious and ideological affiliations.

The Lebanese civil war is complex, including sectarian tensions and often bloody confrontations among Lebanon's nineteen different denominations and political conflicts, sometimes armed conflicts, between Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Israel and other countries with political and economic interests in the region. The confessional identification intensified after the civil war. Students coming to UOB bring with them their highly parochial perspectives and deeply rooted stereotypes. UOB is their first opportunity to meet the other and to really interact with the other, hence the challenge of learning tolerance and appreciation of the non-familiar. Often, UOB lecturers are not just lecturers but also educators in the broader sense of the term, as they have to build bridges and search for common ground in the classroom and on campus.

UOB offered me the chance to teach English as a foreign language, a requirement for students from all faculties. I taught 003 Reading Skills, a five-hour/week course in the Intensive English Program (IEP) over three different semesters. In this thesis, I will report on the action research (AR) I chose to conduct in this class. I chose my research out of a sense of mission as I wanted not only to teach English but to engage my students and to broaden their horizon so that they may learn to tolerate others, appreciate differences, and acquire a broader sense of justice. My experiences in teaching a wide range of students also convinced me that I could contribute to the IEP academic program and perhaps to education in Lebanon by embarking on an academic research that would make a difference in the peaceful, democratic, pluralistic state we aspire to.

English teaching in the IEP classrooms is governed by a pyramid-like structure. Although lecturers have flexibility in teaching, choosing extra material to supplement the textbook, they have to take into consideration the hierarchical structure of the English Division. The structure consists of the curriculum that underpins the design of the syllabus, the choice of the textbook, and the lecturers' role in the classroom within a framework overseen by the chairperson of the Division and the coordinator of the course.

The role of the chairperson is to manage the curriculum of the courses offered by the department. The chair must ensure that the syllabus for each course is an accurate, transparent document of the course's intended learning outcomes, content, assessment strategies, and grading system. The chair also monitors and encourages course evaluation and development when needed to ensure that the department is providing

quality education and offering the needed skills development and value added aspects for all degrees offered by UOB.

In collaboration with the Head of Division, course coordinators for multi-section courses are responsible for creating the course syllabus, including the scope and sequence or schedule of content for the course. The syllabus explicitly states the intended learning outcomes for the course as well as the assessment strategies.

Monitoring of the syllabus continues throughout the semester, as the coordinator supervises the dissemination of the course content and administration of all assessment activities. The coordinator is in constant contact with the lecturers and holds regular meetings with the teaching team to ensure that all sections are moving in parallel.

Scheduling and overseeing grade-normalization meetings are important functions of the coordinator.

## **1.2. Purpose of the study**

Since the 1950s there has been an increasing interest in intercultural communication as a field of multidisciplinary research. This interest has been strengthened by the globalization process (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). The opportunities of an intercultural encounter have increased as a result of advancement in the information technology such as media and Internet, and greater mobility such as moving from country to country or travelling to study abroad. The intercultural encounter involves interaction between the multiple identifications of the social actors and the perceptions they have of each other's identities (Byram, 1997, p.56; Byram and Fleming, 1998, p. 7).



Rapid changes have created a gap between what is being taught and what students need (Gieve and Miller, 2006). Socio-linguist aspects of language and the complexities of language in use may not be attended to adequately (Corbett, 2003, 2008; McConachy, 2008). Because of development in English Language Teaching (ELT) over the past 3 decades, English language researchers, textbook writers, and teachers have been exposed to new approaches, such as the intercultural language teaching approach, which may have positive effects.

Conscious of the changes that societies are undergoing, ELT pedagogy is trying to keep up with such changes by reconsidering its substance and objectives. The cultural framework that neglects the context in which communication takes place is likely to create stereotyping and to lead to misinterpretation and miscommunication. I believe that an intercultural communicative approach should be adopted in the Lebanese context to help develop much needed Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and intercultural awareness in ELT.

English is not the official language or the first language for most of the population of the world. It has become, however, a lingua franca, a primary foreign language, to be learnt in an increasingly global society (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). Most people who want to keep up with the modern global village require communicative competence in English.

Lebanon is a multilingual country. With the longstanding tradition of teaching and learning French, bilingualism is now part of the Lebanese educational system (Shaaban and Ghaith, 1996). Lebanon has recently moved from being a bilingual - Arabic,

French - to a trilingual country –Arabic, French, English. English in Lebanon fulfills national needs: education, commerce and international relations. Most students receive a minimum of 6 years of English instruction in public and private schools prior to entering university. Most universities in Lebanon teach in English, or in English and French, with Arabic receding to third place.

Although UOB offers some courses in Arabic and French, the courses are overwhelmingly in English. The majority of students are Lebanese whose first language is Arabic; however, 75% come from French and 15% from English medium schools (President's Report, 2009). Passing an English exam is a pre-requisite for admission. The 003 Reading Skills course is the final course in the IEP and focuses on students' ability to read, write and speak English adequately. The IEP is designed to develop students' skills in the areas of speaking, listening, writing, reading, and vocabulary building (The University of Balamand, 2006-2007). In the foreign language curriculum that governs it, there is no mention of intercultural objectives of language teaching or ICC. This is despite the fact that the Lebanese national curriculum document published by the National Center for Educational Research and Development (NCERD, 1997) has set as a goal for students of English in Lebanon the ability to communicate effectively with other citizens in the world economy.

In my context, students do not show engagement in the English class. They seem to have some extrinsic motivation but are not intrinsically motivated (Gardner, 1985). It is likely that most of them would declare, like other students in Lebanon that they study English because it is a UOB requirement or a means for pursuing higher education and/or getting better jobs in the world market (Shaaban, 2005, p. 103).

It is possible that students' disengagement is partly the result of the focus of English language textbooks, curriculum and lecturers on linguistic knowledge rather than on intercultural knowledge. It is difficult to engage students under these conditions. This is perhaps not surprising as there is a wide gap between the linguistic focus, students' non-linguistic interests and concerns, and the implicit cultural content of the texts and students' everyday lives and experiences. Based on my readings and experiences, I believe that engagement with language learning is a process in which the learner interacts cognitively, affectively and socially with language both as object and as means of communication (Svalberg, 2007, 2009; Tomlinson, 1998; Van Lier, 2007).

In this global village, multicultural, trilingual Lebanon is the gateway to the East and the West. A small Middle Eastern country, Lebanon used to be an inspiring model where nineteen religious communities live harmoniously together. However, more recently the country has been struggling with cultural differences, mainly religious and political. Although the situation is now peaceful, Lebanon suffered a devastating 15-year-long war (1975-1990). Rebuilding the infrastructure is not as challenging as restructuring the discriminatory, intolerant outlook people have developed towards the other in the same country. A constant fear people have in Lebanon is the possibility of another civil war. An intercultural teaching approach in the Lebanese context, and particularly in my context, may alleviate internal tensions. The implementation of an Intercultural Language Teaching (ICLT) approach that focuses on ICC may reduce prejudices and conflicts between different communities in Lebanon and foster a positive attitude towards other communities, on the local, regional, and global levels.

To meet the needs of today's students in a global world, Byram (1997; 2006), Fantini (2005) and Corbett (2008) state that the main goal of ICLT should be not only Communicative Competence (CC), having linguistic competence or knowledge of the grammatical rules of a language along with the ability to speak appropriately with a native speaker (NS), but also ICC. The latter focuses on the integration of language, culture, and cultural dimensions such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997, 2006). These competencies could be the main focus of teaching English as an international language or lingua franca. This thesis does not focus on the linguistic aspects of ICC (e.g. the language of apologizing or giving/receiving compliments) due to my concerns about other intercultural dimensions of language. The aim of the intervention discussed in this thesis was to draw learners' attention to the dangers of otherization, one aspect of essentialism, a construct which needs to be deconstructed in order to develop Intercultural Competence (IC) and avoid stereotyping (Holliday et al., 2004). It was thought that this would make them more competent speakers of English, and also enhance their engagement with the language to facilitate further learning.

The development of ICC in ELT requires reconsidering the teaching approaches used. It may seem difficult to implement ICLT in a foreign language classroom where teachers share the learners' native language (L1), but it is possible and necessary because of Lebanon's cultural diversity. In addition, the pilot study I carried out in the fall semester showed that the learners' contact with otherness within their culture is limited because of recurring conflicts and unrest. Their experiences with people from foreign cultures is typically limited to family and friends' accounts of cultural differences while working

and/or studying abroad or to mediational experiences such as through textbooks, TV, and media.

Language is a social practice and intercultural learning is thus a process that is possible in the classroom (Byram, 2006, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). The classroom can become a site for intercultural learning where the teacher creates intercultural situations that help to raise intercultural awareness (Byram, 2006; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Tejeda, 1999). By using an appropriate approach in the English classroom, students can move to a third place, construct a third culture that results from interaction between different discourses, and develop understanding and tolerance (Section 2.7 and 2.8.2).

The process of language learning is a three-party-dialogue with culture: between teachers and learners and English language textbooks/materials which are the most important mediators of culture (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999; Secru, 2005). Thus, the inclusion of ICC objectives in English language materials and curricula would affect teachers' practices. It might help develop ICC that is essential for learners' future needs (Broady, 2004, p.70). It is possible that this inclusion may engage students more effectively in their language studies and stimulate their interest.

### **1.3. Rationale**

Awareness of ICLT is rare among professionals in Lebanon. There is, however, a need to consider the role of ICC in Lebanese language education. Students' positive attitudes to culture in the language classroom cannot be taken for granted because the social and political past in Lebanon, including recent local and regional conflicts, have all contributed towards the generation of negative attitudes among its citizens. This is why

it is important to find whether students believe they need ICC or not. Also, one cannot be sure that ICLT will motivate learners or what form ICLT should take.

The literature review, on ICLT and ICC shows that their implementation in the Lebanese context is almost non-existent. Besides, I found that most intercultural educational research has been conducted in English-speaking countries such as Australia (Liddicoat, 2008), and/or in a FL context such as Germany (O'Dowd, 2003) and Spain (Clouet, 2008). Few studies have been conducted in Middle Eastern countries on this subject; hence, the importance of this research project.

#### **1.4. Research questions**

Drawing on relevant literature concerning ICC within socio-constructivist or social science theory and methodology, advocated by Byram (1997; 2006) and Holliday et al. (2004), I conducted an AR study with the view of gaining an in-depth understanding of the above issues. I hope to contribute to the development of ICLT and to provide a basis for a shift in the curriculum towards ICLT at UOB and in Lebanon. In line with McNiff and Whitehead (2009) and Burns (2010), the overarching concerns underpinning this study were: How to realize my values i.e. to tolerate others, appreciate differences, and acquire a broader sense of justice in my practice? How to help the students avoid stereotyping and otherization? How to bring about change in the curriculum? How to engage students?

My aim to improve and cause change in my context led to the following research questions:

1. What are the students' attitudes towards foreign language cultures, countries and peoples associated with the English language they are learning and towards the language itself?
2. How can ICLT affect these attitudes? More specifically, how can ICLT texts or tasks contribute to learners developing ICC or, on the contrary, to otherizing or stereotyping?
3. To what extent is ICLT likely to be welcomed by stakeholders, i.e., administrators, teachers and students? What are some of the limitations one has to overcome?

These will be addressed by employing an interpretivist AR methodology.

### **1.5. An overview of the thesis**

Chapter one presents the background, rationale, purpose and research questions underpinning the study.

Chapter two presents the overarching theoretical framework of this thesis. It draws on Byram's (1997) framework that potentially helps participants develop ICC and adopt a non-essentialist view of culture, avoiding stereotypes and otherization. It also discusses the importance of a socio-constructivist approach to teaching/learning language. A critical review of the textbook, *Mosaic 2: Reading*, is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter three describes and discusses the research methodology used to achieve the aims of the study. It presents the rationale for using interpretive AR methodology, issues of trustworthiness, data gathering tools, and data analysis method. This chapter ends with a description of the intervention and the AR cycles.

Chapter four presents and analyzes the collected data from AR Cycle 2. Four main themes emerge from the data generated through two focus group discussions, two individual interviews and a diary.

Chapter five presents the evaluation of the intervention in Cycle 2 as well as the alterations I made for the intervention, informing Cycle 3.

Chapter six presents and analyzes the collected data from AR Cycle 3 and ends with a brief evaluation of the intervention. As wider adoption of an intercultural language teaching approach depends on the management and lecturers' attitudes, this chapter also presents and analyzes the potential for two administrators and two volunteer teachers to welcome or to resist ICLT.

Chapter seven discusses the main findings and insights gained from the students' answers to the study's first two research questions. It also discusses the findings from the management, lecturers and students in answer to the third research question of the study.

Chapter eight presents the conclusion, contribution, limitations, implications and importance of the study.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter relates to the theoretical framework of my research. I will start by highlighting scholarly essentialist as well as non-essentialist cultural perspectives for their potential impact on teaching language in ELT. Taking Byram's (1997; 2006) ICC model and Holliday et al.'s (2004) non-essentialist approach as a theoretical framework, I will explore the role of culture in teaching English, more specifically the target culture, the local culture, and the global culture or third culture, highlighting the importance of cultural schemata and motivation. I will discuss the use of an intercultural model that goes beyond teaching CC to include learners' attitudes, beliefs and norms to promote intercultural awareness. Finally, I will suggest an advantageous third place or a non-essentialist stance where the intercultural speaker's (IS) identity prevails.

I will provide an overview of the behaviorist and cognitivist approaches that have been prevalent in ELT and then focus on the social-constructivist theory of learning that may be appropriate to teaching ICC. This theoretical framework will create a need to discuss the current textbook in use. It will take the form of a critical review to find what the teaching approach in my context is and what importance has been given to teaching ICC (Section 2.10).

#### **2.1. Definition of ICC**

Although there is no one definition of ICC, researchers (Deardoft and Hunter, 2006; Graddol, 2006; Guilherme, 2002) suggest that ICC, which underpins ICLT, is the ability to interact effectively with events and documents of a culture other than one's own, incorporating awareness of cultural differences so that an intercultural mediator can

arrive at satisfying personal decisions in situations of intercultural encounter. ICC has also been defined as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247; Deardorff, 2004, p. 194).

The proposed approach implies an orientation to teaching ICC that raises learners’ critical cultural awareness (Section 2.9.1), allowing them to interact successfully with documents and events from other cultures (Byram, 1997, 2006). ICC helps answer my questions and meet the needs of our students. It also meets Holliday et al.’s (2004) objectives of essentialism and culturalism avoidance. Essentialism is an attitude that may give rise to otherization, a process that entails imagining someone as alien and different from ‘us’ in such a way that they are excluded from our normal, superior and civilized group (Holliday et al., 2004, p. 180).

Taking Byram’s (2006) intercultural approach and Holliday et al.’s (2004) non-essentialist view of culture as a theoretical framework, the main goal of this literature review is to outline key aspects of intercultural communication which are related to the development of intercultural awareness and ICC in second language learning contexts and to the identification of potential areas of investigation. The interaction between this approach and classroom practices may be the key to successful teaching and learning and has the potential to engage students (Brown, 1994, p. 102; Gutierrez and Vossoughi, 2010).

## **2.2. Culture and English language**

A review of the ICLT literature reveals that several researchers (Byram, 1997, 2006; Kramsch, 1993, 2008, 2006; Valdes, 1995) acknowledge the integration of language and culture, cultural and social context and role of language as a cultural tool in the cognitive process and the creation of meaning. ICLT agrees with the socio-cultural approach in ELT (Lantolf et al., 2009, p. 459) whose principles coincide with those above in addition to other principles that I will discuss below.

It has been recognized that English language and culture are inseparable, especially in teaching materials (Agar, 1994; 2006; Byram, 2006; Secru, 2005; Kramsch, 2008; Risager, 2006; Risager, 2007). Culture is a construct that includes a combination of culture that is expressed and constructed through language. Agar (1994, p.28) argues for the concept of “*languaculture*”, which is a unified approach to language/culture that is a fit between linguistic forms and meanings. It involves a link between two different languacultures that is source languaculture or the speaker culture of origin and target languaculture or any target culture. Researchers (Lamb, 2009; Risager, 2007; Kramsch, 2008) develop this concept to further a third option and an identity dimension (Section 2.8 and Section 2.8.2).

Researchers (Agar, 1994; 2006; Byram, 2006; Hall, 2002; Holliday et al., 2004; Kramsch 1993; Kramsch, 2008; Lantolf et al., 2009; Risager, 2006; 2007) place culture learning at the core of language education to create a space for the usefulness of culture, in particular the intercultural dimensions of language. They argue that language cannot be taught without teaching culture, even if teachers are not aware of doing it. Culture is thus not a fifth skill for acting appropriately in the target culture e.g. table manners, or

to recognize cultural differences (Damen, 1987); nor is it a separate skill, added to the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Kramsch, 1993; Kramsch, 2008; Risager, 2007). The languages we use shape the world we live in. Language cannot be separated from the social reality of the learners, their beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and their institutional and historical contexts. They contrast with Piaget (1950) and Chomsky (2006) whose main interest is linguistic competence, assuming that culture is not related to the goal of language teaching. Being competent in L2 means a lot more than simply knowing how to form syntactically correct sentences (Canale and Swain, 1980; Sarangi, 2011).

Language cannot be separated from its context, particularly in ELT. The new focus in ELT is on the integration of language and culture or linguistic knowledge with communicative skills which demonstrate understanding of language in its cultural context (Christopher and Mercer, 2001; Kramsch, 1993). The importance of a contextual framework in making meaning at the level of classroom practice has been stressed (Johnson, 2006; Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989). McConachy (2008) claims that when students are asked to read an authentic text or listen to a lecture or participate in a conversation they should look at the use of language (function) in its social and situational contexts (who is speaking or who are the characters, what their social roles are, why they have come together). Learners will learn best if they are made aware of the contextual information of a dialogue; otherwise, the learner will assume that contextual information, that is, pragmatic information is similar in all situations.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the role of culture and social context in human cognitive development. He argues that although people have a basic ability for intellectual

development, cognitive development is inherent in or originates from the actual social and cultural contexts of the learner (Section 2.9.). Compatible with Vygotsky, researchers (Byram, 2006; Holliday et al., 2004; Johnson, 2006) propose that language should not be divorced from the world but situated in a meaningful context such as classroom and school. This aim requires situated learning or anchored discussion (Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1992), relating the world to the world of the learner (Lamb, 2009). Limiting factual, static forms of knowledge, they propose that language is at the core of culture with its holistic view, representing the tool that helps learners to develop their learning and move toward a higher level of understanding of otherness. The implication is that language is a social practice and mediator of thought (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Language is not simply a tool for expressing some prior reality. It actively helps to create that reality (Risager, 2006; Roberts et al., 2001).

Language is an important means to construct and exchange meanings. Researchers (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Johnson, 2006; Lessard-Clouston, 1992) maintain that words have no meaning if they are separated from their social context. Texts, whether written, read, spoken, or listened cannot be comprehended without referring to their socio-cultural dimensions. For example, when a person talks about illness, cultural differences may affect communication more than the words do. Illness is culturally constructed (Kleinman et al., 2006, 2006, p. 141). Chung (2011) argues that in the Korean context illness may be seen as a punishment for sin in contrast to the western view of the physicality of illness. This issue has a major impact on the professional responsibility of physicians. It may create misunderstanding between the western doctor

and the Korean patient because of different cultural perspectives regarding the power of medicine and the rooted belief about illness.

### **2.3. Definition of culture**

Acknowledging its importance in ELT, scholars define culture from different perspectives. Culture is defined as a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life, affecting thoughts and actions (Byram, 1997; Holliday, 1999; Seelye, 1993; Weaver, 1986). Their concept includes culture with a big C or great music, literature and arts of the country, and small c or small culture or those elements of culture that determine our daily behavior, thinking, values and emotions, and that might be sources of miscommunication. From these standpoints, several researchers do not see culture as mere factual information conveyed by language (Bennett, 2004; Byram, 2006; Clouet, 2006; Holliday et al., 2004; Kramsch, 2008). They consider that such a view might lead to essentialism and culturalism in research and teaching and thus to learners' disengagement. The understanding of culture that is most relevant to this study is specifically structured on Holliday et al.'s (2004) definition of culture as indicated below.

#### *2.3.1. Essentialism and non-essentialist views of culture*

Essentialism considers that “there is a universal essence, homogeneity and unity in a particular culture” (Holliday et al., 2004, p. 2). In other words, the Japanese are obedient is a typical essentialist statement which treats all Japanese as a homogenous group and otherizes them. ‘They’ are different from ‘us’. For this reason Holliday et al. (2004) expand the definition of culture, suggesting that it is a “fluid, creative social force which binds different groupings and aspects of behavior in different ways, both

constructing and constructed by people in a piecemeal fashion to produce myriad combinations and configurations” (p. 3). This definition distinguishes between two different paradigms: essentialist views of culture and non-essentialist views of culture (Holliday et al., 2004, p. 4-5).

Essentialists view culture through a large culture lens. The description of groups of people, place, relation, membership, behavior and communication is in terms of national or ethnic culture. People can say they visit one homogeneous national culture, Chinese, English, etc. This large culture is associated with subcultures that are in an onion-skin relationship and by implication are subsumed by the larger national or ethnic culture.

Unlike a sub-culture, which is below (sub) a large culture (within the ‘onion’, as it were and by implication inferior to it), a small culture is simply that of a smaller group with shared values, beliefs or behaviors, e.g. the small culture of a specific school or of a particular staff room within that school or a particular teacher’s classroom, and so on. This non-essentialist view allows us to see every person as multicultural in the sense that they are members of many small cultures as part of their daily lives.

Holliday (1999) indicates that in an essentialist perspective, people are somehow caught within the larger national cultures and are stereotyped. Regarding behavior, the essentialist view is predominant in ELT, that is, people are assumed to behave in a typical way. For example, the stereotype is that Chinese Confucian culture of learning has been characterized as involving memorization and is vocabulary and grammar oriented and teacher centered while western culture of learning concentrates more on creativity and is task-based and student centered. Accordingly, the Chinese are assumed

to be passive; they do not value group work. Such essentialist descriptions have no room for individual or context-driven complexity.

Non-essentialists look at people through a small culture lens. People are not caught within their larger national culture. A person belongs to a community that consists of many groups; a Chinese instructor teaching English to Chinese students may also be a member of a sporting club where he/she plays tennis as well as a member of a congregation on Sundays. Instead of ascribing a negative or positive quality to one person, the complexity with which he/she is can be understood by non-essentialists.

People are not confined within national or cultural borders nowadays (Crystal, 2003). Whether virtually through the media, or in the classroom through role playing and simulation, or in society through travelling and studying abroad, learners will experience encounters with people from different cultures. They will meet American lecturers teaching Arab students. They will read about Hinduism and Buddhism and so forth on a daily basis. Accordingly, to avoid miscommunication and misunderstanding, the complexity of who someone is should be understood instead of understanding “the kind of person” one might be (Gee, 2000, p.100).

Adopting an essentialist outlook may lead people to become reductionists or culturalists (Holliday et al., 2004). It has been argued that essentialists see culture as an invariable, static entity (Liddicoat, 2002). Non-essentialists, however, rebut the static notion of culture or culture as a set of given attributes. Liddicoat (2002) indicates that in a static view of culture, culture is seen as facts and artifacts. However, culture is not static or only factual information about the culture, but it is about action and understanding and



about knowing how to engage with the culture (Liddicoat et al., 2003). Culture develops in response to new environments, challenges and opportunities within or outside one's countries. Rites of passage, for example, describe transitions in life or moving from one stage in life to another. Moving away from home for the first time, whether within the same country or abroad reflects the dynamic aspect of culture. These may trigger changes in us and in our society.

By reducing the complexity of culture, people are otherized or stereotyped. Otherization as defined by Holliday et al. (2004) is a central way of constructing the cultural self and the other by "ascribing identity to the Self through the often negative attribution of characteristics to the other [...] It does not allow for the agency of the other persons to be a factor in their identity construction" (p. 180). In other words, when we otherize, we imply that the other does not have any influence or choice about how they construct their identity (who they are) - they are simply who they are because they are Japanese, English, etc. Otherization or stereotyping is a way of seeing ourselves and others based on incorrect stereotypes (Byram, 1997, p. 73). It is labeling a group of people in a positive way: for example, Chinese people are great at math, or in a negative way, for example, English people are cold. To Holliday et al. (2004), it is linking people to "particular physical characteristics, qualities, personality types, emotional tendencies, beliefs and historical events" (p. 126). Thus people are described in terms of their cultural structure, for example, the depiction of Arabs as terrorists, riding camels, stoning women in public, and so on.

The stereotype can also be based on gender, race or language (Holliday et al., 2004). In the workplace, gender stereotyping is based on assumptions such as men are impractical

and dependent on women who are more skilful at operating the fax machine (Holliday et al., 2004, p. 181). Stereotyping can also be based on race, for example, selling bread is the domain of the Hindus, Cameroonians are “the Brazilians of Africa”, and Germans are winners because of their discipline, order and punctuality (O’Donnell, 1994, in Holliday et al., 2004, pp.128-130). Language might form a bridge or a barrier between people. People are stereotyped on the basis of their specific way of speaking, hence the social groups they belong to (Holliday et al., 2004, p. 184). People are also stereotyped according to being native or non-native speakers of English. In the field of ELT native speakers of English are more likely to be hired than non-native speakers (Graddol, 2006).

One’s mental frame of reference can become affected by the cultural glasses that one has been provided with, resulting in stereotyping (Holliday et al., 2004). Stereotypes perpetuate misunderstanding and miscommunication. Accordingly, ELT, more specifically ELT materials, can help create stereotypes from very minimal clues and these may be hard to change (Holliday et al., 2004). Essentialism in ELT may prevent textbook writers, scholars, teachers and students from seeing people as they really are. This may result in interpreting other cultures as mistaken and one’s own culture as the norm. This may also lead to another type of otherization which is linked to representation, that is, absence and invisibility (Holliday et al., 2004). The individual may be imagined as different to the extent that he/she is excluded from the ordinary, greater, and civilized group. Great consumers of English language materials, such as the Chinese and Arabs, are largely absent from English language textbooks. This invisibility may intentionally or not disengage students or form a barrier to teaching and learning English as a foreign or second language.

These cultural paradigms have different orientations to teaching cultures and studying cultures. Essentialists view culture as static, while non-essentialists view culture as dynamic and interactive. Researchers (Byram, 1997, 2006; Holliday et al., 2004; Corbett, 2003) maintain that the act of learning is not only about memorizing linguistic and cultural facts but also about engagement with practices, beliefs and attitudes that make up cultures and entails integrating language and culture into ELT. The content of English language in the classroom should be a vehicle for IC and awareness (Forsman, 2006). The focus on one aspect of culture, mainly the big C, might deprive people of their ability to exercise critical thinking. They may thus be transformed into cultural dupes (Bennett, 2004, p. 20). In fact, users of the same language may find themselves separated by deep cultural gaps, while others who speak distinct languages share the same cultures. A middle-class, Lebanese career woman will probably relate better to an English career woman rather than to a poor traditional Lebanese housewife because she shares some important similar cultures, that is, social class and career traits, with the former.

There should be a balance between the two aspects of culture, the big C and small c (Seelye, 1993). Cultural dichotomy may lead to oversimplification of culture. Holliday et al. (2004) and Hymes (1986) consider this dichotomy to be a false separation which may prevent language learners from experiencing culture holistically and approaching it as a dynamic and interactive process. It also fails to provide learners in cross-cultural situations with understanding without passing judgements and to promote democratic attitudes and tolerance of otherness. Most English textbooks, however, neglect culture in everyday life and

focus on teaching big C which might cause lack of motivation and disengagement in students. Liddicoat (2002) and Steele (2000) encourage teachers to go beyond cultural facts in ELT. The focus on big C can be a barrier to teaching and learning English as a foreign or second language (Bennett, 2005, p. 58).

#### **2.4. Language and culture**

As argued above, language cannot be taught independently of its context (Risager, 2007). Conscious of the importance of culture in ELT, researchers such as Canale and Swain (1980), Hymes (1986) and Ware and Kramsch (2005), shift language analysis from focusing on language structure to focusing on language in context. Ware and Kramsch (2005) sees “language not as a closed set of linguistic structures, but as an open set of semiotic signs whose meanings can only be negotiated, not codified” (p. 200). Within this broad view of culture from a sociolinguistic perspective, Kramsch (1993) points out that responsibility rests with textbook writers, curriculum designers and language teachers to promote cultural awareness.

Central to Kramsch’s (1993) sociolinguistic perspective is teaching about the target culture rather than the local culture or the global culture. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) and Risager (2000) stress the importance of teaching the target culture in ELT. Majdzadeh (2002) has studied the effect of neglecting the target culture. His research investigates the disconnection between the English language and the culture of that language embodied in Iranian English textbooks used in public schools. These books are written with respect to the Islamic tradition, neglecting the cultural aspect of the target language. The author concludes that the lack of cultural awareness/knowledge among Iranian students in public schools has affected their language competence and created a

need to attend private language classes to increase their language proficiency in the target language . In other words, writers in Iran failed to represent the target culture (or the global culture) and thus students failed to acquire the intercultural skills necessary for their future.

Teaching about the local culture only may still help students to develop a degree of CC. Canale and Swain (1980), Forsman (2006), and Samimy and Kobayashi (2004) argue that the following components of CC are interconnected with one another in communication.

1. Grammatical competence: the ability to use the rules of the language to understand and produce the language correctly.
2. Discourse competence: the ability to understand and produce coherent texts within various genres.
3. Pragmatic competence: the ability to understand and produce utterances that are appropriate for the context in which they are expressed.
4. Strategic competence: the ability to efficiently use the skills available to express oneself correctly.

Although important at the foundational stage of learning languages, CC has limitations. A key competence in communication is that CC can help learners to acquire the ability to convey the message they wish to convey whether verbal or written (Flowerdrew, 1998). The above descriptive tenets of CC involve knowledge of the grammar, syntax and lists of lexical items, and CC skills, that is, fluency and accuracy in different contexts and situations. Accordingly, language is seen from an essentialist perspective

as “a fixed system of formal structures and universal speech functions, a neutral conduit for the transmission of cultural facts” (Kramsch et al., 1996, p. 105).

CC emerged as a reaction to Chomsky’s de-contextualized view of language. The former emphasized that when interacting with events and documents, for example, the competent and proficient learner should have the ability to implement these competencies or to know what to say to whom, how, when and where. As suggested by Hymes (1986) and Kramsch (1993, 2008), CC focuses on the socio-linguistic dimensions of competence, challenging Chomsky’s use of the term, which included only grammatical competence. CC, however, assumes a uniform competence within the individual and the language group without taking into consideration the real situations of communication, that is, that communication occurs in context and cannot be separated from culture.

Although pragmatic awareness in particular is cultural, CC does not include culture in context. Kramsch (1993) argues that “facts over meaning have not enabled learners to understand foreign attitudes, values, and mindsets” (p. 23). Without addressing culture, becoming communicatively competent may not help to raise learners’ awareness about their own cultures or about other cultures. CC gives importance to NS competence neglecting the need for IS competence in the global world.

## **2.5. Motivation**

Focusing on the target culture can also be de-motivating as the motivation to integrate with the English speaking countries’ communities hardly makes sense anymore (Lamb, 2009). Gardner (1985) puts forward the notion of conceptualized motivation: intrinsic

motivation that implies learners' positive attitudes towards the target culture and their willingness to identify with the NS and instrumental motivation that relates to achievement of the learners' goals whether academically or in the job market. Lamb (2009) has re-conceptualized the construct motivation to further include the identity of the learners. Acknowledging the global status of English, Lamb refutes any clear binary distinction between the two above forms of motivation and states that motivation is not linear leading to learning and achievement. Motivation is rather relational, including other variables such as the learner's identity. In his study of Indonesian learners, Lamb (2009) found that motivation was a more complex construct and that it should be better looked at as interface between language and identity and learner, depending on the context for each individual. Drawing on Dornyei's (2009) L2 motivational self-system, he presents the distinction between the 'ideal L2 self' and the 'ought to L2 self'. Learners who envision themselves as proficient L2-users (who have such an ideal L2 self) will be strongly motivated to work towards becoming L2 users in order to reduce the discrepancy between this vision, or their imagined L2 community, and their current state. Other learners may ostensibly share the same goal of L2 proficiency but feel it is as an obligation imposed by others (i.e., have an ought-to L2 self), and this engenders a more defensive stance where the individual's main focus is on preventing failure rather than striving toward achievement.

To Lamb (2009), motivation is more identity than achievement oriented. He suggests that learners' experiences and environment should not be neglected and especially that the learners position themselves in relation to their language community and the culture, people and values represented by the target culture.

English is, however, associated with many English as L2 cultures and people in the world with different colonial histories and this might also affect learners' motivation. In my context, learners associate English with the West, specifically the US. This concept is in itself culturalist because English does not belong only to the English speaking countries anymore. It belongs to the people who speak English across the world (Crystal, 2003; McKay, 2002; Pennycook, 1998; Pennycook, 2007; Widdowson, 1994). For this reason, it might be more motivating to associate English with an IS identity rather than with an NS identity. Allowing for instrumental motivation in the context of this study, motivation is also better looked at as an interface between language and identity i.e. the IS identity.

## **2.6. The intercultural speaker**

CC may not be able to meet the learners' goal nowadays, as it aims to help learners to achieve NS competence (Alptekin, 2002; Clouet, 2006; Lamb, 2009; Liddicoat, 2008). This does not normally allow him/her to communicate competently or effectively. The underlying NS's cultural assumptions are more connected to an essentialist definition of culture (Jaeger, 2001). CC emphasizes the schism between the NS and the non-native speaker of English that fits "the image of a stereotyped Other" that is the NS identity (Kramsh, 2008, p. 405). This view entails disregard of the learner's values, attitudes, behavior and the intercultural skills advocated by Byram (1997), more specifically critical cultural awareness which promotes openness, tolerance and respect for otherness. Whether one is a NS or not, a lack of the necessary cultural dimensions can prevent one from interacting effectively with events and documents of a culture other than one's own (Byram, 1997). CC needs to be coupled with other skills to become ICC (Crandall, 1995; Hyde, 1998; Nelson, 1995). Risager (2000) argues that although linguistic dimensions are important in communication, "content or greater knowledge"



of the world should be given similar weight (p. 15). With the acquisition of ICC, the present study assumes that students will be more proficient, competent and motivated which facilitates their engagement in the process of language learning (Svalberg, 2007; 2009) and helps them attain intercultural speaker (IS) identity.

The aim of an ICLT approach is for learners to achieve an IS or mediator status as a possible replacement for the NS position (Jaeger, 2001). One develops into not an NS but an IS. One reason against the NS as an ideal is that it is unattainable (Clouet, 2006; Jaeger, 2001). Byram (1997) indicates that adopting it may entail a loss of the identity of the learner and his values, attitudes and beliefs. The focus of the NS model is on acquiring static knowledge and CC to convey a message in set contexts. But there are new requirements that widen the goals that have been traditionally set for FLT (Holliday, 2006). The new goals arise from the necessity to be able to deal with cultural complexity at the local and global levels.

To feel more comfortable when encountering differences, the IS has also to adopt the role of an ethnographer (Roberts et al., 2001). As recommended by Roberts et al. (2001), this role involves finding out about differences, which may help in developing empathy or “putting oneself in someone else’s shoes” (p. 38). The IS is “someone who has knowledge of one or, preferably, more cultures and social identities and has a capacity to discover and relate to new people from other contexts for which they have not been prepared” (Byram and Fleming, 1998, p. 9). In the reading class, for example, reading texts in English can provide learners with the opportunity for intercultural encounters. Instead of being a silent reader whose aim is to imitate NS proficiency, the

English language learner should consider himself/herself an IS, an ethnographer and/or moderator.

An ethnographer is one who would mediate between different cultures, dialoguing with the text, using foreign language competence in combination with knowledge about oneself, and understanding of the other person's cultural and social universe. I agree with Alvarez (2007), Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1993) that the IS who can mediate between cultures is the ideal that ELT should aim for. A US citizen may speak English perfectly but may not be well understood by an Australian. Put differently, grammatically correct English does not guarantee successful communication. On the other hand, a foreign accent may not hinder communication. A Lebanese teacher with an Arabic or French accent may communicate successfully with both native and non-native English speakers.

In the Lebanese context, ELT focuses on teaching the target culture. Most English language textbooks/materials used in Lebanese schools and universities are produced in the US and the UK (Bacha et al., 2008). They reflect the reality and views of their writers (Cunningworth, 1995; Holliday, 2006). The Lebanese learners in Lebanon are likely to need to interact not only with people from the target culture, the English speaking countries, but also with people from different cultures using English as a lingua franca. Teaching about the target culture may enhance the Lebanese learners' CC but may not help them to avoid miscommunication when they interact with native speakers and non-native English speakers.

The inclusion of both the target and local cultures seems to be necessary in teaching languages. In ELT, Gray (2002) indicates there is a need to connect the world of English with the world of the learner. Bennett (2005) points out that there should be inclusion of local materials in English language textbooks for the reasons noted below, but even that may not be enough.

## **2.7. Schema theory and third culture/global culture**

The inclusion of the local culture can activate learners' schemata. Cognitive schemata make up the stored background knowledge that the learner carries around with him/her and imposes on the world in an attempt to make sense of it (Holliday et al., 2004, p. 198). The following three types of schemata may have an impact on learning, specifically on reading comprehension:

1. Formal schemata indicate preceding knowledge of organizational forms and rhetorical structure of different texts.
2. Content schemata are background knowledge of the topic of the text, which is often culture-bound.
3. Linguistic schemata reflect prior linguistic knowledge of vocabulary and grammar rules (Carrell, 1987).

Drawing on schema theory, some believe that the cultural content of English textbooks should be modified to suit local norms. Carrell (1987) argues that the study carried out on two groups of ESL learners, studying the effect of formal and cultural schemata on their reading comprehension, showed that cultural schemata affected reading to a greater extent than formal schemata. The writer indicates that reading materials that build or activate content and formal schemata are recommended because of the positive

effect they may have on learners' comprehension. Nelson (1995) and Melendez, Robert and Pritchard (2009) stress the importance of recognizing and respecting the learners' own culture. However, as indicated below this could mean that a) local culture is essentialized (a unified construct); b) the target culture cannot be introduced through target culture -based reading texts.

Holliday et al. (2004) argue that such cognitive schemata are derived both from one's experiences and/or from mediated experiences. Schemata help to make predictions from incomplete information. For instance, when we do something frequently, such as going to the movies: we buy a ticket, popcorn and soft drink, look for the right seat and watch the movie, we do not need to be told about the details that accompany this activity because the schemata for this experience can help us to form the relevant mental representation and to anticipate what will happen. As for the mediated experiences, people derive their knowledge through what other people tell them, through TV, movies or the printed word.

In teaching the four skills attention to the relevant schemata may improve the learning process. According to schema theory, comprehension involves an interaction between the textual input and the learner's existing knowledge. Successful understanding depends on the availability and activation of the relevant schemata (Semino, 2000). For example, several classroom activities are presented and described by Carrell (1987) for use before, while, and after reading to activate the reader's schemata.

Although linguistically oriented reading activities are an important way of contributing to reading comprehension, cultural schemata play a more significant role than often

assumed. In a foreign language classroom, understanding of the language coupled with cultural schemata can enable students to approach reading topics from the appropriate cultural perspective. Semino (2000) argues that, “differences in available background knowledge can result in differences and /or failures in comprehension” (p. 525).

In line with schema theory, McKay (2003) points out the importance of including materials related to the students’ culture. He states that writers should go beyond the NS’s culture in language teaching and should not neglect the learner’s culture. Students have a wealth of background knowledge from their own culture. In ELT cultural schemata can be an important vehicle for better understanding and for developing ICC. Nelson (1995) and Cook (1997) also found that students recall more if the text is more related to their culture. This may also result in more engagement.

As indicated by constructivists (Hall, 2002; Lantolf et al., 2009), the construction of meaning can be a process where meaning is negotiated between textbooks, teachers and learners. My position is that English language should be sensitive to the local cultural context. As McKay (2003) states, “each country in which EIL is being taught must take ownership of the language, selecting teaching content and methods that are appropriate to the local context” (p. 145). Accordingly, the western cultural content and approaches to teaching ELT texts in Lebanon need to be re-examined to improve the process of learning, to avoid otherisation and misunderstanding and trigger more engagement.

Awareness of one’s own culture or cultural schemata is important to understand and interpret a text. In ELT it is important to engage the learner’s cultural and social experiences if we are to reach them (Lamb, 2009). The local culture helps them to

maintain a link with their own cultural roots and to understand their own culture (Bennett, 2005). This way they can share such understanding with people from different cultures. The research literature exemplifies the gain from the inclusion of the learners' culture in the English language textbooks of some countries, such as Kuwait, Morocco and Chile (Cortazzi and Gin, 1999). It shows that the use of authentic materials drawn from the local culture, for example, local newspapers, magazines, textbooks, photographs and artifacts, has many advantages in terms of language gains (Robinson, 1981).

Stelly (1991) compares traditional textbook-based classrooms with those using authentic materials. His study showed that in terms of gains in language comprehension and positive attitude towards the target culture there were statistical differences between experimental and control groups in favour of the latter. Jolly and Bolitho (1998) outline a framework for materials writing and point out that "the further away the author is from the learners the less effective the material is likely to be" (p. 111). They refer to the fact that after the initial welcome given to text books by Bolitho and Tomlinson (1995), Littlejohn and Hicks (1996) and Soars and Soars (1986) after the downfall of communism, many Eastern Europe countries started to produce their own to better reflect the learners' needs and culture.

Both English teachers and writers of English language textbooks who focus solely on the learners' culture are, however separating English from its NS culture and can fall into the trap of essentialism, thereby preventing learners from achieving ICC. The local culture becomes a barrier instead of a bridge (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998), which might be a step towards miscommunication.

As argued by Holliday et al. (2004), schemata stem not only from personal experience but also from our mediated experience of the world. We have fixed schemata for an event already established in our national, regional, or ethnic cultural milieu (Pellegrino, 2006). A person's mental frame of reference can become contaminated by the schemata he/she is supplied with, resulting in stereotyping. For instance, at the various encounters one has, meeting people from different cultures or people with different religious and political affiliations, one may bring in schemata (e.g. for a burial or wedding, or for giving or accepting gifts) from one cultural context into another. The mental schemata we form the first time we encounter an event may become fixed, and we do not take into consideration new data. Accordingly, the local culture can limit learners' potential to engage in the creation of meaning (Bennett, 2005). There is a need for flexibility to avoid misunderstanding. Schemata should not be fixed or difficult to change. On the contrary, they should be subject to updating or modification in order not to become stereotypes.

As discussed earlier, the culture introduced into the English classroom may be a source of concern. Focusing on either local culture or target culture that is the English speaking countries' culture in isolation has limitations. Both need to be included. But that may not be enough. There is a third option, a third culture (Kramsch, 1993) or a global culture (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006) that belongs to the world which is often ignored (Hyde, 1998; 2006; Sifakis, 2004). I use 'global culture' and 'third culture' interchangeably to counter the essentialist view of culture (Section 2.3.1.)

Global culture refers to an amalgamation of cultures, which might include elements of local, target and other cultures, and from which each individual constructs their own 'third place' and that is why I referred 'global culture' as 'third culture' or 'third place culture'. In line with Holliday et al. (2004), this third culture is 'fluid'. It is also diverse. It breaks out of the above dualities i.e. local culture /target culture, NS/NNS, self/other (Kramsch, 2009). For each learner, it is differently located and makes different sense at different times. When people from different cultures meet, interact and bond, a third culture emerges (Liddicoat et al., 2003; Kramsch, 1993; Kramsch, 2009).

English as a global or international language or lingua franca is used by people from different nations in different contexts (Crystal, 2003; McKay, 2002, 2003; Pavlenko and Norton, 2007; Pennycook, 1998; Pennycook, 2007; Prodromou, 1997). English is a language of wider communication that serves people's needs on the local and the global level (McKay, 2002). This language does not belong to any target culture; it belongs to its speaker i.e. the IS (McKay, 2002). The IS construct is compatible with Byram's (2008) 'intercultural citizen' or Risager's (2007) 'world citizen', within a transnational paradigm. Risager (2006) considers that the national paradigm- the association of English with one target language community, i.e. the US or UK, that has been prevalent in English language education should be problematized because it fails to acknowledge cultural diversity and individual identities within and across cultures. Accordingly, this global or international language necessitates the ability of IS to deal effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds on the local level and in the global world.



I advocate including a range of source languaculture and target languaculture to give each learner the opportunity to establish their own third culture and to develop flexible schemata. This process can help individuals gain insight into their own culture. These insights can then be shared by people in intercultural encounters to develop cross-cultural awareness and construct their own individual meanings (Mckay, 2002, pp, 95, 100). In my IEP English 003 reading class this meant introducing cultural topics from around the world i.e. terrorism and using a SCT approach.

As recommended by Bredella (2003), I believe that a flexible model for intercultural understanding in ELT is needed to help people (including Lebanese learners) to be aware of cultural differences and take appropriate decisions. I believed that Byram's (2006) competencies could help people adopt a non-essentialist view of culture, establish a global culture, develop flexible schemata and a third place identity that is the IS identity discussed below (Section 2.8.2).

## **2. 8. A Shift towards ICLT**

ICC is not a luxury but an essential foundation in contemporary ELT. Holliday et al. (2004) indicate that cultural differences are due to many factors other than national culture. They also stem from factors that relate to gender, age, social status, and so forth. Consequently, there should be a shift from Western and non-Western culturalism - essentialist attitudes that look at culture/language as a set of facts and divide the world into "them" and "us" - to a global stance, a third place where there will not be such dichotomies (Simpson, 2006). People have stereotypes of Westerners, or Arabs or Swedish women. Some people in the Arab world stereotype the Arab man, the Arab woman; it may be a positive stereotype, but a stereotype nonetheless. The issue is that

essentialism is very common in the world, but because of the dominant position of Western countries (and English speaking countries in particular) in ELT, Western essentialism is a particularly big problem. I would say that, for example, nationalists all over the world essentialise and otherise in ways which are very dangerous. Perhaps we all have a tendency to do it because it seems to simplify the world.

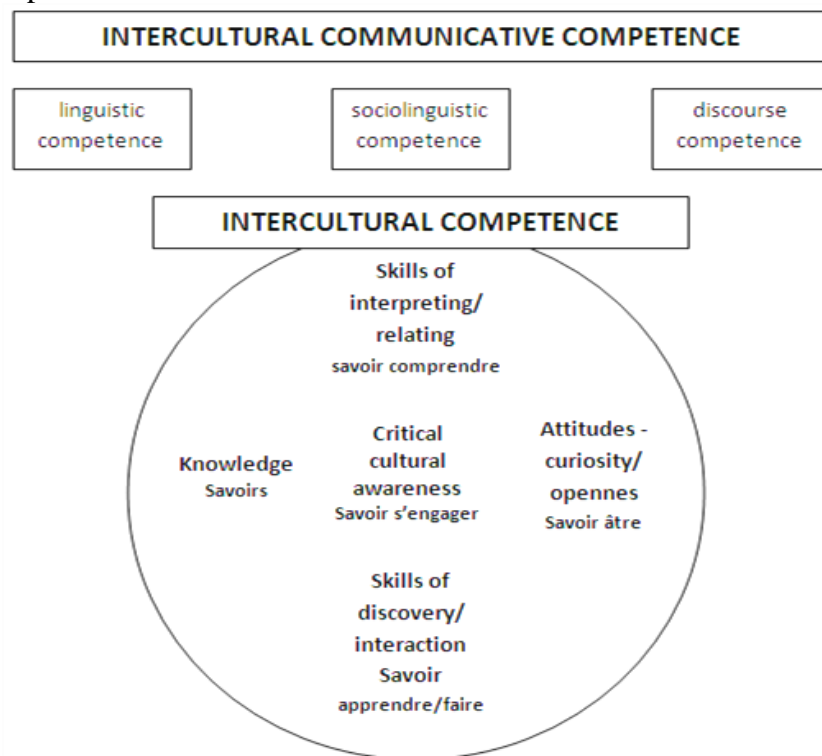
In the Lebanese context, essentialism and stereotypes became noticeable especially after the civil war. There are many examples of sectarian labeling, which is tightly linked with political affiliations and how students from different communities relate to each other. Labeling practices with students mentioning the sectarian/political affiliation of a person, such as “I like Raymond but he is Christian” and/or “he belongs to [this party]”, or “I like Omar but he is Muslim” and/or “belongs to [that party]” was one that I witnessed repeatedly. Besides, rival political leaders’ discussions about, for example Hezbollah’s weapons or affiliation with Syria and Iran and /or Western policy, in particular, the US in the Middle East, were sources of heated discussions and negative tensions in this study context. I witnessed many such instances in UOB corridors before entering the IEP 003 reading class and elsewhere on campus. Student council elections in my context (and in Lebanon generally) have long been tense, mirroring long unresolved tensions and grievance. The administrators (At UOB) have banned the student council elections and emphasize academic issues. The main reason is the lack of the intercultural skills discussed below.

In this situation, it is even more important that students are given the tools to reflect critically on their own perceptions. That is why ICLT is so important.

### 2.8.1. Byram's Model of ICC

To avoid otherizing, Deardorff (2006) argues that as people belong to different cultures they need complex intercultural competencies (Figure 1) to raise their intercultural awareness so that they can interact more competently, for example, with a document or in an event in a specific situation. ICC is a construct that can be taught (Byram, 2006). It includes both a state and a process where the cognitive, affective, social and behavioral overlap in the process of learning language as presented in the figure below. The outcome includes a higher order of learning and a higher order of cognitive processing such as in critical thinking, elaboration, argumentation and self-reflection (Byram, 2006).

Figure 1 Components of ICC



(Byram, 2006, p. 118)

The dimensions illustrated in Figure 1 represent different overlapping aspects of ICC that learners crucially need in this intercultural world. As noted earlier, learners need

linguistic competence for CC. In this study, my focus is not on CC, as this is the main or only objective of their regular English education. Following Byram's (2006) suggestions, our students' CC should be coupled with the following competencies:

- Attitude: curiosity, openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own (savoir etre)
- Knowledge: of social groups and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general process of societal and individual interaction
- Skills of interpreting and relating: the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own (savoir comprendre)
- Skills of discovery and interaction: the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction (savoir-apprendre/faire)
- Critical cultural awareness/political education: the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (savoir s'engager)

Knowledge of the world or culture does not only include the acquisition of culture with a big C or small c but also the general process of interaction, knowledge of the individual as well as how to behave in a specific context. When dealing with a document or an event, the IS who replaces the NS as a goal or ideal self in ELT needs the ability to know about and compare his/her culture and other cultures to enhance his/her cultural awareness and know how to relate with differences. This skill has the

potential to result in knowing how people relate to others and how they interact to work collaboratively, avoiding disagreement. The acquisition of such knowledge skills may raise his/her intercultural awareness, allowing him/her to act and behave appropriately in different contexts and situations.

To interpret, discover, interact, and explore meaning are essential components in Byram's (2006) model. As one cannot know everything about every culture one encounters, the intercultural mediator needs certain skills of interpretation and analysis. In the English language classroom, students interpret cultural symbols and language and relate his meaning to meaning in the materials (Byram et al., 2002). Comparing and contrasting cultures may raise learners' cultural awareness but may also lead to stereotyping. The learner needs to discover, learn new knowledge, reflect and integrate and operationalize the knowledge, attitudes and skills in interaction with a text or an event. For example, the learner can adopt an ethnographical stance to have a first-hand experience that may help him/her to raise awareness about cultural differences (Holliday et al., 2004; Byram, 2006).

Intercultural scholars agree that one component alone is not enough to ensure ICC (Deardorff, 2006, p. 248). *Savoir etre* is a necessary skill that an intercultural, competent person needs because it affects all other dimensions (Deardorff, 2006; Byram, 2006). People's attitudes can be impacted by their mediated schemata and experiences which may create stereotypes. An intercultural person can be aware of the complexity of culture by adopting an overarching attitude of respect, tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, and openness to other cultures.

These competencies may result in acquiring critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2006; Guilherme, 2002). Teaching culture through non-essentialist lenses implies that culture is dynamic. The acquisition of the aforementioned competencies (Figure 1) allows objective critical evaluation of a document or an event from the global culture in ELT (Byram, 2006; Tang 2006). The intercultural mediator may develop empathy, openness and tolerance. They may be able to withhold previous judgments or stereotypes, to decenter, to see other perspectives, thus challenging long held beliefs. They will realize that what they take as natural is indeed relative and culturally bound. For example, the idea of cohabitation and family relationship and values in the West are prejudged by many people in my context. Focusing on these skills, in different situations and settings might also make the content of English more relevant and transferable to other situations.

A number of empirical studies involving the implementation of intercultural communication have emerged in the last three decades (Byram et al., 2001; Glaser et al., 2007; Liddicoat, 2008; Lundegren, 2009; McConachy, 2008; O'Dowd, 2003; Secru et al. 2005; Stephens, 1997; Ware and Kramsch, 2005). These studies have examined the integration of language and culture and intercultural competence skills, using or not using Byram's (1997, 2006) model.

Brislin and Yoshida's model (1994), for example, which pre-dates Byram's model (1997), promotes the same main tenets i.e. awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills. Brislin and Yoshida's (1994) model, however, focuses more upon intercultural performance in professional settings. It pays little attention to educational contexts, as pointed out by Guilherem (2002). It also sees intercultural relations from a contrastive

perspective, which can be problematic, encouraging dichotomies such as "Us" versus "Them" or East and West and so forth. More specifically, this approach is prescriptive, goal-oriented, based on skill training and aimed at controlling behavior where recommendations for specific behaviors should be followed. As pointed out by Guilherem (2002), it stresses generalizations about the target culture focusing on the role of convention and the notion of cultural appropriateness i.e. appropriate table manners.

Scholars such as Guilherme (2002) and Lundgren (2005, p. 174) argue that Byram's model (1997) is the most developed and the most practice oriented as well as the best model for teachers and learners to develop. Critical cultural awareness and/or a critical attitudes towards stereotypes and prejudices within the same culture and/or against FL cultures, which are translated in works such Byram (1997; 2006), are lacking in the earlier writer's work. I agree with Guilherme (2002) that Byram's model (1997; 2006), compared to other models such as the one discussed above, is likely to be the most suitable for implementing ICC in the classroom.

Drawing on Byram's (1997) model, Secru et al. (2005) investigate teachers' beliefs and perceptions of their role as mediators of language and culture in foreign language education. The informants who took part in a comparative quantitative study by means of a questionnaire survey were 424 secondary school teachers from seven countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Mexico, Spain, and Sweden). This study explores how the foreign language teachers considered culture-and-language teaching, how they viewed their students' attitudes towards the foreign countries and cultures associated with the language they were learning, and how they thought about their teaching

practice related to intercultural competence and intercultural communication. The writers aimed to inform teachers' education in general, to meet the demands of multicultural society. The key finding was that although the teachers were willing to promote IC that was not reflected in their actual teaching practice. The writers discussed the implications for teacher education, arguing that the new objective of teacher foreign language education should be the acquisition of not only CC but also intercultural language teaching (ICLT) skills and intercultural competence (ICC).

Intercultural communication has also generated a lot of interest among other scholars. Stephens (1997), for example, studied the problem of cultural stereotyping in work on intercultural communication, drawing on Jin and Cortazzi's (1993) quantitative research study of 101 postgraduate Chinese students' cultural orientation. Stephens describes and presents the results of a small-scale attempt to test the generality of Jin and Cortazzi's study. The participants (12 Chinese visiting scholars following a course for English language teacher trainers at a British university) commented in writing on some comments from the earlier research study regarding their cultural orientation, their views about academic study, language attitudes and language competence. The findings support the view of culture as a contested area of discourse. The writer argues that communication problems may be more economically explained in terms of aspects of language proficiency rather than cultural differences. She suggests that ideas about Chinese culture should be set in a historical context. Generated by a small sample, however, the writer acknowledges that these findings cannot be generalized to other settings and populations.

ICC is a holistic capability (Byram, 1997, 2006; Secru, 2005; Secru et al., 2005). It is not a set of skills and knowledge one can acquire once and for all, but a continuing



process. For instance, my students cannot claim that they are interculturally competent because they attended the intercultural course I implemented through this AR research study. ICC is a never-ending process; it is a journey and a way of being. The diverse socio-cultural contexts of use that students experience as participants in communications across cultures cannot be reduced to an inventory of items to be mastered. On the contrary, it is the ability to negotiate meanings as participants within a socio-cultural context (Crichton, 2007). Otherwise, this may lead to conflicts or feelings of being otherized. That is why I consider ICC a necessary foundation in ELT to significantly reach out to people from different cultures in my context and in the world.

It has been argued that being interculturally competent means giving up moral principles or succumbing to cultural dualism (Bennett, 1998). Interculturalists, however, reject a dualistic view in favor of a third alternative where actions must be judged within context. Bennett (1998, p. 31) argues that absolutists might be judged as lacking in ICC because they reject seeing their own behavior in a cultural context. For instance, marriages are evaluated differently in different cultures. In Islam, polygamy means a system of marriage whereby a man is allowed to marry more than one wife, a practice not allowed in some cultures. Looking at these issues from an intercultural point of view, a Western intercultural mediator may understand his own culture and at the same time show openness and tolerance to Islamic culture. They may also notice that polygamy is not the rule but an exception in Islam and that view vary even among Muslims.

ICLT is a challenging task where virtual reality cannot replace face-to-face communication in the real world (Vogel, 2001). However, even within the constraints of

the classroom it may contribute to finding a solution to conflicts and misunderstandings that are embedded within and across cultures. ICLT may fulfill the curriculum goals, give the students the skills they need, and has the potential to engage them. In line with Byram (2006) and Gee (2000), Holliday et al. (2004) suggest that ICC may provide a way out of essentialism and culturalism by allowing learners to construct a third place identity in English language education.

### *2.8.2. A third place and identity*

The acquisition of ICC may meet a need to shift to a global stance or to “decenter”, creating a ‘third place’ (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). This third place is not a fusion of different cultures but a creation of a cultural identity that is unique to the individual (Feng et al., 2009; Kramsch, 1993). It is this ability to find/establish /adopt this third place identity that is at the very core of intercultural competence. This third place is a stance, a conceptual lens that supersedes dichotomies such as NS and NNS and ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ and stresses process, variation and style over product, place and stable community membership (Kramsch, 2009; Ware and Kramsch, 2005). It also helps create a sphere of interculturality that enables language students to take an insider’s as well as an outsider’s view on both their first and second cultures. In this study, ICC can pave the way for a third place identity, which can draw upon the learner’s own culture and global culture in expressing personal and unique meanings.

Identity describes the features that a person might take for granted but which distinguish one individual from another. Culture, which is inseparable from language, is at the core of one’s identity (Risager, 2006). Identity is not static though (Byram, 2006; Gee, 2000; Lamb, 2009). It is a complex construct, affected by factors such as nationality, region,

ethnicity, social class, gender, age, religion, politics, and roles. Gee (2000, p. 100)

indicates that from a static point of view, an individual is labeled to be “a certain kind of person”, that is, black, female, student, teacher, Arab, Lebanese. Gee (2000) develops a new understanding of identity arguing that identity is dynamic and thus constructed within four different overlapping frameworks:

1. Genetic identity (over which one does not have control)
2. Institutional identity
3. Dialogic identity
4. Affinity identity (based on shared interests or experiences)

Gee (2000) argues that these dimensions which contradict the static notion of identity, “may well all be present and woven together as a given person acts within a given context” (p. 101). Gee (2000) and Holliday et al. (2004) adhere to the dynamic view of identity, stating that identity is multiple, shifting, and produced.

A third place approach does not imply a loss of identity. It does not entail fusion of cultures or identities but understanding the other culture without losing one’s original cultural identity (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998, p. 117). Put differently, Bredella (2003) argues that “we do not lose our soul if we transcend our cultural and ethnic identity” (p. 46). Understanding other cultures may impact our cultural identity without weakening it. It is different from acculturation, which implies a culture change due to direct or indirect contact with other cultures and which results in change in identity, attitudes and beliefs (Alred, Byram and Fleming, 2003, p. 163). Kramsch (1993, cited in Risager, 2000) states that when developing ICC, one creates a special personal linguistic and cultural identity that is new and complements one’s own. My third place would be different from that of another person’s even if we were drawing on the same set of cultures.

In the English language reading class, literature, for example, can prepare the intercultural learner for the encounter with the cultural Other (Pulverness, 2000). The latter emphasizes the third place approach suggesting that the Chinese-American Gish Jen's *Typical American* (1991) can be read not simply as an account of culture clash but as a document of the pursuance of new kinds of cultural identity - neither typically American nor typically Korean or Chinese- but situated in what Kramsch (1993) called third places. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) confirm that such a model is likely to "stabilize the learners' self-identity" (p. 117).

Although recognizing cultural differences, Byram (1997) rejects the dichotomy between 'Self' and the cultural 'Other', between 'Us' and 'Them', helping learners to bridge the gaps and promote negotiation between and among cultures. This is achieved by rejecting otherization, allowing identity recognition, and continual readiness to examine and re-examine the entire claims. Jaeger (2001) believes

it involves being able to contribute to finding solutions to culturally conditioned conflicts and misunderstandings and helping to create and participate in multicultural cooperation fora, in such a way that cultural complexity becomes a source of creativity and productive innovation of current ways of doing things (p. 54).

ICC is not about studying cultural differences but about finding a new cultural position. To decenter is to keep the aptitude "to take up the other's perspective on their own culture" and try to find solutions to intercultural misunderstanding (Byram, 1997, p. 42). Thus, a third place approach in ELT does not mean adopting an essentialist view of

culture or the NS identity but the construction of an IS identity (Hyde, 2001). For the teacher it means the adoption of intercultural teaching approaches that are governed by the social constructivist theory of teaching/learning.

## **2.9. A social constructivist approach to teaching/learning culture**

English language education has been governed by three main theories of teaching/learning: behaviorism, cognitivism and social constructivism (Sawyer, 2006). Each of these theories has a bearing on different, competing perspectives of what knowledge is and has implications for ELT, more specifically in teaching culture as well as in carrying out research. To understand the process of teaching/learning culture, it is necessary to understand the main principles underlying these theories as they have a bearing on the classroom culture (Risager, 2000; Gieve and Miller, 2006).

In the early 20th century ELT was carried out from a traditional behaviorist perspective (Pavlov, 1927 and Skinner, 1954). Behaviorists see language learning as a stimulus – response process (Sawyer, 2006). They stress linguistic knowledge and a teacher-centered approach in ELT, focusing on audiolingual teaching/learning. They believe that learning language is not an active, mental process but an unconscious, automatic process where good habits can be formed by avoiding errors. This surface approach to learning involving mechanical repetition of information so that it is remembered often without real understanding of its meaning or significance may result in learners lacking intrinsic motivation (Brown, 2000; 1994).

Cognitive theory of learning emerged as a response to behaviorism in ELT in the 1960s (Piaget, 1950). Contrary to behaviorists, cognitivists argue that people are rational beings who require active participation in order to learn. However, to Piaget, culture

does not seem to have a crucial place in teaching language. He views culture/language as a set of facts to be memorized, adopting an essentialist and static view of culture, disregarding learners' attitudes, beliefs and experiences. Language is typically taught from this perspective for the sake of passing English courses rather than for interacting effectively in the global world. Accordingly, learners on such courses may show disengagement and disinterest in the English language classroom (Brown, 2000; 1994).

ELT approaches post Piaget follow a linear sequence: input, processing, storage and output (Derry, 1990; Sawyer, 2006). New information is transmitted to the mind where it is elaborated and becomes well connected with prior schemata. Once stored in the mind, the learner can produce new meanings. The teacher/facilitator plays a crucial role in the process of learning by designing activities that help students to build on what they know. However, learners may not internalize or use what they learn because this theory implies a surface learning approach; the acquired knowledge is not context-based but content-based and ignores the experience and interest of the learner, separating knowledge from the world, including culture. Cognitivism seems to be prevalent in my context, adhering more to the acquisition of CC and to testing what students have learned rather than teaching language and culture in an integrated way to develop ICC and avoid stereotyping and otherising.

### *2.9.1. Social constructivist theory*

In their summary of Vygotsky's social cultural theory, Negueruela (2003) and Lantolf et al. (2009) present the Social Cultural Theory of Learning (SCT) in a way that helped me to implement ICC in my teaching practice. The constructivist concepts discussed below

were required to meet the purpose of my AR study, fulfill the needs of my students and motivate them.

Adopting SCT in my context paved the way for the implementation of ICC in my IEP Reading Skills 003 course, and the creation of a particular culture of learning (Risager, 2000) different from the above-mentioned cultures of learning in the following main respects:

1. integration of language and culture
2. cultural and social context
3. role of language as a cultural tool in the cognitive process
4. scaffolding
5. zone of proximal development
6. commitment to praxis
7. circuitous process of learning

Unlike Piaget (1950), Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the integration of language and culture, the cultural and social context, and the role of language as a cultural tool in the intercultural cognitive process as discussed earlier ('commitment to praxis' will be discussed in Chapter Three because it has a bearing on the roles of teacher and student).

Vygotsky (1978) introduces the scaffolding concept to describe how learners are helped to develop their understanding of the world. Whether with a document or an event, social interaction takes place through dialogues. Scaffolding or dialogism is an instructional concept that involves providing the learner with support till they can achieve the task on their own (Yang and Wilson, 2006). Teachers, peers and/or materials may provide scaffolding. Teachers may use two types of scaffolding:

1. Supportive scaffolding: conversational instruction to encourage learners to express themselves freely
2. Directive scaffolding: instruction to assess students' knowledge in their natural setting

Supportive scaffolding is preferable to directive scaffolding. The advantage of supportive scaffolding is that it involves the student in thinking and acting much more than a directive approach (Reinfried, 2000). Dialogism also takes place among students when working in groups using dialogue about the studied phenomena (Lundegren, 2009, p. 137).

The use of scaffolding, which can take place in a collaborative atmosphere between teachers and students or between peers, creates “communities of inquiry learners” (Hall, 2002, p. 97). When the teacher uses scaffolding, students whether individually or collaboratively will be given a space for reflection, internalizing the knowledge resulting from dialogism. It encourages learners to become autonomous learners who act on the information, creating new ideas instead of simply assimilating the knowledge given by their teacher. In Miller's (n.d.) view, using Vygotsky's SCT may foster students' ability to consciously reflect and make meaning not only in a classroom context but also to think about the world. This may well be a more effective and motivating process of learning.

Cognitive development takes place within the student's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is achieved not only at the social level but also at the individual level. Scaffolding is a mediational cultural tool which facilitates the development that takes place within students' ZPD, as mental activities in the individual



(Johnson, 2006). To Vygotsky, learners are not passive learners and assimilators of knowledge. Learners internalize what they learn to produce new meanings and concepts that results in change in both the self and the activity.

Activity theory is another important sub-aspect in Vygotsky SCT. Lantolft et al. (2009) explain that it is related to student motivation. They state that meeting the learners' needs and purposes may be motivating. In particular, the social purpose behind the implementation of tasks and activities may help the learner to be more engaged. For example, acquiring IS proficiency in order to communicate and deal with differences so as to succeed in life, may be seen by many students as more important than, and perhaps preferable to, learning for the sake of passing tests of transmitted knowledge.

Social constructivism emphasizes what Vygotsky (1978) calls commitment to praxis (Johnson, 2006; Sternberg, 2008; Gutierrez and Vossoughi, 2010). Praxis entails:

- Theory and practices are intertwined e.g. theory and practical activity are to be incorporated to promote development and change through scaffolding.
- The teacher/researcher reflects on action and in action e.g. the teachers are transformative intellectuals in their natural setting i.e. the classroom.
- The learners are autonomous e.g. the students reflect , interpret and construct their own meanings

Most importantly, the SCT do not see the process of learning as linear as suggested earlier by cognitivist and behaviorist theorists. The pattern of learning, as illustrated below, entails circuitous moving from experience to reflection to conceptualization to action. Kolb (1984) indicates that “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38).

Liddicoat (2008), for example, explores the idea of intercultural pedagogy in language education in Japanese language teaching, exemplified by a case study drawn from Japanese language teaching and learning. He incorporated the intercultural approach to language curriculum and practice through authentic reading activities to improve understanding and provide deep cultural learning. He argues that a focus on the intercultural through noticing, comparing and reflecting on one's own culture as well as the culture of others does not represent a movement away from language focus but instead maintaining it at the core of the language curriculum.

Liddicoat (2008) proposes a set of principles that are similar to Kolb's learning model. He provides a starting point for developing intercultural language learning which includes noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting. In practice, the activity of noticing, which can "regulate what can and should be noticed", can be attained when students compare and/or contrast the local culture and the target culture (Liddicoat, 2008, p. 282). With the help of teachers who should promote autonomous learning, the learner or "noticer", drawing on his own or mediated experience, reflects and interprets the material, then draws their own conclusions, potentially arriving at a third place, or decentering. When the learner encounters a reading text or an event, he/she will create an individual meaning about the experience.

Examples from native and non-native users of English regarding the usefulness of SCT to promote reading comprehension are equally important. There are a number of research studies that describe the benefits of using a constructivist approach in teaching reading comprehension in different contexts. The result of Gladwin and Stepp-Greany's (2009) study about the effect of a student-centered approach where the teacher used scaffolding, through collaborative learning approach and dialogic interaction versus

traditional reading instruction on reading comprehension in Spanish, showed no disadvantages of the former on reading. Students who participated in the experimental group, with a student-centered approach and with a teacher as facilitator, recalled more than students who took part in the control group, with the traditional method or teacher-centered approach. The comments made by the teachers and the students revealed as good if not better understanding of the task, pleasure, interest and engagement with the activities in the experimental group.

Kramsch and Thorne (2002) and Ware and Kramsch (2005) argue that a traditional approach may dampen enthusiasm while Brown (2000) suggests that constructivist teaching can foster critical thinking and create motivated and independent learners. As illustrated in Chapter 5 and in line with the writers above, SCT principles were implemented in the present study as I felt they may meet the needs of the Lebanese learners and help develop their ICC. I used reading texts (e.g. Appendix 8) with my students. Working together, they might have scaffolded each other's reflections on and understanding of the readings from an intercultural perspective.

If a third place is uniquely constructed by each individual, it will be inherently constructivist. It would follow that the implementation of ICLT in the English classroom can preferably be achieved through a SCT approach. However, I had to work within the constraints of the IEP Reading Skills 003 course curriculum and syllabus and cover the reading textbook. In addition, using only ICLT along with a SCT approach might be resisted by stakeholders in my context (Johnson, 2006). As Ahmed (2004) suggests, I utilized the traditional, formal structure to support the implementation and

application of constructivist teaching and learning styles along with the teaching material in use in my context.

## **2.10. Critical review of the English language textbook *Mosaic 2: Reading***

The potential of foreign language textbooks in promoting Byram's (1997; 2006) skills can be said to depend on the extent to which they promote the appropriate approach to teaching/learning, that is, one grounded in SCT, as well as non-essentialist views of culture (Holliday et al., 2004).

In the IEP Reading Skills 003 course at UOB where this study took place, *Mosaic 2: Reading* (Wegmann and Knezevic, 2007) is used. Written for a global market by a group of American professors, the textbook is designed for junior, first-year university students. The Language Department chose this book because its overarching goals are appropriate to teaching English for academic purposes (Bacha et al., 2008). It devotes the major portion of instructional time to the reading skill plus culture but does not give ICC much importance. To provide a review of the textbook, the following questions were addressed: What is the underlying theory of learning in *Mosaic 2: Reading*? What potential does *Mosaic 2: Reading* have for promoting the acquisition of ICC or for contributing to otherizing or stereotyping?

Adopting an appropriate learning theory might have helped to promote ICC and thus avoid stereotyping and otherizing (Byram 2006; Liddicoat et al., 2003). I was not sure that the content of the textbook was sufficient to achieve the above aims. The structure of each chapter is the same but the topics are different. To answer these questions I made a random choice of chapters from the textbook for a critical review.

### *2.10.1. Learning theory in Mosaic 2: Reading*

When EAP textbooks were first published, there was a break with behaviorism (Bacha et al., 2008). *Mosaic 2: Reading* adopts a mix of cognitive and socio-cultural approach but it also teaches culture as a fifth skill that includes the ability to recognize cultural differences (Damen, 1987). The textbook contains meaningful, achievable tasks that may engage learners cognitively and affectively (Tomlinson and Mashuhara 2000; Saluveer 2004; Wegmann and Knezevic, 2007). Taking small linear steps makes reading achievable. The textbook starts with basic reading strategies such as ‘before you read’, ‘top down or skimming’, ‘bottom up or scanning’, ‘predicting and reading with a purpose and goes on to more advanced strategies such as ‘making inferences’, ‘note-taking’, and ‘reading graphics’. Each reading passage is followed by comprehension questions, such as true or false questions and fill in the blanks questions to mainly focus on language in context and to ensure the use of new vocabulary (Figure 2). Students are also asked to discover things for themselves to recognize and analyze both lexical and functional chunks of language.

The primary aim here is to teach English language; consequently, the reading passage is considered a language text (Saluveer, 2004). The textbook largely promotes a cognitive approach to learning. There is a constant discussion of learning results with continuous feedback from the lecturer after testing the students’ reading skills. At the end of each chapter there is a self-assessment log that asks students to tick their reading and vocabulary-building strategies and a list of the target vocabulary (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Self-assessment log

**Self-Assessment Log**

Read the lists below. Check (✓) the strategies and vocabulary that you learned in this chapter. Look through the chapter or ask your instructor about the strategies and words that you do not understand.

**Reading and Vocabulary-Building Strategies**

- ☐ Previewing a reading for its organization
- ☐ Getting meaning from word structure and context
- ☐ Analyzing cause and effect
- ☐ Inferring the meaning of idioms and expressions
- ☐ Reading a poem
- ☐ Identifying synonyms
- ☐ Using a chart for comparison
- ☐ Reading for speed and fluency: not vocalizing words as you read

**Target Vocabulary**

**Nouns**

<input type="checkbox"/> bevy	<input type="checkbox"/> clenching	<input type="checkbox"/> massive	<input type="checkbox"/> join their ranks
<input type="checkbox"/> conflicts*	<input type="checkbox"/> empathize	<input type="checkbox"/> philanthropic	<input type="checkbox"/> lay the groundwork
<input type="checkbox"/> context*	<input type="checkbox"/> hobbling	<input type="checkbox"/> plebeian	<input type="checkbox"/> let bygones be bygones
<input type="checkbox"/> contrition	<input type="checkbox"/> resolve*	<input type="checkbox"/> roughened	<input type="checkbox"/> letting her down
<input type="checkbox"/> demeanor	<input type="checkbox"/> restore*	<input type="checkbox"/> swarmed	<input type="checkbox"/> lies at the heart
<input type="checkbox"/> equilibrium	<input type="checkbox"/> shuffling		<input type="checkbox"/> magic bullets
<input type="checkbox"/> evidence*	<input type="checkbox"/> tottering		<input type="checkbox"/> make amends
<input type="checkbox"/> remorse		<b>Adverbs</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> takes a toll
<input type="checkbox"/> schisms	<b>Adjectives</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> dead (as in dead silent)	<input type="checkbox"/> would have fallen all over herself
<input type="checkbox"/> slaughter	<input type="checkbox"/> cultural*	<input type="checkbox"/> disdainfully	
<input type="checkbox"/> strategies*	<input type="checkbox"/> grotesque	<b>Idioms and Expressions</b>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> hunched	<input type="checkbox"/> cement the relationship	
<b>Verbs</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> inclined*	<input type="checkbox"/> day-to-day situations	
<input type="checkbox"/> acknowledge*	<input type="checkbox"/> litigious	<input type="checkbox"/> his/her side of the story	

\* These words are from the Academic Word List. For more information on this list, see [www.yuw.ac.nz/lals/research/awl](http://www.yuw.ac.nz/lals/research/awl).

Affective engagement is a cornerstone in *Mosaic 2: Reading* (Bacha et al., 2008; Lantolf et al., 2009). The textbook adheres to some of the socio-cultural principles discussed above (Lantolf, 2009). The textbook personalizes learning and makes it more relevant to learners' lives. Many opportunities are given to students to share and express their opinions. Students are asked at the beginning of each chapter to look at photos, discuss a quote, talk about their meanings but to relate them to the text. They are also

asked to discuss, in small groups in a guided academic conversation, topics related to the reading themes.

Each chapter has a similar set of questions and activities that targets comparing and contrasting the cultural concepts in the textbook with those of the learners'. The textbook promotes the comparison method in most of the chapters. For example, in Chapter 10, "Contrite Makes Right", students are asked to report on the cultural dimensions in the article to see whether apologizing can be applied to their society or societies other than the US (*Mosaic 2: Reading*, p. 264). Such exercises encourage students to do research on the Internet, take notes and share similarities or differences with their classmates. It also includes 'problem' solving tasks. However, these communicative tasks adhere to the cognitive theory of learning where the focus is on learning the language rather than learning about the language. It was anticipated by the authors that the use of the above criteria and tasks would enhance reading proficiency (Wegmann and Knezevic, 2007).

Such tasks may raise learners' cultural awareness and improve language proficiency but may not help to develop IC, avoid stereotyping, and promote student engagement. They may, in fact, convey cultural biases instead of promoting an intercultural point of view (Holliday et al., 2004). People within a culture have different attitudes, beliefs and values. In line with Holliday et al. (2004, p. 188), it is necessary to facilitate "active engagement with diversity" (Liddicoat, 2008, p. 284) and with conflicting situations. There is a need to focus on the multi-facetedness of other people and societies. For the self to be defined, use is made of contrastive others. Things are what they are in terms of what they are not (Holliday et al., 2004, 156). Cultural differences should not be

emphasized because they are not absolute. ‘Self’, ‘Other’, ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ differences may lead to cultural clashes (Holliday et al., 2004).

What was needed then to meet the needs of students was more than comparing and acquiring factual knowledge about differences. There must be a need for interpretation as opposed to immediate understanding of differences. For these reasons, I believed that a SCT approach was needed to develop IC.

Adopting a SCT approach may help to develop *savoir s’engager* and to avoid biases (Byram, 2006; Lantolf et al., 2009). Learners can use their background knowledge or schemata and the new input to construct new meanings. Interaction through scaffolding takes place when students discuss the topic in pairs or groups in relation to their own countries or cultures. Peer interaction exposes students not to simple factual knowledge but to different points of view and leads them to reflect on them. The teacher as facilitator uses scaffolding to encourage “the independent noticer of [lived] experiences, language and culture” to draw on their own or mediated experiences, interpret the culture in the materials, compare it, relate it to their own culture, and reflect on it (Liddicoat, 2008, p. 282). Discussions and reflections bring out different points of view which may also be found within the students' culture.

Teaching culture from an intercultural perspective is not a linear but a developmental process that requires a set of suggested socio-cultural principles (Lantolf, et al, 2009). These principles help students to construct meaning instead of only memorizing factual information. Meaning is also created by learners, not imposed on them through direct, linear instructions as proposed in the textbook. As Byram (1997), Deardorff (2006) and



Secru et al. (2005) suggest, an approach based on SCT may better help develop higher and more complex skills, meeting the needs of our students. It may help learners to be open to diverse constructions of meanings and different understandings of the world, use their knowledge, skills and attitudes and critical culture awareness to avoid stereotyping and essentialist views of culture, and create personal meanings that are theirs or make meaning that will not be forgotten but transferred to different situations (Holliday et al., 2004). Put differently, a socio-cultural approach may help learners develop the IS identity discussed above, enabling them to mediate between cultures.

#### *2.10.2. Culture in Mosaic 2: Reading*

With respect to question two, many checklists have been designed for teachers to evaluate the potential of textbooks to promote IC and understanding (Guest 2002; Kilackaya 2004; Tomlinson, 1998). Most of the checklist items overlap or have a lot in common. To evaluate the cultural dimension in a textbook, Saluveer (2004) drew on Huhn's (1978) checklist and formed a list that was later revised by Byram (1997) and Cortazzi and Jin (1999). To review *Mosaic 2: Reading*, I drew on Saluveer's (2004) list:

1. factual accuracy and up-to-date information
2. presentation of a realistic picture
3. freedom from ideological tendencies
4. presentation of phenomena in context rather than isolated facts
5. relevance of historical material to contemporary society
6. presentation of personalities as products of their age
7. avoidance of stereotypes

What makes *Mosaic 2: Reading* different from traditional textbooks is that it focuses on the multicultural aspect of today's society. Traditionally, British and American cultures have been predominant in English language textbooks (Aguilar, 2002). Different cultures, however, have been introduced more recently acknowledging that there are other English-speaking countries such as Australia and Canada, and that English has become an international language. Including different cultures reflects the multicultural character of the world (Kilackaya, 2004). The course textbook presents, for example, cultures from Mongolia (Chapter 1), China (Chapters 2 and 3), India (Chapters 4 and 10), Korea (Chapter 4), Malaysia (Chapter 5), Spain and the US (Chapter 7), Africa (Chapter 8), and Mexico and Spain (Chapter 9). It is worth noting that Arab cultures are absent from the textbook.

The authors present cultural facts and up-to-date information and put phenomena in context rather than presenting them as isolated facts, both of which are important in teaching culture (Saluveer, 2004). *Mosaic 2: Reading* includes reading passages drawn from a range of sources, such as newspapers, magazines, the web, and research reports and seems to focus on the factual aspect of cultures (Bacha et al., 2008). For example, from an e-newspaper, the article “Bare Branches Might Snap in Asia” discusses a real contemporary issue: the dangers of Asia's, mainly China's and India's, preference for sons and the problems arising from this practice.

The choice of topics has implications for presenting a realistic picture. Teaching culture entails choosing topics that are of interest to students in the global world (Saluveer, 2004). As suggested by their publisher and writers, the textbook series (*Mosaic* 2007) is dedicated to improving the lives, careers, and interests of readers worldwide. The

following topics may be stimulating and may interest today's students: "Language and Learning", "Danger and Daring", "Gender and Relationships", "Beauty and Aesthetics", "Transition", "The Mind", "Working", "Breakthrough", "Art and Entertainment", and "Conflict and Resolution" (*Mosaic 2: Reading*, p. v). As noted later, they could have been dealt with from an intercultural perspective by teachers, but they were not. Instead, they were mere vehicles to teaching vocabulary and other linguistic facts as indicated above and in a box at the end of each chapter (Figure 2).

The textbook is not totally free of ideological orientation. It was authored by American writers and implicitly includes and promotes American cultural values. Chapter 10, for instance, "Conflict and Resolution" highlights the value system in the US. Students are asked to comment on the title "Contrite Makes Right", the surprising power of apology and its impact on reconciliation. Learners are also asked to comment on the universality of admitting fault or saying sorry in societies other than the US. From an intercultural point of view, the text is inappropriate because it is concerned with cultural attitudes in the US. Cultural values, habits and customs in the target culture are not universal (Byram, 2006; Holliday et al. 2004; Dunnet et al., 1986; Sifakis, 2004). In other words, even within the US, some might not find forgiveness reasonable or attractive in all situations. It might also be controversial in some cultures, where the creed of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' is culturally upheld, at least by official authorities. Whatever the materials writers have done, teachers are responsible for promoting critical reflection, but this is lacking among teachers when dealing with such issues.

Regarding the 5<sup>th</sup> criterion in the above list, the authors present historical material that can be relevant to contemporary society (Saluveer, 2004). For example, Chicano poetry

is presented as the voice of Mexican-American culture (Chapter 9). Native Americans are also included. Although many ethnic groups live in North America, the authors indicate that Native Americans were chosen for historical reasons that make them different from others. Learners should have been asked by teachers to demonstrate critical reflection on some aspects of that history, which is taken for granted as truth, by adopting a critical culture awareness stance (Byram, 1997). This is lacking in the textbook too.

As a product of its time, the textbook presents personalities from different cultural background such as Nelson Mandela (Chapter 10, p. 265) (Figure 3). However, although the personalities are close to the students' time they are not close to their age group. This also disengages them.

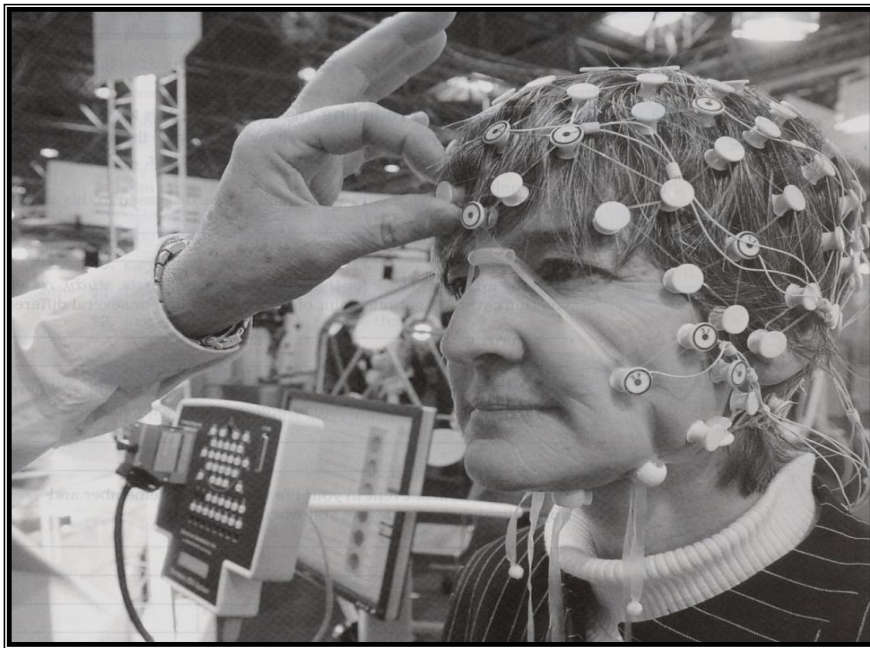
Figure 3 Nelson Mandela with an official of the former regime



The textbook undeniably teaches culture. However, it does not promote IC in a way which helps to avoid otherisation and stereotypes (Byram, 2006; Humphrey, 2007). I will expand on this below.

Regrettably, examples of stereotyping in the textbook are many. Because of space constraints this review will focus only on gender stereotyping found in Chapter 6, because it is a cultural issue in my students' context, which is a patriarchal society where women are still struggling to be acknowledged and treated on an equal basis with men, and because it might be interesting and relevant for students. Gender stereotyping and/or otherising in the photo and reading passage in Chapter 6 reinforce such attitudes. Visual modes hold meaning and are central to making meaning of modern texts (Kress et al., 1998; Schmitz, 1984); however, they also generate or reinforce stereotyping (Harper, 2002; Gudykunst and Kim, 2003). As noted above, every chapter in *Mosaic 2: Reading* opens with a photograph. The investigation revealed stereotypes associated with negative messages about women. To learn about the human mind, for example, an adult woman in the role of 'patient' is depicted to illustrate 'the mind' (Figure 4), while women are excluded from the results of the studies in the reading text. This may create or reinforce stereotypes of women or invisibility (Holliday, et al., 2004).

Figure 4 The mind



One can infer from the photo and the reading passage that women's mental abilities are less well developed than men's. Even though Chapter 6, "The Mind", deals with some research results by psychologists who have studied people with an extraordinary ability to remember and memorize, women are found to be absent in the first main reading (Holliday et al., 2004). The text "A Memory of All Seasons" represents a famous psychologist, Peter Polson, who cites a waiter, John Conrad, and a conductor, Arturo Toscanini, who have the extraordinary ability to remember and memorize. The first main reading in this Chapter depicts the life map of Fernandez, a male executive who starts a pizza business that has an impact on many other countries. The same Chapter presents Edgar Allan Poe, Sigmund Freud, Lesle Lemke, Leopoldo Fernandez and William Somerset Maugham. Women seem to be made invisible or excluded from the category of geniuses (Holliday et al., 2004).

Byram (1997; 2006) suggests that the aim of ELT should not be to rule out stereotypes and prejudices but to recognize, confront, and address them, thus turning thinking

around to altering negative experiences into positive ones. Hence, although textbooks may unintentionally encourage stereotyping, it is sometimes good to include such texts (Feng and Byram, 2002) so students can critique them from an intercultural perspective. In *Mosaic 2: Reading*, students were not asked to analyze critically neither the photos nor the texts. The authors did not suggest stereotype avoidance whether in the visual mode or reading passage.

To sum up, *Mosaic 2: Reading* is a convenient textbook for teaching EAP and for teachers in the English 003 reading class. It teaches culture but mostly from a cognitive perspective using the contrastive approach which may raise learners' awareness about cultural differences but may not help to develop IC which is the driving force behind stereotype and otherization avoidance (Humphrey, 2007). Accordingly, both the literature review and the findings of the critical review discussed above provided valuable insights and established a context for the rest of my AR and clarified what needs to change in ELT in my context.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This chapter presents the rationale for using an interpretivist AR methodology. The purpose of this AR study was to implement the intercultural approach using a socio- cultural approach and to derive understanding from evidence and bring about change in the curriculum and help students develop the ICC skills, enabling them to acquire tolerance, respect, openness and skills to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty. The ultimate aim was to address a problematic situation to fill a gap in the curriculum, to engage our students and meet their needs to interact efficiently and appropriately in the Lebanese context and in the global context. The choice of a qualitative AR is due to the nature and purpose of the study. The tools of data gathering and analysis modes to study the result of teaching ICC along with the traditional material will be presented and described in this chapter. This part also includes a description and discussion of the selection of the participants in the research, the methodology used, including the AR method, data gathering tools, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical issues and the intervention.

#### **3.1. A shift in cultural research**

My belief in the need for an ICC, my reaction to the de-motivating assimilative approach to teaching/learning, and my wish to improve, and make changes in my context were the driving force behind the choice of an AR methodology. Humphrey (2007) in “Intercultural Communication Competence: The State of Knowledge” reported a shift in the last 30 years, from the positivist paradigm to the interpretivist paradigm or socio-cultural perspective in the study of culture. This involves the use of qualitative interpretivist research. Investigations of IC have been made from the



positivist perspective by several researchers (Hall, 1966-1976; Hofstede, 1983-1994). This approach was influenced by the essentialist view of culture where culture was looked at as a static product that can be measured, implying one-dimensional classification. It attempts to explain cultural variations in communication and aims to predict linguistic behavior (Humphrey, 2007). The contribution of the interpretivist approach may challenge positivist assumptions as it is based on the belief that culture is dynamic and subject to change depending on the nature of the people involved and their understanding of intercultural communication.

### **3.2. Research paradigm: Rationale for using AR methodology**

I chose to use ‘the critical paradigm’ and ‘the interpretivist paradigm’ interchangeably due to the fact that they have a common goal: exploring, understanding and improving the objectives under study (Burns, 2010; Creswell, 2003; Denscombe, 2007; Gay and Airasian, 2003). The critical paradigm has an additional goal which is to study a social situation with a view to improving the practices conducted within the educational experiences (Schwalbach, 2003; Wallace, 2006; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). Conventional research methodology would have been useful if it fit the situation of this study; however, the discussion below reveals that AR was more appropriate (Dick, 2000). In the discussion below I will make a sharp distinction between two opposing paradigms. In actual fact, many researchers combine elements from both depending on their research questions.

What makes an interpretivist AR strategy appropriate and preferable to traditional research in my context is that qualitative AR methodology met my educational research assumptions at the following levels: ontology, epistemology, methodology and social

intent and was intertwined with my values, logic and practice (Humphrey; 2007; Dick, 2000; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009; Burns, 2010). McNiff and Whitehead (2009, p. 9) presents different kinds of logic:

- Propositional logic that sees propositions as one-dimensional linear tracks and assumes one correct way of thinking
- Dialectical logic that focuses on the idea of contradiction
- Inclusional logic that sees different ways of being and doing

These researchers claim that values (what one values and believes in), and logic (how one thinks), which have implications on practice (what one does), are not abstract, fixed categories as proposed by the positivists. Values and logic are lived and flexible. For example, my value of openness and tolerance are not abstractions. In the study context, they should achieve a way of living that is being open and tolerant. In practice, researchers try to realize these notions through using AR methodology. This may be the reason for criticizing AR as problematic in that findings cannot be generalized to other settings.

With respect to this study, interpretive and positivist paradigms have different stances at the ontological level. McNiff and Whitehead (2009) state that positivists study reality as fixed objectives “out there” (p. 17). What is studied or is external to the researcher and the researched is waiting to be discovered or observed by an inquirer who has little if any impact on the object being observed (Roberts et al., 2001). In contrast, as an interpretivist, I view my values of tolerance and stereotype avoidance as “in-here”, lived in the practice (Lantolf, 2008, p. 37).

At the epistemological level, positivists believe that knowledge is objective and thus separated from the knower excluding his/her values (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009; Hall, 2002; Byram et al., 2001). In this study, however, I did not separate myself and my values from the studied phenomena. I acquired knowledge from interaction with the world and from collaboration with the participants. Knowledge is constructed through daily interaction between the researcher and the participants making dialectical links between knowledge and practical activity (Hall, 2002; Lantolf, 2008). The created knowledge is contextually bound and subjective. It is shaped by my past and present experiences. Accordingly, past and present experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values of the individuals ('I' and my students) were also taken into consideration.

The two paradigms have different stances towards the methodology used to obtain the desired knowledge (Byram, 1997; Hall, 2002). Positivists and interpretivists adopt different scientific approaches to study the same phenomenon (Burns, 2010).

Positivists' concern is to generate knowledge drawing on existing theory, a conceptual framework, and "a theory of practice" (Burns, 2010, p. 14). They follow a neat linear path; they start with general research questions, collect, analyze, interpret data, record findings and draw up a conclusion. For example, the purpose of quasi-experimental research within the positivist paradigm can be explanatory. It may "test a particular intervention based on a pre-specified theoretical framework" (Berg, 2001, p. 186). For example, the implementation of the ICC approach may cause higher scores in students' reading comprehension skills. The findings may confirm or disconfirm such assumptions; however, the subsequent findings are not likely to be applied in the immediate study context (Burns, 2010).

I preferred to use an exploratory stance, looking for “a theory for practice” (Burns, 2010, p. 14). I developed my own theory through AR. In this case, I tried to “realize [my] values” and live my theory through practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009, p. 9). Burns (2010) does not exclude the use of theory in the literature on AR. Therefore, I identified assumptions before reaching a position that led to suitable methodological choices. I followed a cyclical approach to research: plan, act, observe, reflect and generate hypotheses for future research (Denscombe, 2007; Newton and Burgess, 2010). Most importantly, I developed knowledge and tried to produce immediate change in my context (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009).

Both paradigms are concerned with the selection of suitable research methods (Creswell, 2003; Denscombe, 2007; Gay and Airasian, 2003). Positivist researchers believe that knowledge is best explored using quantitative methods or evidence-based methods of natural science. Since people are detached and respond to external stimuli, their behavior can be predicted and explained rationally. Language is understood from behaviorist and cognitive perspectives and studied as such. Positivists prefer quantitative data and often use experiments, surveys and statistics, believing that what cannot be verified numerically is not useful. Accordingly, positivist researchers count, for example, the frequency with which a phenomenon occurs and correlate the occurrences of this phenomenon. The quality of the research is tested against the rigor of its method and the validity of its findings to justify its replicability.

I employed qualitative AR research method with data gathering tools such as focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. I did not try to predict and explain causal relationships between variables in a situation, that is “if I do x, then y will

happen” (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009, p. 19). I sought to understand actions and meanings, putting emphasis on the perspectives of the participants in this AR and on understanding how they arrive at different interpretations. I conducted most analyses with words and by means of less formal language or concepts to describe phenomena and relationships. I extracted themes from evidence and organized data to present a coherent, consistent picture (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, in doing so I necessarily traded off replicability for responsiveness (Dick, 2000).

### **3.3. Research design**

This qualitative AR study helped address my initial overarching concerns and research questions, and met my purpose, that is, develop ICC and use SCT to cause immediate change in my context. The overarching concerns underpinning this study were: How to realize my values i.e. openness towards differences in practice? How to help learners avoid stereotyping and otherization? How to engage students? How to bring about change in the curriculum? Thus the point of departure regarding the second and third research questions were students’ perspectives, and regarding the fourth research question administrators’, lecturers’ and students’ perspectives.

The research questions used in the study were revised from the pilot AR study, Cycle 1, and used in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3. The reason for using the same questions was that I taught the same class, IEP Reading Skills 003 course but with different students.

Focusing more on the process, the implementation and development of the intercultural approach, the research questions dealt with the conceptions of the participants about the intercultural approach, and its potential to contribute to learners developing ICC.

### 3.3.1. *The immediate context*

This AR study was a longitudinal intervention in the real world (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Van Lier, 2007). The AR cycles were conducted in the IEP Reading Skills 003 classroom over 3 Cycles through 3 semesters. The fall semester 2010 phase was fundamental to the research because I had the occasion to pilot the intervention, data gathering and interpretation. The piloted study informed the spring and summer semester cycles in 2011. Working within the constraints of the current curriculum required adhering to the syllabus of the IEP, leading to common texts and final exams. Therefore, the intercultural materials (Appendix 1, Column 3, Table 1) were introduced alongside teaching the traditional course materials (Appendix 1, Column 2, Table 1).

The book I was using, *Mosaic 2: Reading*, consisted of 10 chapters that had to be covered over one semester at a given pace (Appendix 1, Column 2, Table 1). Lecturers in all Reading Skills 003 sections had to supplement the textbook with materials that would reinforce students' learning skills. The supplementary materials, related activities, and quizzes were graded. These materials carried 10% of the students' total semester grades in the IEP courses.

Maintaining a flexible schedule, I replaced the normal supplementary materials with intercultural materials, devoting three hours to the textbook and two hours to the intercultural materials (Appendix 1, Table 1, Column 5), except when there were tests or quizzes and unexpected closures due to political unrest. The IEP is an integrated skills, theme-based program which has a set pace. However, each skill has its own textbook while the themes are maintained. As I had to combine the IEP curriculum materials with my own teaching materials and approach (Section 3.8), I needed extra teaching hours.

Each skill is taught by a different lecturer in close cooperation. Sometimes I had to add extra reading teaching hours, taking them from a colleague who was teaching writing skills to the same class. The reading skills were given in classrooms that lacked technological facilities. Hence, I had to swap my classroom with other classrooms when I wanted to show movie clips.

### *3.3.2. Participants*

The participants were the Reading Skills 003 students, the lecturer/researcher (myself), the management and two teachers (Appendix 1, Column 4, Table 1). I thus had an intact group in a natural setting from the outset. The same class was used in three research phases: the pilot study and Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 but with different cohorts of students each time. In my Reading Skills 003 class the number of students each semester was limited to 2 groups of 12 students each (24 students in total), except in the pilot study where the number of students was limited to 3 groups of 6 students (18 students in total). I was unable to continue with the same students in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 as students who completed the course were promoted to higher levels. What changed from one Cycle to the next, apart from the students, was the element of intervention. I taught intercultural material along with the traditional course in each Cycle but in slightly different ways because of my experience from the previous Cycle.

Most students were males who came from poor to average socioeconomic backgrounds i.e. they had part-time jobs and/or received scholarships from their political parties (March 14 i.e. the Future party and March 8 i.e. Hezbollah party). Religions/political affiliations affected beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Most of the students were French

educated and were studying English as a foreign language, a requirement from all the Faculties (Appendix 2 and 3, and Section 3.6.1).

Other stakeholders i.e. management and teachers participated in this study (see Section 1 and Section 6.4. for more information). The management included two unique post holders, the head of division and the coordinator. Out of twenty teachers, two volunteered to be interviewed whereas the other teachers declined because of their hectic schedule. Their position, teaching experience, and personal perspectives are relevant to this research.

### *3.3.3. The role of lecturer/researcher*

As a lecturer, I was at the center of the research (Burns, 2010). I committed myself to praxis which entails that theory and practices are not contradictory concepts (Johnson, 2006; Sternberg, 2008). To promote development and change, I incorporated theory and practical activity (Lantolf et al., 2009). It is not unusual that AR is undertaken by one teacher in his/her own classroom (Burns, 2010; Gay and Airasian, 2003). The advantage I had over an outsider researcher in traditional research was that I was immersed in the studied situation. I had valuable knowledge about the culture of the context studied, which an outsider would not have had.

In addition, the findings and conclusions drawn by an outsider researcher may not be trustworthy in my context. However, it would have been useful to conduct collaborative AR with other teachers as “collaboration is a much preferred way to do AR” (Burns, 2010, p. 45). It would have entailed involving a colleague. We could have observed each others’ classrooms to provide supplementary perspectives regarding



different aspects of my AR study. For practical reasons, it was not possible; it would have involved, for example, training other teachers. It was also difficult to arrange this because of my colleagues' other commitments. Being part-timers, they had other teaching commitments in other educational institutions.

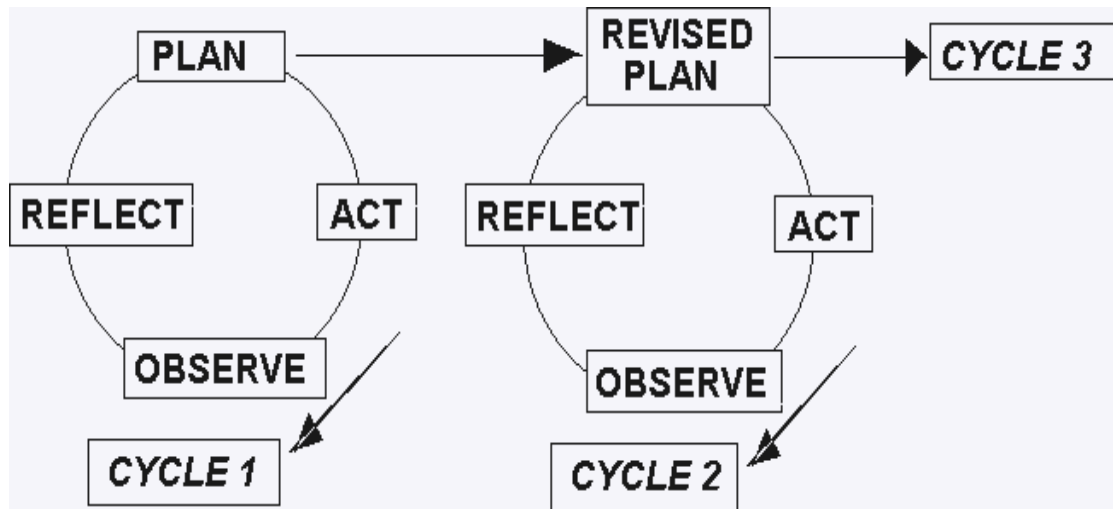
### **3.4. Action research**

AR has been referred to as a process that draws on the tradition of social science. Borrowed from psychology by Lewin (1946), who originally sought the solution of social problems and the improvement of intergroup relations by resorting to experiential learning, it is defined by Carr and Kemmis (1986) as:

a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out (p. 126).

AR forms a methodological framework for the practice of learning, teaching and professional development (Denscombe, 2007; Guterriez and Vossoughi, 2010). What makes AR different from traditional research such as quasi-experimental design study is its interactive or cyclical nature. The present study included three spirals of AR that incorporated planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Figure 5) (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, p. 11).

Figure 5 AR Cycles



(Riding, Fowell and Levy, 1995)

I first explored the literature and critically reviewed the textbook to help understand and find solutions to the problem. I then followed McNiff and Whitehead's (2009) steps in each of the AR Cycles:

- I planned for the intervention.
- I carried out the intervention.
- I observed before and after the intervention using two sources of data (diary, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews).
- I evaluated the outcome of the data to revise and make necessary changes in subsequent cycles.

In this AR study, I adapted Kolb's (1984) model for learning, agreeing with Riding et al., (1995) who indicate that both iteration in AR and experiential learning help translate constructivist learning into practice and thus produce change. The findings from each Cycle informed planning and developing for the next one. Focusing on learners' developing ICC dimensions through experiential learning, I used spiral cycles

to investigate change in their attitudes towards otherness, using diary, focus groups discussions and semi-structured interviews to draw evidence and provide new knowledge.

#### *3.4.1. AR is participatory*

Unlike traditional researchers in the positivist paradigm (Guterriez and Vossoughi, 2010), AR includes inclusional and dialectical logics (see 2.3). I carried out research with the participants as “participants are [our] equals, and they should be treated as such” (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009, p. 61). The study aimed to empower the students and myself in the educational process (Wallace, 2006; Gutierrez and Larson, 1994; Guterriez et al., 1999; Gutierrez and Vossoughi, 2010; Freire, 1970). This empowerment is due to AR’s concern with the subjective reality of the experience of the participants” in contrast to experimental research (Pole and Morrison, 2003; Guterriez and Vossoughi, 2010).

I used SCT (Gutierrez and Larson, 1994; Guterriez et al., 1999; Freire, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978) along with an experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984) and dialogism (Dysthe, 2002) to deal with the issue studied, in a collaborative atmosphere with the Reading Skills 003 English course students. Autonomous learning was encouraged in the classroom. The learners would be conscious of what they were learning, trying to develop new concepts to deal with the problem presented in class. They would construct their knowledge, reflect on ideas such as social norms including those other than their own through interaction with peers and the teacher, and transforming them into usable knowledge.

### *3.4.2. Reflection in action and on action*

The study involved a reflective, enquiring attitude not only toward teaching but also toward doing research (Burns, 2010; Guterriez and Vossoughi, 2010). Praxis gave me the role of the reflective researcher (Johnson, 2006; Guterriez and Vossoughi, 2010). Reflection on practice is an intellectual tool that gave me a different role that is not restricted to teacher as transmitter or facilitator but also as a transformative intellectual in my natural setting, the classroom (Johnson, 2006). Reflection is a dynamic means to develop personal professional knowledge (Burns, 2010; Denscombe, 2007). As a teacher/researcher, I wanted to reach conclusions and develop interpretations in AR (Burns, 2010, p. 142). To develop my professional knowledge I reflected on my teaching practice and the research process using a diary (Section 3.3.6.3).

As a constructivist teacher, I tried to improve my professional practice. I did research about SCT of learning along with teaching language in an intercultural approach. I substituted the traditional cognitive approach to learning with a socio-cultural approach. I believed that knowledge is not transmitted to the mind but constructed through experiential learning and dialogism (Dysthe, 2002; Guterriez and Vossoughi, 2010). The aim was to better engage students in the process of learning and to help them take control of their learning.

I also reflected on the research process (Burns, 2010; Altrichter, 1993). I looked at my own practice. I tried to explain what happened. I gained new insights from continuous feedback and debriefing on learning about ICC from the participants. As noted in the evaluation of Cycle 2 (Chapter 5), I realized that the students who seemed to welcome the intercultural course may still not adopt IC, as their loyalty to their religion and

political association was more dominant. Hence, I decided to change the focus of my research in Cycle 3, where the focus was on attitudes: decentering and perspective taking. Iteration also helped to correct misinterpretation in the finding of previous iterations caused by my biases, expectations, and beliefs - which may not have been possible in experimental research.

### *3.4.3. Iteration*

Iteration, a characteristic of AR, may contribute to the generality of the finding of this AR study (2010; Tomal, 2003; Wallace, 2006). The iterative approach (Figure 5) in this study includes three AR cycles. Teaching involves classroom action on a continuing basis; thus reflection on action and in action were inseparable (Burns, 2010). Successive iterations allowed for not only different data from each cycle but also assessment of the findings in earlier ones. For example, the finding about stereotyping in Cycle 2 triggered different practices and more interesting discussions in Cycle 3. The cyclical approach to AR is more likely to yield trustworthy findings (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). Successive iterations in the AR Cycles helped me to change my understanding through self reflection that acknowledges other conceptions. As recorded in the diary (*E8 August 16*), I realized that students in Cycle 3 who approved enthusiastically of ICC preferred replacing their negative stereotypes with their opposite. However, positive stereotypes often go hand in hand with negative stereotyping: generous but naïve, talented but not intelligent and so on. This realization will be taken into consideration in any future researches that I may be involved in, and in my teaching.

#### *3.4.4. Limitations*

Adhering to the interpretivist paradigm, AR has certain limitations: the research may be related to a specific context, participants may be biased and findings may lack rigor (Burns, 2010; Feldman, 2007; Wallace, 2006). This AR study may be criticized for generating “new knowledge that is highly specific to its context and its generator” (Walford, 2001, p. 110). For example, one of the limitations to this AR study was the focus on a small unrepresentative sample of students in one class in each Cycle at one institution of higher education. This may create a threat to the external validity of the research or its transferability. A randomly selected group of students might have allowed me to generalize more than convenience sampling, but it would have led to less ecological validity (Dick, 2000).

Ecological validity is a strong feature of AR studies in contrast to experimental research. Human action is positioned and dependent on a real life context. This AR study was conducted in a natural, familiar context rather than in an experimental setting (Brannen, 2005; Edge, 2001; Schwalbach, 2003). I was concerned about the research transferability to other settings (Feldman, 2007; Wallace, 2006; De Laine, 2000) including other classes in other universities. In this study I present a detailed account of the context, the procedure and the findings of this AR study with the aim of increasing its transferability to other contexts, which is the qualitative parallel to external validity in positivist research (Schwalbach, 2003). This can allow others to carry out similar studies in other English reading classes or in other universities in Lebanon or elsewhere.

AR may also be criticized by traditional researchers for providing subjective knowledge (De Laine, 2000; Edge, 2001; Wallace, 2006). Students’ biases may affect the result of

the study, too. Being aware of their participation in the study, students might behave differently or in an artificial way. This study is concerned with the subjectivity of the people who “construct the social world” and their experiences (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p. 5) rather than the objective knowledge in the positivist world. Learners are not assimilators but producers of individual knowledge through group and pair work, discussions and debates in the IEP classroom as well as through participation in focus group and semi-structured interviews.

It has been argued that in AR the researcher’s experiences and perspectives may bias the research findings (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006; Tuckman, 1999). Unlike an outsider researcher, I might find myself tending to favor certain explanations that suit the intercultural approach about which I have high personal expectations. As noted earlier, iteration, a characteristic of AR, could help avoid or correct such biases (Burns, 2010; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009).

To minimize the influence of such biases and to ensure confirmability, which parallels objectivity in the positivist paradigm, I tried to consult “a critical friend” (Altrichter, 1993, p. 50). External persons might not be acquainted with the university educational system. Group discussions with colleagues who are teaching parallel classes should have taken place to share my concerns about issues related to this study. However, attempts to arrange this proved difficult due to my part-time colleagues’ rigid schedules. It may also have been due to their lack of belief in the necessity of ICLT or to the fact that teaching language from an intercultural perspective was not a required component of the IEP schedule.

Another limitation of the study was the gender imbalance. There was only one girl in each class in the spring semester and one in the summer semester. This limitation weakened the representation of the female voice and also affected the discussions in class. These limitations are part of carrying out research in a natural setting over which I had no control. I followed Burns' (2010) and McNiff and Whitehead's (2009) suggestions to minimize these limitations and ensure trustworthiness. I used different techniques such as triangulation, member checking, and adherence to ethical guidelines.

### **3.5. Trustworthiness**

The validity of this study was related to two aspects: personal validity and social validity (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). The researchers' values and beliefs cannot be excluded from the AR process (Burns, 2010). Accordingly, my beliefs about teaching and learning influenced the choice of the intercultural materials and the theory of learning used to reach my objectives. The study was imbued with my values. I committed myself to improving my teaching and AR practice. I also had moral obligations towards my students. To me, producing change in attitudes towards otherness is a moral issue with political implications (Feldman, 2007, p. 31). I chose to make my own stance explicit to enable readers to take them into account. I also tried to use inclusive pedagogy: democratic interaction and inclusion, as far as possible during the research process (Gutierrez and Vossoughi, 2010). In addition, to strengthen the study trustworthiness and overcome the aforementioned biases, the following techniques were used.



### *3.5.1. Triangulation*

Irrespective of the adopted paradigm, researchers use triangulation techniques to ensure trustworthiness (Brannen, 2005). Borrowed from navigation techniques, triangulation looks at a subject from different angles in order to confirm the accuracy of the study. In this AR study, method and data triangulation were used to enhance the credibility of my findings (Burns, 2010; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). I attempted to strengthen my study by collecting data from different sources, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and diary. Data triangulation provides a study with validity, escaping the weaknesses of each mode of data gathering (Figure 6). It can supply the research with confirmability and dependability through cross-checking of data. It would have been ideal to include classroom observation by another researcher but that was impossible as explained above.

### *3.5.2. Member checking*

To ensure that findings express the participants' experiences, I used member checking (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006; Tuckman, 1999). Member checking is a technique used within the interpretivist paradigm to ensure the validity in terms of, dependability and confirmability (Coleman and Briggs, 2002; Miles and Huberman, 1994). It validates the credibility of the research findings.

Member checking started before carrying out interviews with the participants. I built rapport with the interviewees, explaining the reasons we were having the interviews, asking them to express their honest opinions. During the interview, I restated the questions to get more accurate responses. After the interview, I went back to those who participated in the research to validate the findings, mailing or making available written

copies of the summary findings to each participant (Coleman and Briggs, 2002). I e-mailed a written copy of the summary findings of the interviews to those participants who had expressed interest in receiving one to ensure that the findings expressed their opinions and views (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). This allowed them to comment on the data and whether or not the summary reflected their position. Many of them, who are still studying at the university, were interested in knowing the results of my research and whether I had finished writing my thesis.

### *3.5.3. Ethics*

Besides trustworthiness and member checking, the issue of ethics was a major concern in conducting this AR research (Burns, 2010; Hall, 2002). A code of ethics should guide the research process (Denscombe, 2007; Coleman and Briggs, 2002). I sought ethical approval from the School of Education in Leicester. Being an insider researcher in my professional context, the right to access was not a problem. As a teacher/researcher, I obtained permission from the head of department to undertake the research. This included informing her about the research and obtaining approval to go ahead.

Ethical behavior towards participants was adopted as British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004) recommends. At the beginning of each Cycle, participants were fully acquainted with the procedures (Denscombe, 2007; Coleman and Briggs, 2002). I explained each aspect of my method of teaching, researching and collecting data to those involved in this study. I also explained the aim, purpose and benefits of this AR study to the educational process.

As with the data collection, I assured the participants of confidentiality. I explained to them that the data gathered would only be used for research purposes. Before the focus groups discussions and interviews, I followed the department guidelines. Students were given consent documents (Appendix 10) which clarified that they had the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the research (Denscombe, 2007). The participants in the focus groups discussions and interviews were aware of the reasons behind this research as well as of the importance of their participation. None of the students declined to participate in the focus group discussions. Participation in the semi-structured interviews was voluntary.

Anonymity was taken into consideration (Hall, 2002). The names of the participants are referred to only by the initials of their roles or by pseudonyms. Students in the focus groups discussions are referred to by number: S1, S2, S3, etc. In the semi-structured interviews, they are referred to by pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. The student interviewees in Cycle 2 are called Shady and Eddy and the student interviewees in Cycle 3 are called Rony and Mike. The same procedure is used with management and volunteer teachers who answered the third research question in Section 6.4. However, I reminded them that complete anonymity could be compromised unintentionally in the context of this study, which they did not mind (BERA, 2004).

After obtaining their consent, I recorded the focus group discussions and interviews. I used an unobtrusive small tape recorder to alleviate the fear of being interviewed. The discussions were carried out in Arabic because students expressed themselves better in their native language (Colloquial Arabic). The data generated from both data sources was recorded. Verbatim translations were made collaboratively with two student

assistants. I checked the verbatim translation and transcriptions of the interviews to ensure validity and whether words and expressions were understood by the reader (Babbie, 2004; Sowell, 2001). The same procedure was used with management and teachers except that the discussions were carried out in English, upon their request.

### **3.6. Tools of data gathering**

The dependence of AR on the interpretivist paradigm justified the type of data gathering tools I chose (Burns, 2010; Cohen and Manion, 1994). The focus was to meet the objectives of my study, through a form of data that relates to the research questions (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). To generate exploratory descriptive knowledge, I used qualitative data gathering tools such as diaries, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews (Burns, 2010; Denscombe, 2007). I also conducted semi-structured interviews with management and lecturers.

#### *3.6.1. Focus group discussions*

Following the implementation of the intercultural activities at the end of each Cycle and after the final exams (Table 1, Column 4), focus group discussions were carried out. In this special qualitative technique, I interviewed students in guided group discussions (Burns, 2010; Denscombe, 2007).

Focus group demographic information was important (Appendix 3). The four focus group discussions (24 students) took place in their natural setting, the Reading Skills 003 class at the end of the semester. The number of students in each group was limited to 2 groups of 6 students in each of the Cycles. In the pilot study, Cycle 1, the number

of students was larger: 3 groups of 6 students each due to a higher number of enrollments. The pilot data will not be analyzed below.

Table 2 Student focus group discussions

<b>Cycles</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Num of students</b>	<b>G 1</b>	<b>G 2</b>	<b>G 3</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>L1</b>
Cycle 1	Fall 2010/11	Class room	18	6	6	6	5female/13 males	18- 21	Arabic
Cycle 2	Spring 2011	Class room	12	6	6		1female/11 males	18- 21	Arabic
Cycle 3	Summer 2011	Class room	12	6	6		1female/11 males	18- 21	Arabic

The focus group discussions helped to provide richer data and greater insights than could have been collected through questionnaires because of their dependence on interaction within the groups (Burns, 2010; Denscombe, 2007). This mode of data gathering, however, has its limitations (Cohen and Manion, 1994). I was aware that focus group discussions may not always tap true feelings and may reflect participants' biases. The participants or the captive audience may give different opinions in real life situations compared to imaginary ones or they may give spontaneous answers with minimum interest and commitment to what they said (Cohen and Manion, 1994). In the context of this AR study, some participants were less communicative or even remained silent. To minimize such limitations, I used member checking and adhered to ethical guidance, as discussed in Section 3.5.2. and Section 3.5.3.

To address the validity of the questions (Appendix 4) the focus group discussion questions for students were piloted in Cycle 1. I asked open-ended questions rather than

yes or no questions to avoid setting off a defensive reaction (Babbie, 2004). For instance, I asked “What is your opinion about the foreign cultures associated with the English foreign language” instead of “Do you like the culture associated with the English language?” However, I had to stop the recording. One student in the focus group discussions gave irrelevant and obviously invented examples which I decided to exclude from the data analysis. I reminded him that he could withdraw if he did not wish to participate anymore, but he did not pull out of the study. I did not have any similar problems in the other cycles.

In carrying out focus group discussions, I played the role of facilitator (Burns, 2010; Denscombe, 2007). I attempted to be neutral, refraining from giving my opinion. For example, I nodded while listening attentively to the participants so they would not believe I disagreed with their opinion. I also invited them to participate to get a wider range of opinions. I sometimes intervened to put the discussion back on track. To make the students feel more comfortable, I did not use note taking. In spite of its usefulness, the focus group discussions entail the need for semi-structured interviews to allow the researcher to differentiate an individual’s views from those of the group (Burns, 2010; Denscombe, 2007).

### *3.6.2. Focused semi-structured interviews*

The semi-structured interview was a useful tool to answer the research questions underpinning this qualitative AR study (Burns, 2010; Denscombe, 2007). Interviews can be classified as structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Denscombe, 2007). At one end, they are like a spoken questionnaire, at the other they are like normal conversations. One of the reasons for not using the structured interview was that

respondents choose from limited options in answer to a predetermined list of questions (Denscombe, 2007) and so this format mostly produces simple, factual information rather than respondents speaking their mind about complex issues.

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are both useful (Babbie, 2004). However, the difference between them is that the latter “relies almost exclusively on open-ended questions” (Babbie, 2004, p. 245). I found them useful when I carried out the focus group discussions. They allowed me to be detached and introduce a theme or topic and then let the participants pursue their train of thought. However, in un-structured interviews, respondents may give unexpected answers that are much more difficult to analyze than those in structured and semi-structured interviews.

The semi-structured interview was preferable for the individual interviews. The degree of structure in an interview can slide back and forth along a continuum (Denscombe, 2007). For example, I had a set of closed questions at the beginning of the actual interviews to elicit specific factual data. For instance, I gathered background information about the participants’ age, gender, and former intercultural experiences (Appendix 3). I had control over the flow and sequence of questions. I had a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered (Appendix 5). The semi-structured interview seemed to allow participants to express freely their opinions, thoughts, feelings and experiences regarding the issues. It allowed me to gain further insights, providing me with richer data. I used probes, rephrased certain questions and asked detailed questions for relevant information if the respondents were unclear about certain things.

In Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, two volunteer Reading Skills 003 students were interviewed either in my shared office, if my colleague was not there, or in their classroom. The interviews were held in Arabic upon their request as discussed above.

I followed Babbie (2004) and Sowell's (2001) suggestions for conducting valid interviews. At the beginning, I introduced the aim of the interviews to the students. A general question was asked first such as, "Some people suggest that we should teach ICC in our English language courses. What do you understand by culture teaching in a foreign language teaching context?" I probed into the situation and prompted respondents to answer, asking more detailed questions to get deeper insights into the phenomenon. I used back channeling such as facial expressions and body language, and "Tell me more about it" to encourage respondents to talk freely and in detail. I also rephrased and explained the questions if the respondents were unclear about the question. An exit question was asked at the end of the interviews to see if they wished to comment on or add something to what they had said. These interview questions were expected to secure more honest, accurate information than is possible in solely an unstructured interview or a questionnaire.

### *3.6.3. Diary*

I was aware of the benefits of keeping a diary in AR. A diary is a naturalistic means "to tap into affective factors, language learning strategies, and the learners' own perceptions of language learning – facets of language learning and teaching experiences which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to external observers" (Bailey, 1996, p, 197). It gives "possibilities for reflection in-action and reflection on-action" (Burns, 2010, p. 17). Sample entries include not only what happened, what people did, but also some of



the vital contextual information that relates to these events and people's reactions to them (Coleman and Briggs, 2003)

As a reflective researcher, I tried to use this tool for reflection over this 3-Cycle AR study. It could provide me with introspective data and help me to capture events and reflections that took place in the classroom about action and practice (Burns, 2010; Denscombe, 2007; Hall, 2002; Tomal, 2003; Bailey, 1996). Throughout the AR process, I tried to track the details of the study before during and after the lessons (Schwalbach, 2003; Gay and Airasian, 2003; Hall, 2002). I recorded my comments before and after carrying out the activities in the intervention. The diary included 2 parts: the lesson (Appendix 8, 9 and 11) and then the recording of my reflections. Keeping a journal also involved a critical description of the lesson and evaluation of success (Edge, 2001). I recorded a journal entry every Wednesday after the intervention (Table 1, Appendix 11). This activity took approximately 15 minutes. I kept the diary in a computer file, and engaged in an early analysis of the diary data (Coleman and Briggs (2002).

The diary prevented me from losing important information, which might affect the validity of the research (Burns, 2010). Due to lack of base-line data such as pre-intervention interviews or a pre-intervention survey, the diary enabled me, for example, to compare and detect changes in students' attitudes from the beginning to the end of the intervention as indicated below.

The disadvantages of a diary reside in its subjective nature (Burns, 2010; Bailey, 1996). A diary may include teacher/researcher biased data. It may include comments that implicitly or explicitly support the writer's own perceptions and expectations. However, it can convey a feeling of what it was like to be there. Diary entries should be read in

context: the context of their production, their intended audience, and the author's interests. For this purpose, I tried to include details for a thick description. I included excerpts to illustrate specific aspects in connection with the presentation and discussion of the implementation of the classroom work. Written for this study's purposes, it was hoped that the research diary would provide a more complete and balanced picture of the study, affording credibility to this AR through data triangulation (Figure 6 and Table 4 below).

### **3.7. Data analysis**

The two main approaches to thematically analyze qualitative data are inductive and deductive approaches (Babbie, 2004; Braun and Carke, 2006; Burns, 2010; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). I did not draw on the literature and set hypotheses at the outset of the research to test a theory. Instead, as an insider researcher, I used induction or data driven analysis. Induction enabled me to explore data without prior hypotheses or without prior anticipations about the phenomena, allowing themes and categories to emerge. Inductive coding is a suitable method to analyze qualitative data such as attitudes, tolerance, and flexibility. The unit of analysis in this approach could be a word, a phrase or a theme (that described the meaning of the text segment).

Data collection was followed by the analysis of what was revealed by the data and reflection on the implications of the findings followed for further research and action (Burns, 2010; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). Although the diary, focus group discussions and interviews include a great deal of data, I limited my data analysis to the most relevant themes to my research questions and my research claim (McNiff and

Whitehead, 2009). Thematic analysis was carried out on the verbatim transcription of the focus group discussions and the interviews (Neuman, 2003; Burns, 2010). The brief description below illustrates the use of inductive analysis modes I adopted:

1. I familiarized myself with the interview data. I read, summarized and took notes on interview content to capture ideas, views and intuitions at all stages of the data.
2. I generated initial codes and based on recurring themes or topics and developed into a number of different categories.
3. I looked for themes and gave labels to main ideas, reviewing themes and going over the data several times.
4. I defined and named themes in order for them to be easily sorted and retrieved.
5. I also considered alternative explanations by looking for differences in responses that I recorded during my data collection; inconsistencies and contradictions across individual answers were also considered informative. Finally, I produced a report to display the conclusions (Braun and Carke, 2006; Feldman, 2007; Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

Thematic coding used in this study made the coded data available for corroboration. For example, it made it easier for my student assistants to check the relationship between the codes and the data. It was also anticipated that thematic analyses would enable a comparison of the data from the different data sources and across cycles (Figure 6), and their integration into a coherent whole to ensure trustworthiness.

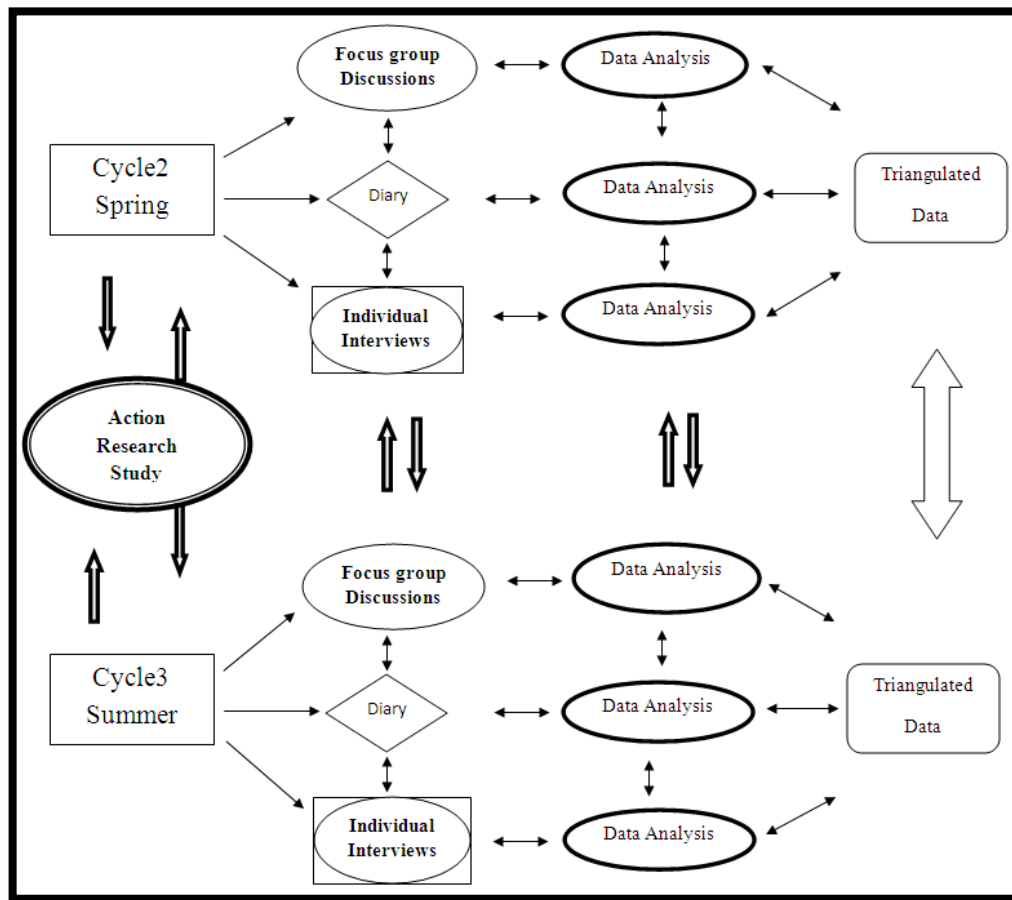
Thematic analysis, however, has its limitations (Braun and Clarke, 2006). When analytical processes involve the researcher, errors and uncertainty might emerge. For

example, some important categories might be ignored or neglected which may weaken the reliability of the research. To ensure analytic precision and enhance the replicability of the research, I followed certain guidelines (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Burns, 2010; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). I tried to provide rich description and interpretation of the data by providing sufficient isolated comments and direct quotations. The aim is to attempt to capture the truthfulness and complexity of the situation to persuade the reader that my argument is reasonable. At the analysis stage, I also looked “at discrepant cases” or evidence that may disagree with the data (Burns, 2010, p. 133). To have more confidence in the analysis and reach consistency between the data interpretation and analysis, two student assistants were given data extracts to check. Member checking and data triangulation were used to enhance the credibility of the analysis. Finally, as illustrated below, I used matrices to organize and display data from different sources, resulting in triangulated data.

### *3.7.1. Evaluation: Emerging themes*

The data gathered from the students in each focus group discussion, in each semi-structured interview and in the diary, in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 was analyzed separately. Thematic analysis was used to answer the first two research questions which guided this study and to address my overarching research questions. The steps I followed to present the outlined themes and subthemes are outlined in Figure 6. In each Cycle, I analyzed each focus group discussion, individual interview and diary data set and triangulated across and between both focus group discussions and individual interviews data (Bryman, 2004). Finally, I triangulated across and between the data sets in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3.

Figure 6 Data analysis and triangulation



As to research question 3, it was answered by data from all stakeholders: students, management and lecturers.

I selected various themes by looking for repetitions, similarities and differences by cutting and sorting techniques (Bryman, 2004; Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The answers to my research questions that were framed by the focus group discussions and semi-structured interview protocols allowed the emergence of four major themes and a number of sub-themes in Cycle 2 and Cycle 3. Triangulation or the combination of data sets (Figure 6) aimed to enhance data richness and depth of the inquiry, achieving a

more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena (Bryman, 2004; Bryman, n.d.).

The main findings are organized around the following themes:

1. The students' attitudes towards the English language/culture
2. The effects of the course on the students' attitudes towards otherness
3. The stakeholders' reasons for wanting or not wanting the intercultural course
4. The stakeholders' reflections on the importance of IC; the five savoirs
5. The stakeholders' reflections on the limitations of ICLT
6. The stakeholders' suggestions for better ICLT and other subthemes (Table 3).

Table 3 Emerging themes

Themes	Data Sources									
	Action Research Cycle 2				Action Research Cycle 3					
	FGD 1	FGD 2	Interview 1 Study	Interview 2 FGD	FGD 3	FGD 4 Key	Interview 3	Interview 4 Mkt	Sub-interview	Lloyd interview
Research questions and FGD and Interviews protocol										
Chapter 4/ Cycle 2										
<b>Theme 4.1. The students' attitudes towards the English language /culture</b>										
4.1.1. <i>You find English everywhere</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.1.2. <i>English is a tool to reduce barriers</i>	x		x							
4.1.3. <i>English is the language of the enemy</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.1.4. <i>The learners' critical perceptions of Western values</i>	x	x	x	x						
<b>Theme 4.2. The effects of the course on the students' attitudes towards otherness</b>										
4.2.1. <i>The Effect of ICLT on their attitudes towards C1</i>	x	x								
4.2.2. <i>The Effect of ICLT on their attitudes towards C2</i>	x	x								
4.2.3. <i>The effect of ICLT: stereotype avoidance</i>										
4.2.3.1. <i>Serotype avoidance in C1</i>		x		x						
4.2.3.2. <i>Serotype avoidance in C2</i>		x								
<b>Theme 4.3 . Reasons for wanting the course</b>										
4.3.1. <i>It is a different language course</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.3.2. <i>We should learn about the culture to use the language correctly</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.3.3. <i>ICLT makes learning English easier</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.3.4. <i>The language is a key to further cultures</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.3.5. <i>The students' reflection on the importance of IC.</i>										
4.3.5.1. <i>Cultural knowledge</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.3.5.2. <i>Knowledge discovery can avoid cultural misunderstanding</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.3.5.3. <i>Attitudes: we should put ourselves in their place</i>	x	x		x						
4.3.5.4. <i>Avoid generalization</i>	x	x	x							
4.3.6. <i>The students' suggestions for better intercultural education</i>										
4.3.6.1. <i>It should be obligatory</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.3.6.2. <i>The teachers' IC- at their time they weren't raised to believe in tolerance of others</i>	x									
4.3.6.3. <i>The importance of movies in ICLT</i>	x	x	x	x						
4.3.7. <i>The students' reflections on the limitations of ICLT</i>										
4.3.7.1. <i>Loss of C1</i>	x	x								
Chapter 6/Cycle 3										
<b>Theme 6.1. Attitudes towards the English/language culture</b>										
6.1.1. <i>Learning real English: language and culture</i>					x	x	x	x		
<b>Theme 6.2. The effects of ICLT on the learners' intercultural skills</b>										
6.2.1. <i>The effect on attitude towards C1</i>					x	x	x	x		
6.2.2. <i>ICC challenges stereotyping in C1 and C2</i>						x	x	x		
<b>Theme 6.3. The students' approval of the intercultural course</b>										
6.3.1. <i>The course was more than that: more than a standard English course</i>					x	x	x	x		
6.3.2. <i>The effect of the course on the learners' linguistic skills: it facilitates learning</i>					x	x	x	x		
6.3.3. <i>The students' reflection on the importance of ICLT</i>										
6.3.3.1. <i>Cultural knowledge: facilitates communication and minimize misunderstanding</i>					x	x	x	x		
6.3.3.2. <i>The skill of relating and interpreting: to improve C1</i>					x	x	x	x		
6.3.3.3. <i>Attitude dimension: we need something like that</i>					x	x	x	x		
6.3.4. <i>Suggestions for better intercultural education</i>										
6.3.4.1. <i>The course should be given more time</i>					x	x				
6.3.4.2. <i>The course should be obligatory</i>					x	x	x	x		
6.3.4.3. <i>The textbook is not enough</i>						x	x			
6.3.5. <i>Limitations of learning IC</i>					x	x	x			
6.3.5.1. <i>Giving up C1</i>						x	x			
<b>Theme. 6.5. Administrators and teachers' perspectives: ICLT in the IEP class</b>										
6.5.1. <i>Different attitudes towards ICLT</i>										
6.5.1.1. <i>ICLT should not take place at the foundational level</i>										x
6.5.1.2. <i>A lack of awareness about the importance of ICLT</i>										x
6.5.2. <i>Different views about the importance of ICLT</i>										
6.5.2.1. <i>There is a need for IC</i>										x
6.5.2.2. <i>ICLT can improve language learning</i>									x	x
6.5.3. <i>Limitations to ICLT</i>										
6.5.3.1. <i>Geo-political and historical limitations</i>									x	x
6.5.3.2. <i>Practical limitations to ICLT</i>									x	x
6.5.4. <i>Suggestions for better intercultural education</i>										
6.5.4.1. <i>Including ICLT in ELT</i>									x	x

#### 3.7.1.1. *A sample of an emerging theme/category*

Following the outlined steps in Section 3.7., the matrices below display the coding of a data extract from one semi-structured interview, i.e. Mike's (Figure 7). I searched Mike's transcript for patterns, repetitions and consistency or inconsistency (though inconsistency was not found in this case). The same procedure was used with the other respondents' data extracts, i.e. Shady, Eddy and Rony. Then, I triangulated data extracts from the four participants (Table 4) to illustrate the emerging theme that helped to answer research question 3 in Section 1.4. The themes' definition and description, and key comments from the participants' data are provided below to demonstrate how a theme emerges from the data. The aim is to provide a rich account to ensure replicability of the data analysis process.

This theme, "The students' reasons for wanting or not wanting the intercultural course", identifies comments made by students regarding their positive or negative views of the intercultural course. The theme was further broken down to illustrate the reasons for their positive comments e.g. "It is a different language course". What made it different and engaging was that it taught language and other much needed skills, i.e. IC. Being different from the traditional way of teaching /learning or breaking with the transmission of linguistic and cultural information that was dominant in their 003 IEP courses was another reason behind Mike's and the other participants' approval of the course. Although other themes and subthemes emerge from the below extract and from students' transcripts, such as the positive effect on their linguistic skills, I only include one theme and subtheme due to word constraints.



Figure 7 A Sample of a short data extract from Mike's interview with initial coding

- How do you view the intercultural course?

- The English course is very helpful and important because it introduces us to other cultures and we went deeply into it. We haven't learnt the language only but the English culture and traditions too, how the American people have stereotypes and prejudices about Arabs and vice versa.

- Did you find it helpful?

- Yes it was very helpful. I've never learnt a language that way before. At school, we learned French for almost 10 years or maybe more. But I don't know how to speak this language because we didn't use to take the French courses seriously; it was all about grammar; no discussions or new information; we used to learn grammar and how to compose a sentence; we didn't go deeply into the language. This course was very helpful.

T: Was it different from the English course you had before?

- At school, we studied English for an hour per week. It was very classical, I mean grammar, phrases and something like that; we didn't learn about other cultures and we didn't use to attend this course anyway. So the difference is that the ICC course introduced us to other cultures and traditions; how to deal with others, how they think.

T: What did the English course teach you?

- First, it gave us more information about this language; it taught us how to read, speak and listen; it's a total immersion. Second, during the discussions, we were introduced to other cultures and this is a major point.

- Our speaking skill improved because of these discussions; now we know more about other cultures and civilizations and opinions; the role playing part was very useful too.

*Handwritten notes and codes:*

- helpful + important
- it taught language and culture
- deep learning
- not a traditional way of teaching/learning
- disengagement
- deep learning
- classical way of teaching
- disengagement
- ICLT
- taught about language
- language skills
- engaged
- Dialogic
- Culture knowledge
- improve the speaking skills
- Dialogic
- Role playing was useful

The same procedure, as indicated above was carried out on the four interviewees' data sets. An example of data driven codes with segments of text from the four data sets represented identification of statements that were coded into subcategories and were reported with my comments on the data from my diary in Table 4.

Table 4 A sample of students' interviews - triangulated data

Theme 3	Reasons for wanting the intercultural course	Reasons for not wanting the traditional course	My diary comments/Theoretical framework
Subthemes			
4.3.1. <i>It is a different language course</i> ; 6.3.1. <i>The course was more than that: more than a standard English course</i>			
Shady		"... group discussion was missing" (Shady, 20);	Dialogical relation Students appreciated the democratic classroom environment.
Eddy	<p>"There is a big difference. (Eddy 22)</p> <p>Integrate language and culture " (...) we learned many things other than language( ...) (Eddy, 22-25)</p> <p><i>It makes learning English learning easier:</i></p>	- <i>The English course used to be very classical.</i> " (Eddy, 22)	<p>Break with traditional approaches to teaching/ learning</p> <p>Students appreciated the SCT approach.</p>
Rony	<p>"it's not only an English language course but a cultural course" (Rony , 3);</p> <p>"It was more than a Standard English course" (Rony, 11);</p> <p>"We learned it through activities, researches, or presentations (listening or speaking), or discussions, the way of teaching is very interesting"(16-18)</p>	<p>"The old course was taught in an old way of teaching, a lot of memorizing that you would ultimately forget ...)</p> <p>Rony, 35-36)</p>	<p>Students were critical of the traditional ways of learning.</p> <p>They found it interesting.</p>
Mike	<p>"We didn't learn about other cultures and we didn't use to attend this course anyway. So the difference is that the ICC course introduced us to other cultures and traditions; how to deal with others, how they think. "(Mike, 15-18)</p>	<p>"it was all about grammar; <u>no discussions or new information</u>; we used to learn grammar and how to compose a sentence; <u>we didn't go deeply into the language</u>" (Mike, 9-11)</p>	<p>The intercultural course was more engaging .</p> <p>ICLT does not contradict the aim of ELT</p>

To ensure trustworthiness in the interpretation of the data, the same extract was given to my two student assistants for corroboration (Braun and Clarke, 2006). There was no discrepancy between my data interpretation and analysis and theirs.

### **3.8. The intervention**

#### *3.8.1. Cycle 1: Pilot study*

Informed by the insight gained from the literature review and the critical review of the English language textbook in use, I decided that the intervention in the real life situation should consist of theoretical input and practical exercises (Lantolf et al., 2009). A supplementary partial course that consisted of units with a focus on Byram's (2006) competencies along with a socio-cultural approach (Freire, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978) was introduced in my Reading Skills 003 class to see how it worked.

At the beginning of each of the three semesters, I asked the students to fill in a questionnaire that would provide me with demographic information (Appendix 2). In Cycle 1, as noted in Table 2 above, the number of students was larger (18 students), including five females. The intervention in the first Cycle/pilot study in the fall semester in 2010-2011 (Table 1, Column 3) consisted of a series of reading tasks, movie segments from *Pocahontas*, activities, worksheets, debates and discussions. The following units were taken from the Intercultural Competence for Professional Mobility Project (ICOPROMO) (Glaser et al., 2007) except for the 6<sup>th</sup> Unit, The Committee from Kuwait (Cushner and Brislin, 1996), which was taken from Lazar (2003), the 7<sup>th</sup> Unit which was taken from Santos and Fabrioci (2006) and the 10<sup>th</sup> unit which was taken from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories> :

1. Who is talking funny?

2. Preferences
3. Tu es Anglaise
4. Non-verbal communication and body language
5. Journey to the unconscious
6. Formulating hypotheses: culture assimilator, The committee from Kuwait  
(taken from Cushner and Brislin 1996, in Lazar, 2003 )
7. Social Stereotypes (Santos and Fabricio, 2006)
8. I speak English and I am literate
9. Perspective taking: Not like you (includes movie segments or scenes from  
*Pocahontas*: Scene 1: By the river; Scene 2a: Indian village, Jamestown, and  
Scene 2b: Indian village, Savages.
10. Terrorism activity

In each cycle, the two hours sessions for each unit took place on Wednesdays, on a weekly basis throughout the semester (Table1, Column 5). The findings from Cycle 1 were not included in this study. However, the pilot study was deemed necessary because it helped to implement the materials, to improve my ICLT and ICC skills, to pilot and refine the focus group interview questions and the individual interview questions and to analyze and interpret the pilot data systematically through reflection. The pilot study demonstrated that the research plan for subsequent Cycles was a feasible model.

### 3.8.2. Cycle 2

The class in spring 2011 consisted of 12 participants of whom only 1 was a female. 10 of the participants were Lebanese and 2 were from neighboring Arab countries. 9 of them had been learning foreign languages for more than 6 years. 9 students declared

that they had never lived in a foreign country for a month or more. 10 had never attended a workshop or course on multicultural awareness or intercultural communication (Appendix 3). I limited the intervention in this cycle to the listed materials in Cycle 1 (Table 1).

### 3.8.3. Cycle 3

The class in the summer semester of 2011 consisted of 12 participants including 1 female. 10 participants were Lebanese and 2 from neighboring Arab countries. 9 had been learning foreign languages for more than 6 years. 9 of them declared that they had never lived in a foreign country for a month or more. 10 students had never attended a workshop or course on multicultural awareness or intercultural communication (Appendix 3).

Based on evidence drawn from Cycle 2 (Section 5.1), I decided to change the intervention in Cycle 3 (Table 1, Section 5.2). I kept the units “*Non-verbal communication*”, “*Perspective taking: Not like you*”, including 2 movie segments from *Pocahontas*, and the activity ‘*Formulating hypotheses: culture assimilator, The Committee from Kuwait*’ and the activity “*Social Stereotypes*”. I also added three movie segments from *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *My Life in Ruins*, *An American Carol* that dealt with stereotyping and otherization (Table 1 and 4, Appendix 9). I also included the same activities that addressed the issue of terrorism (students preferred the subject) and asked students to do research and added a role play after the activity.

The reasons for the change in the intervention, for including more movie clips, and for doing more research about the issue and adding role playing will be discussed in

Section 5.2. It was anticipated that the intercultural materials may engage and help students to improve their language knowledge, to develop intercultural awareness and to avoid their prejudices and stereotyping within their own culture as well as across other cultures (Byram, 1997, 2006; Holliday et al., 2004). Two sample lessons are introduced below to teachers/researchers who might be interested in carrying out similar research (see also Appendix 8 and 9).

#### 3.8.3.1. Reading lesson: Terrorism

The terrorism activity in Cycle 2 consisted of a reading passage about an act of terrorism, “1998: US embassies in Africa bombed” (Appendix 8). Before reading the passage, there was brainstorming about the topic and its lexicon. I then presented the issue along with the situation below:

- A car bombing has happened in New York. Some of the students in the university (Arabs) have the same religion, nationality, or social class of the perpetrator of the act of violence. Some other students have the same religion, nationality, or social class of the victims of the act of violence.
- “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”. Do you agree or disagree?

I divided the class into two groups and asked them to discuss and debate terrorism stereotypes from Western and Arab viewpoints.

#### 3.8.3.2. Movie segments

In my 003 reading class, the traditional supplementary materials aimed to improve learners’ reading skills. In addition to the reading textbook discussed above, teachers had the freedom to use different techniques and activities and authentic materials such

as movies, extra reading texts, role playing/simulation etc. to meet the objectives of the syllabus which was more linguistically oriented (2.11). Movies can be entertaining, motivating, interesting and enjoyable. They can also be a vehicle for learning the four language skills plus culture (Kilackaya, 2004). Teachers could not afford too much classroom time for movies. In addition, a two hour movie might be a distraction during learning and might not be beneficial in terms of developing learners' IC. For these reasons, I opted for movie clips. Due to words constraints, a description of only two typical lessons will be included below.

In consecutive sessions (Table 1, Appendix 9), students were asked to watch three movie segments from: *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *My Life in Ruins* and *An American Carol* (Table 5 below). The aim was to raise awareness about intercultural stereotypes and to decenter. It is worth noting that the movie segment *An American Carol* dealt with Arab and Western terrorism stereotypes too.

Table 5 Movie segments

Cycle 3/Source	Movie segments	Length in minutes	Dates/ Wednesday
(ICOPROMO, 2007)	<i>Pocahontas</i>		Week 2
	1. By the river Savages 2: Savages	2.28 4.48	July 5th
warmupsfollowups.blogspot.com/search/label/stereotypes	<i>My Big Fat Greek Wedding</i>	2:10	Week 4 July 19th
	<i>My Life in Ruins</i>	1:20	Week 4 July 26th
	<i>An American Carol</i>	4:26	Week 6 August 2nd

Before watching these segments, students were asked to deal with texts which presented contemporary issues such as cultural, national, gender and behavioral essentialism. As described in Appendix 9, the series of movie segments were used to brainstorm about stereotypes, warm up, follow up, and activate schemata, preparing the students for the topic that was discussed in class, fostering conversation and wrapping up the topic. The movie segments also made them aware of the language of stereotypes, focusing on vocabulary and listening comprehension. Each activity was used in a lesson lasting 1 hour 45 minutes.

After watching each movie segment, intensive discussions about stereotypes, otherization and decentring took place.



I will present and analyze the main findings from Cycle 2 in the spring semester of 2011 in Chapter 4 and from Cycle 3 in the summer semester of 2011 in Chapter 6. As mentioned above, the findings from the pilot study, Cycle 1, in the fall semester of 2010-2011 will not be included in this thesis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FOR CYCLE 2

In this chapter, I will present and analyze the main findings from Cycle 2 in the spring semester of 2011. The findings are organised around themes and subthemes (Table 3). I carried out two focus group discussions and two semi-structured interviews after the implementation of the intercultural materials and the final exams along with diary data (Table 1). I refer below to each focus group discussion and each student by number and to the italicized quotes by line numbers (e.g., *F1S2, 15*; *F2S5, 4-8*). For the two interviewees, I use the pseudonyms Shady and Eddy. An ellipsis, i.e. (...), indicates that information or words has been left out. Diary data entries (Cycle 1, 2011 and Cycle 2, 2011) include reflections before, during and after the intervention. Only one sample of a diary entry from Cycle 3 has been included (Appendix 11) because of words constraints. Diary extracts below are referred to by the initial E and by date, e.g. Diary extract 1, June 30<sup>th</sup> (E1, June 30<sup>th</sup>). The word *course* in the data below refers to the intercultural materials in the intervention.

#### 4.1. Attitudes towards the English language/culture

##### 4.1.1. *You find English everywhere*

When I asked students to reflect on ICLT, most of them in both data sources associated it with the importance of the English language. Although the students did not refer specifically to the activities in Table 1, these activities seemed to have raised their awareness about English as a global language. To the students in both focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, English is a lingua franca or a means for communication between different cultures. They believe that learning English is a need and a common mean to deal with differences whether on the local or global level. They

feel that this language can help them to avoid conflicts or misunderstanding and succeed in life. Several students described English as “*a common language*” (F1S2, 15), “*a lingua franca between us to make our business more successful*” (F2S4, 25), and “*the lingua franca is a common language among all*” (F2S3, 29-30). One student stated, “*You find English is everywhere*” (Shady, 26). ICLT seemed to separate English from the English speaking countries.

Motivation is a contributing factor in second language acquisition (Gardner, 1985; Lamb, 2009). ICLT helped to develop Shady’s intrinsic motivation towards English. When asked to express his views about ICLT, he felt that it changed his attitude towards the language itself. He felt that he loved English because it is easier and more important than French. This feeling towards English triggered his curiosity to know more about the language. He said,

*It was very easy to learn English. There are no exceptions. I love this language and I think it’s much more important than French (...). Now I have the curiosity to read and learn. That’s why I always use the Google translate application.*  
(Shady, 8-9, 11-12)

Most students showed extrinsic motivation orientation with regards to the goal of learning English (E1, February 28, 2011). Eddy along with many other students maintained that English is a common language that will help them communicate with people from different cultures, specifically with the West. Many Lebanese work in the Gulf where they meet people from different cultures. Drawing on the experience of his

relatives, Eddy emphasised the importance of the English language as a means to succeed in his career. He said,

*First, the English language is very important, and we should learn it in order to deal with the West, especially when we travel to work abroad. It's a common language. A Chinese and a Lebanese can communicate in English in order to understand one another. It facilitates communication between communities and helps me to reach high posts in the future. For example, my uncles are smart and used to be very good in their studies, but they are French educated. When they travelled to the Gulf for work, they found it very difficult to accomplish most of their work which required English, so they learned English and everything went just the way they wanted. (Eddy, 2-9)*

For similar reasons, another student concluded, *"We should be fluent in English. Everyone should learn it"* (F2S3, 30-31).

The reason for the positive attitude towards English is obviously not because of any inherent qualities of the English language as compared to other languages. Due to the political instability in Lebanon and lack of job opportunities the participants appeared to be aware that English is the best means to achieve one's goals'.

#### *4.1.2. English is a tool to reduce barriers*

The learners believed in the power of language in intercultural communication. Students claimed that stereotypes exist between Arabs and Westerners. A common language may help them communicate better, correct stereotypes and reduce barriers between countries. As an example, Eddy thought that knowing the language of the

English speaking countries may help to solve cultural misunderstandings. When asked how he would describe to a friend the effects of ICLT on his intercultural knowledge, he said,

*They think we are terrorists and underdeveloped. They have this bad impression about us because they don't know our language. That's why we must learn their language in order to prove the opposite. A common language is a must in order to reduce barriers between countries and to stimulate communication. (Eddy, 44-49)*

It seemed that the students re-associated the English language with the English speaking countries. This association might be the reason for several students' negative attitudes towards the West, as noted below.

#### *4.1.3. English is the language of the enemy*

Several students believe that English is the language of the enemy. One student emphasized that English could be used as a weapon against enemies to protect and defend positions: *"We must know the language of our enemy so that we can be aware and able to protect ourselves and fight against them"* (FIS6, 352-353). English cannot be separated from the context of its speakers, i.e., history, geography, politics, etc. The participants otherized the West. They seemed unable to dissociate English from the English speaking countries.

The activity about terrorism raised the learners' awareness about the gravity of the issue globally. It also seemed to have triggered intense feelings towards the English speaking

countries, in particular the US. The activity about terrorism raised the learners' awareness about the gravity of the issue globally. It also seemed to have triggered intense feelings towards the English speaking countries, in particular the US. The terrorism activity in Cycle 2 consisted of a reading passage about an act of terrorism, "1998: US embassies in Africa bombed" (Appendix 8). Before reading the passage, there was brainstorming about the topic and its lexicon. I then presented the issue along with the situation below:

- A car bombing has happened in New York. Some of the students in the university (Arabs) have the same religion, nationality, or social class of the perpetrator of the act of violence. Some other students have the same religion, nationality, or social class of the victims of the act of violence.
- "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter". Do you agree or disagree?

I divided the class into two groups and asked them to discuss and debate terrorism stereotypes from Western and Arab viewpoints.

As recorded in the diary, most students were against terrorism in their classroom discussions, but many found it justifiable in some cases (E12, May 9, 2011). English cannot be separated from its context. Cultural factors such as politics cannot be ignored. The West's war against terrorism and interference in some Arab countries may have triggered the learners' stereotypes. I noted in the diary "Although many topics were discussed in the classroom, terrorism was the learners' preferred subject" (E1, February 28, 2011; E12, May 9, 2011). I asked students, "Isn't there any other topic you would like to talk about"? Their answers were revealing. Two students explained that nowadays this topic was the most relevant to their context, "*Terrorism nowadays is a*

*subject everyone is talking about” (FIS6, 32-33) and “It reflects our problems” (FIS2, 340).*

The issue of terrorism might be the primary source of students’ attitudes towards the West. In their comments and their classroom discussions they stereotyped Westerners. The learners said that some European countries, Canada and particularly America, judge Arabs by drawing on misconceptions and prejudices. They look down on Arabs and have developed Arab-phobia and racism, as two students claimed,

*Many Europeans remain very racist and also fanatic. They have a phobia of Arabs in general and of Islam more specifically. And in Canada also, some tend to be very racist. (FIS1E, 81-82)*

Students felt that the language of the enemy can be a powerful means to challenge the West’s stereotypes about Arabs. Disapproving of the West’s misconceptions about generalized Arab terrorism, students believed that not all Arabs support what happened in the US on September 11, 2001. One suggested that such stereotypes should be challenged through Arab English-language media, *“Through reports. The Arab media should use the English language in its programs” (Eddy, 142)* so that the foreigners can understand.

The students felt they had to defend their Arab identity. When asked how they felt when they had discussions about openness and tolerance, students accused the West of lacking openness and charitable attitudes. Such lack is based on the Western countries’ ignorance, narrow mindedness, and misconceptions. The students recommended that Americans learn more about Arabs and their culture in order to have a better

understanding of them and their religion. Knowledge should precede judging people, as one student stated:

*Americans consider Arabs as terrorists. We have to know about the other culture before judging it, even if we consider their customs as terrorist acts. We should not be judgmental if we don't know about their ways of thinking and their situations. (F1S6, 27-30)*

The students felt that better cultural knowledge may help correct the Arabs' image in the world. As an example, a student suggested, *"But if they come and try to live with us, they would change their opinion"* (F2S3, 405). Clearly, ICLT raised learners' awareness about the usefulness of the skill of discovery, curiosity and openness to avoid stereotyping. I noted in the diary, however, "the language of stereotyping was prevalent in the students' discourse i.e. 'Us'/'them'. A few students used 'some' or 'not all Americans' are 'against Arabs' in their classroom discussions" (E12, May 9, 2011).

The negative attitudes towards the West stemmed from the students' beliefs that the West has a hidden agenda. The learners' attitudes divided that world into "Us and Them". Several learners claimed that the West only cares about its economic interests and world dominance. Discussions about openness and tolerance triggered opposite attitudes towards otherness. For example, one stated, *"They make economic agendas to fight against the countries that are improving such as China. They act according to their own interests"* (F1S3, 228-229).



The students believe that the West does not stand up to the principles they try to spread in the world. They felt the contrary was happening that the West was acting against its principles of respect for human rights, upholding democracy and advocating freedom in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. They said,

*The foreign cultures say that they fight for freedom while they occupied Iraq and Afghanistan. They act according to their benefits. (FIS3, 219-220)*

*They were the first to stand up for the nation's right and the right of people to choose their destiny and rule. But when they realized that such idealism doesn't fit their needs they tried to manipulate the world to remain superior. (FIS4, 230-232)*

The students' attitudes were, in particular, related to the Palestinians' rights to regain their land. One student said, "*Palestinians are accused of terrorism because they fight for their land*" (FIS6, 214). These stances are related to the local socio-political context and are not separate from the American politics in the region.

Students also saw the West from a colonialist perspective. The discussion triggered intense dormant feelings towards the West (E12, May 9, 2011). When asked to describe his culture to a foreigner, Eddy maintained,

*We have a bad impression about them and vice versa*  
*[What is that bad impression?]*

*We find them colonialist. Their personal interests come first while we have principles that we don't abandon. (Eddy, 53-57)*

The above attitude is also related to the legacy of colonialism. This legacy tended to reinforce essentialism and to awaken dormant feelings of the colonial image (Said, 1987, cited in Holliday et al., 2004, p. 93). I felt that these attitudes may be one of the causes of students' disengagement with the language because language and social identity are extremely complex (Lamb, 2009).

#### *4.1.4. Learners' critical perceptions of western values*

The learners were critical of Western values and ways of life. They showed, however, ambivalence towards them. They claimed that they accepted them. One student criticized western family values and said,

*The west is corrupt, it has little religious beliefs and pushes children to leave their family at a certain age supported by their governments and they get too much freedom. It is not a good thing and it leads to disrespect. (FIS3, 21-23)*

He felt, however, that he would accept such differences: “*they are happy but I wouldn't accept such a way of life; they are free although I don't agree with them*” (FIS3, 25-26). Shady also claimed that families in the West do not have social or family life and suffer from a high rate of suicide.

*They don't have a social life at all - they leave their families when they turn 18 and go for cohabitation; they also suffer from a high suicide rate and family disintegration, whereas we love life. (Shady, 60-62)*

The students stereotyped Westerners' values, adopting particular perspectives on the Western world (Gee 1999, as cited in Hall 2004, p. 74), using a language that reflected their culture world-view (Hall, 2002 p. 75). I wrote, "It seemed that the intervention, in particular the discussion on terrorism, helped express meanings that underlie language i.e. values, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, political and historical considerations" (E12, May, 9). I sometimes relinquished my neutrality. "Where do you get your information from?" was a common question I kept asking to raise awareness about their stereotypes and biases and fixed schemata. The students' mediated experiences, their immediate environments and the media seemed to be the reasons behind stereotyping and otherizing.

Despite this initial stereotyping of Westerners, Shady stated later that generalization should be avoided. With respect to his disapproval of cohabitation in the West, he explained,

*Nothing is 100% perfect. For example, not all Americans live in cohabitation.*

*We should take a look at the statistics. Maybe 60% go for it and 40% prefer family life. (Shady, 98-100)*

The learners have never been to the West. ICLT seemed to have caused some change in their mediated experience. It provided them with more flexible cultural Schemata. They seemed more lenient.

## **4.2. The effects of the course on the students' attitudes towards otherness**

### *4.2.1. The Effect of ICLT on their attitude towards their culture*

As for the effects of ICLT on their attitudes towards differences, students' comments were positive. It seemed that ICLT helped them develop positive attitudes towards their own culture. In answer to my questions about the advantages and disadvantages of the skill of interpreting and relating the discussed themes throughout the course to their own culture, several students in both focus group discussions and interviews agreed that it had allowed them to reflect upon their culture. It seemed to have raised their cultural awareness. Two students claimed that they had never thought about their culture. This may have been due to their belief that it was meaningless and "retarded". After taking the course, they looked at it differently. They realized its importance and developed more respect towards their culture and its people. They reported,

*Before taking that theme, I hadn't thought about my culture. I didn't give any importance to the Lebanese culture and thought that we are retarded. But no, after taking that theme my point of view changed and I became more open. If I want to tell you about my culture, it is more important for me now to talk about it. (F2S5, 173-176)*

*I agree with S5. Everyone should know their culture. We are all supposed to know about the Lebanese culture. At first, I wasn't interested in the way of thinking or the way of talking of people living in South Lebanon or in North Lebanon or in Beirut. But now I'm very interested in knowing more about the differences in each region; what they like or dislike, what's right or wrong for them. (F2S4, 178-182)*

The students believed that Lebanon used to be an example of cultural co-existence (FIS1, 174-175). Thinking about their culture as a backward, they probably referred to otherization and stereotype attitudes that have been prevalent in the Lebanese context. Students alluded to the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war. People now are still psychologically and physically confined to their regions, denominations, and allegiances to their political leaders. This situation may be the source of such attitudes. However, it seemed that ICLT brought about a change in their outlook towards their culture.

#### *4.2.2. The effect of ICLT on their attitude towards the target culture*

In addition to its relevance and usefulness in their context, ICLT helped the participants to see other perspectives. In answer to the advantages and disadvantages of relating and interpreting themes in both cultures, students believed in their usefulness without noticing that they were relapsing into otherization of “Us and Them”. They stated that this skill may help to evaluate and learn lessons from the Western countries, in particular the US to improve one’s culture: *“It’s good to be able to criticize the foreign culture, copy what is suitable for us and avoid the wrong”* (FIS3, 168-169), and *“It makes us more curious to know their acts and what they mean”* (FIS6, 170).

ICLT may also be a source of intercultural development. Although believing that the West otherizes Arabs and looks down upon the Arab culture, learners looked up to the West as a model to follow, improve and correct mistakes in their culture. Students stated that ICLT helped question what is usually taken for granted. They acknowledged

weaknesses in their culture and tried to learn lessons from the target culture to correct them. One student said,

*They accuse us of being underdeveloped people. We might be, but we should criticize ourselves in order to correct our mistakes. (...) We should accept what we are in reality in order to improve. (FIS3, 48-50)*

When asked how he would describe a foreign country to a friend, Shady praised Western culture and its technological advancement. Most importantly, he praised the West's ability to correct mistakes and to improve tremendously after World War II. He said,

*It's a good culture characterized by advancement in technology - they knew how to develop themselves after World War II. They benefited from correcting their mistakes. (Shady, 57-59)*

This statement illustrates the students' stance, "*We have to fight against our problems*" (FIS3, 181). I felt that the student alluded to the Lebanese who are still making the same mistakes after experiencing a long, terrible civil war while the West developed, improved, and made huge economic progress after World War II. The students were aware that lack of IC in their context was a hindrance to the country's prosperity, progress and security. They believed that the skills of relating and interpreting the local culture and the target culture lead to critical cultural awareness. The following illustrates their position, "*It shows more benefits than disadvantages. Knowing other perspectives makes us capable of knowing our mistakes*" (FIS1, 173-174). ICLT can be a means to question the taken for granted and look at it with critical eyes. The students

seemed to acquire a more objective stance towards the West and question the taken-for-granted.

#### *4.2.3. The effect of the course: stereotype avoidances*

##### *4.2.3.1. Stereotype avoidances in the local culture*

The students recognized the value of discussing topics such as openness and tolerance. When asked about the effect of the course, most students in both focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews felt that there was a change in their attitude. They considered that such discussions raised their cultural awareness and taught them to accept the other. I wrote “At the beginning of the semester, the discussions were heated, but by the end of the semester, the discussions were calm and rational” (E12, May 9, 2011). Through discussions about openness, tolerance and sharing ideas, they felt that they had learned to avoid stereotyping. They admitted that discussions about openness and tolerance “*helped us be more open to others and to learn about other cultures and to accept others*” (F2S5, 231-232). Learning or knowing about openness and tolerance seemed to help some students to implement them in their daily life. One student pointed out that these values are taught in order to be implemented, “*We learn about stereotypes in order to be tolerant. We should apply everything we have learned*” (F2S1, 249-250). The students seemed to imply that IC is not an abstraction or a theory ‘out there’.

ICLT raised students’ awareness about stereotype avoidance even within their culture, as voiced by the only female in the class who contributed for the first time in the discussion. Her (S2) participation in F2 was minimal. That was not unusual because she was the least talkative among the students in the classroom. Drawing on her personal experience, she stated that she used to have prejudices about one of her classmates (he

was from a different region and religion and had different political affiliations than her), but later she discovered that he was a good person. She stated, *“I shouldn’t judge from the first impression, I should get to know them more and then judge them”* (F2S2, 202-203).

Both Shady and Eddy admitted development in their intercultural skills. Both claimed that the course taught them not to make generalizations. For example, Shady said, *“This course taught me how to avoid stereotyping”* (Shady, 66). Belonging to a multicultural, traditional country, both interviewees felt that the course changed their attitude towards its inherent differences, specifically towards religious differences. This change helped them to build relationships with friends from different regions and to respect people from different sects. Shady said, *“For example, now I have friends from Zahle and North and South Lebanon. I learn from them and respect them whether they are Muslims or Christians or Druze”* (Shady, 47- 49).

Similarly, Eddy claimed that his negative reaction towards others changed because a negative attitude may lead to misunderstandings. He repeatedly claimed that he would respect, accept and understand others, giving anecdotal illustrations. In answer to a question about the effect of the course on his intercultural skills, Eddy said,

*My skills were improved. Now I accept the other. For example, if we are discussing a topic in class, my reaction should not be negative. I should take into consideration my friends’ points of view, why he thinks that way. The negative reactions affect the relations between countries negatively.* (Eddy, 81-84)



Shady also believes that the course was an effective means to challenge stereotyping and prejudices, more specifically within his culture. It was obvious that ICLT had had an influence on Eddy's objectivity, openness, and flexibility:

*Concerning the activities we did in class, they were very helpful - they taught us how to be objective and how to roll away from narrow-mindedness and fanaticism - they helped us correct our mistakes and avoid all the bad things we used to do before and we have become more flexible. We learn from others and vice versa. (Shady, 14-17)*

Believing that generalizations should be avoided, his attitude towards people from different religions or different cultures changed. In answering my probe question "Would you describe the course as an effective way to challenge stereotypes and prejudice?" he drew on his personal experience admitting, *"Yes, it was effective and we should apply it in our daily life. In class for example I'm not generalizing anymore; I respect the others"* (Eddy, 121-122). The students discussed sensitive issues drawing implicitly or explicitly on their religious and political beliefs and assumptions. 'We should 'apply it' entails that IC implementation is crucial and necessary in their daily life.

#### *4.2.3.2. Stereotype avoidances in the target culture*

Eddy claimed that ICLT helped him to develop more objective, open stances towards the target culture. When asked how he would describe a foreign country to a friend, he pointed out that he would present a good image about the West despite the perceived

Western attitudes towards Arabs. He learned not to generalize because not all Westerners are against Arabs. Eddy said,

*Of course not - I would have answered totally the opposite saying that they will treat us the same way they treated the Afghani and Iraqi people without taking into consideration the positive things they have. This course made me very objective; now I can see things clearly due to this course; now I take into consideration the good things they have and avoid the negative ones in a peaceful way. (Eddy, 67-71)*

*[What made you change your mind?]*

*When we started learning about cultures, we didn't benefit first; our opinions remained the same, but now my point of view towards the West and towards myself too has changed. Although Western governments' policy is based on economy, numerous countries are with the Palestinian issue and against Israel. In addition, many Israelis call for co-habitation with Arabs, so we don't have to generalize. (Eddy, 73-78)*

There seemed to be a change in his attitude towards Western values, too. In answer to whether ICLT had caused any change in his behavior and skills, he acknowledged this” “*Everyone has a different point of view*” (Eddy, 101-102). Eddy felt that the course affected his perceptions towards values that were different from his cultural values. He stated that he would use what he learned in this course in the future,

*A negative reaction has a bad influence on our relations with others. Thanks to this course, my reaction will be positive if I travel to live abroad and I will*

*accept the way they think and act. Now I can avoid the culture shock. (...) For example, if I came across a group of girls partying till 3 a.m, I would have said that they are loose girls or where are their parents. After I took this course, I can understand now that it's a kind of democracy and freedom in their country - that's how they learn to be independent and self-confident. (Eddy, 78-89, 92-95)*

The majority of the students stated that generalizations may impede intercultural openness and understanding. S3 in F1, who showed bitterness towards the West, felt that generalizations should be avoided. He said, *"For example, not all Americans are against Arabs. Some people are against the policy of their government, sympathizing with us"* (F1S3, 17-18). Nevertheless, the 'Us' and 'Them' dichotomy was still apparent in the learners' answers which contradicted the students' previous claims of openness and tolerance.

For Shady, the usefulness of the course resided in dealing with stereotyping. Like other students, Shady did not take the course seriously before. But he felt that the course was interesting because it taught other skills, such as not to stereotype or prejudge people but to deal positively with people from different countries in the future. I wrote, *"The students had only cared about meeting the objective of their traditional course and getting promoted to higher levels. They asked me at the beginning of the semester, 'Why are we learning this?' (E1, February 28, 2011). When asked "How would you describe to a friend the effect of the course on your culture learning", he said,*

*First, we didn't take the course seriously, but later we found it very useful, it has become part of our daily life. We also learned new things, such as stereotyping.*

*We used to judge people before knowing them. We should avoid prejudging and stereotyping. (Shady, 28-31)*

The students seemed to express themselves very positively about ICLT, indicating that it changed the way they viewed themselves and others, and that it helped them become more tolerant. It is not unusual for people to say that they do one thing yet do another. The students could be saying what they thought I wanted to hear. Also, in earlier extracts the students engaged in a lot of stereotyping and otherizing in their discussions. As mentioned above, to ensure trustworthiness, I employed triangulation or a type of data cross-checking procedure in which multiple data sources or data collection procedures are expected to agree or disagree.

### **4.3. Reasons for wanting the course**

After the intervention, most students in both group interviews seemed to welcome ICLT. I was teaching the IEP 003 reading class for several semesters. They frequently described it positively using expressions and words such as, “very important”, “joyful”, “and useful”. In the diary I noted “I noticed that students’ attendance was higher than students’ attendance in other parallel sessions or in my previous IEP 003 classes” (E12, May 9, 2011).

#### *4.3.1. It is a different language course*

A salient reason for appreciating ICLT was its break with the traditional, structural, audio-lingual and cognitive models. It was different from their previous language learning experiences and different from their current language experiences. In both focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, the majority of the students

reported that ICLT was new to them. Students stated, as briefly illustrated by one of them: “*No, we haven’t been taught ICC*” (F2S1, 276). Students were critical of the traditional method of teaching/learning that dominated their previous language courses. Their usual language courses used to focus on linguistic outcomes.

In their experience, English language teaching was done with the sole purpose of preparing them to meet their university entrance exams. Students said that ICLT was not an objective in ELT. As noted in the critical review, language and culture were taught as factual information for testing purposes. They felt, however, that the intercultural skill should be taught to be practiced in real life as illustrated in the following comment: “*We used to only study these topics as subjects to be tested on later but we never considered understanding them and incorporating them in our activities*” (FIS2, 273-274). It seemed that even values were taught as factual information to be tested during exams.

Both interviewees were critical of their current English language experience that stressed teaching based only on the textbook. Eddy said,

*Yes, because it was other than using the book. We won’t use what we learned in the book. We will forget them and only remember the information concerning the cultures and this is what we use in the future. We know many examples concerning this topic, examples of what others think and what we think about the West. (Eddy, 27-30)*

Being critical of their previous and current English language experiences entailed that students were also critical of the teacher-centered approach. For example, most of the

students reported that they had never had discussions comparing and contrasting cultures in school: *“When we came here, specifically this class, we learned more about cultures according to their similarities and differences with each other”* (F2S5, 270-271). To both interviewees, the language courses they had had before did not stress dialogical relations. Reflecting on his previous English education, Shady said, *“group discussion was missing in the previous courses”* (Shady, 20). Evidently, ICLT had helped raise awareness about the socio-cultural approach which is a student-centred approach to learning.

To the students, their previous English education tended to ignore teaching culture. Unlike a traditional course, ICLT was rich in useful intercultural knowledge such as values, attitudes and beliefs that could be beneficial in the future. Eddy said,

*There’s a big difference. The English course used to be very classical. It was all about grammar and reading. But when we took this course and learned about cultures, we improved indirectly; we learned many things other than language; we’ve been introduced to new cultures and traditions and we learned many new things. (Eddy, 22-25)*

Eddy, along with most students as noted in the diary, welcomed ICLT for the following reasons. First, it broke with the traditional, cognitive, and test-oriented approaches to teaching/learning languages. Second, it addressed below the waterline elements of culture (Weaver, 1986) and small culture (Holliday et al., 2004) which are more related to their world. Third, it integrated culture in ELT as noted below.

#### 4.3.2. *We should learn about the culture to use the language correctly*

The intervention raised students' awareness of the importance of integrating culture in ELT. Without referring to any of the activities in the intervention, the students insisted that language cannot be separated from culture. For example, one student felt that cultural awareness is a necessary means to avoid cultural shock, especially if the person is religious. He said,

*There is a relation between culture and language.*

*[If you separate them what would happen?]*

*I learned English and travelled to the United States, and if I didn't learn the culture of this country too I wouldn't adapt to their way of living. I learned how to speak their language, but I didn't learn how to deal with them. For example, their attitude in living and entertainment. Their life differs from our Lebanese culture, as they are more open. If I were religious I would've gotten a cultural shock. (F2S5, 83-87)*

Similarly, several students reported that culture cannot be ignored when learning a language even within their culture. In Lebanon, the relationship between language and culture cannot be ignored, as one student suggested,

*In the Arabic courses at school and specifically in the reading materials that contained information about the Lebanese culture including the army or even agriculture... so how can we separate culture from language. One doesn't only learn grammar but should learn about the culture to use the language correctly. (F2S5, 71-74)*

The course seemed to raise the learners' awareness about the importance of ICLT which integrated the local and the target culture i.e. third or global culture in their English classroom (see Section 2.2). In answer to their suggestions regarding the course in the diary, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, learners' responses were mostly in favor of teaching culture in ELT. To some learners, language and culture are intertwined. Learners believed that culture should have been taught in ELT, for it added more useful knowledge about the target culture. In answer to "Does this mean that the English culture should be taught in an English class?" one student answered,

*Not only learning the language counts but also becoming cultivated and knowing more information about the country and its tradition. Otherwise, the language has no importance. (FIS3, 105-107)*

This student felt that without the cultural dimension language seems irrelevant. In their previous courses, more specifically in school, English teaching stressed linguistic knowledge while cultural knowledge was not given any importance.

#### *4.3.3. ICLT makes learning English easier*

To most students (80%), the importance of ICLT resides in its positive effect on their language proficiency. The learners thought that ICLT makes learning English easier and facilitates learning the language: "Once one is familiar with the culture of a country, it gets easier to learn its language" (FIS4, 93). When asked about the effects of ICLT on their linguistic skills, several students confirmed that it improved their reading, speaking and listening skills. Shady confirmed that "This course was very helpful because now I can read articles and advertisements and watch the BBC news and understand mostly everything" (Shady, 26-27). The following also illustrated this point: "Sure. It helps us



*“speak better English” (F1S6, 101).* These illustrated the fact that ICLT does not contradict the aim of ELT. On the contrary, the students seemed to imply that ICLT contributed towards English language learning.

#### *4.3.4. Language is a key to further cultures*

Most of the students believed in the inseparability of language and culture in ELT. They felt that language cannot be separated from its context. Language is a means that enables people to express their ideas and to communicate with others. It is also a cultural key that reflects culture and makes sense of it. Therefore, any change in culture would result in changes in language. The learners supported these ideas with examples from their culture and the English speaking countries. In particular, they related culture to sub-groups within their culture and/or the target culture, adopting a non-essentialist view of culture. They pointed out different ways of using language with different varieties or dialects. This indicates that language and culture are not fixed. When asked about the importance of culture in ELT, they commented,

*Yes, sure, language is culture and if we are learning a language that means we are learning its culture. And if a person knows the country’s language and does not know their traditions and culture, he cannot adapt with them. (F2S1, 64-66)*

*Yes, sure, it’s very important to get to know the culture while learning the language. The language is a key to further cultures. Thus, the language reflects the culture. (F1S2, 85-86)*

*Any language is a tool. Though in the US and England where the English language is spoken with different accents, the cultures of the two countries aren't the same. (F1S1, 98-99)*

*If anything changes in the language, the culture becomes also affected by this change. Here in Lebanon, the culture varies among the different regions; [...] this doesn't mean that different languages are spoken. It's the same Arabic language but in multiple dialects. (F1S5, 100-102)*

#### *4.3.5. Learners' reflections on the importance of ICLT*

The reasons for the learners' positive attitudes towards ICLT were to do with the following intercultural dimensions and knowledge.

##### *4.3.5.1. Cultural knowledge*

Most of the students' answers showed that the ICLT introduced them to different, overlapping intercultural competencies. There was a consistency across the participants in the diary and the two focus group discussions and the other interviewees' answers concerning the range of different kinds of knowledge the students seemed to welcome. When asked to reflect on the course, students explained, without referring to any specific activity in the intervention, that they learnt about different cultures, specifically about different customs, norms, verbal and non-verbal communication and ways of thinking. ICLT, for example, introduced them to perceptions in different cultures: *"It introduces us to new cultures, traditions and ways of thinking. It shows us how they think and how we think"* (Eddy, 10-11). Here, I felt that there was a relapse into otherizing, i.e. 'Us' and 'Them', which contradicted the objective of the intervention.

Regarding the terrorism activity, as I noted in the diary, there should have been more stress on similarities and differences rather than solely on contrasts and more reflection and critical thinking. Also there should have been more awareness raising about the language of stereotyping.

Several students recognized that knowledge of non-verbal communication was essential because it is cultural and can be a source of intercultural misunderstanding when encountering differences. The activity ‘Nonverbal communication and body language’ and the movie segments from *Pocahontas* and the resulting discussions seemed to raise their awareness. For example, the students gave examples about the meaning of shaking hands, eye contact and other non-verbal codes in different cultures. They stated that in one culture a particular gesture may be a sign of respect, while in other cultures it may mean disrespect. One student said, *“In the United States, the eye contact is a very important tradition but in other countries they think that it is similar to a face-off”* (F2S4, 51-52; E6, March 28, 2011). It seemed, as noted below, that knowledge triggered their knowledge discovery skill.

#### *4.3.5.2. Knowledge discovery can avoid cultural misunderstanding*

When asked to reflect on ICLT, the learners underscored the knowledge discovery skills. In particular, as recorded in the diary: “The Committee from Kuwait and “Journey into the Unconscious” along with the classroom discussions could have raised their awareness about the importance of the knowledge discovery skill. Students probably welcomed this skill because it is a pre-condition for avoiding misunderstanding and coping with ambiguity” (E8, April 11, 2011). The students felt that doing research before dealing with cultural differences may raise people’s

awareness about differences in behavior and ways of thinking. It may also help one adapt one's behavior to different situations. For example, a student suggested

*Each culture has its diversity and its special way of thinking. People are different as we mentioned before. In China, for example, they act and think differently. That's why researching is very important in order to avoid any culture shock. (FIS4, 45-47)*

We can infer from their answers and the diary extracts that they felt knowledge discovery is a prerequisite to raise intercultural awareness, to be acquainted with different perceptions, religions, and behaviors and to avoid misunderstanding.

#### *4.3.5.3. Attitudes: we should put ourselves in their place*

The attitude dimension was valued by most students. Upon their reflection on the course, several students in both the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews expressed the importance of developing attitudes such as respect, empathy and behavioral flexibility to avoid misunderstanding. Respecting different traditions and understanding people's behavior was dealt with in the classroom through "The Cultural Assimilator". For example, one student said,

*Also, we got to know that each country has its traditions that might seem disrespectful to strangers, like in the example of the ladies in Kuwait that don't shake hands by tradition and not out of disrespect. (FIS1, 42-44)*

Most importantly, they believed that people should show respect and empathy to avoid misunderstanding. Based on two extracts from *Pocahontas* along with the reading activity “Not Like You” without directly referring to them, learners reflected on their attitudes towards differences. Perspective taking or getting into somebody’s shoes was one of the attitude dimensions discussed in the classroom and valued by the students (E11, May 2, 2011). A student explicitly stated, “*We shouldn’t behave spontaneously. We should put ourselves in their place and understand how they think and accordingly behave properly*” (FIS5, 12-13).

It seemed that the activities raised the students’ awareness of qualities that are required when encountering differences, namely decentring. Awareness of the negative effects of lack of such dimensions in the Lebanese context may create an impetus to adopt them and use them in real life.

#### 4.3.5.4. Avoid stereotyping

The students acknowledged the negative effects of lacking the above dimensions, not only at the global level but also in their local context. For this reason, they appreciated the course. The learners acknowledged the existence of generalizations and stereotyping in their context that is replete with religious and political stereotypes. They also acknowledged the effect of sectarian attitudes that have caused unending social and political unrest in Lebanon. For example, in Lebanon, there is a common belief that all Shiites belong to the Hezbollah militant party, and all Sunnites belong to the Future party. The two parties are known for distinctive, conflicting political views and affiliations. The former is known to be more pro-Arab and pro-Iran while the latter is more pro-West. I wrote “the students’ allegiance to one of the parties triggered heated

discussions in their break time. They were not allowed to talk politics/religion in the classroom. That was one of the reasons to carry out this study (E1, February 28, 2011). The students also showed awareness about other stereotypes, providing further examples about Syrians, Filipinas, and Egyptians. It was generally believed that all Syrians are bad, all Filipinas are maids and all Egyptians are gas station workers. For example, two students said,

*Misunderstandings may also happen between the people of the same country and culture. For instance, all Shiites are considered supporting Hezbollah or all the Sunnites supporting the Future movement. (FIS1, 51-53)*

*They call the Syrian worker and whoever works in a gas station an Egyptian. They make fun of the Philippines though their population may be rich with highly educated people. (FIS5, 59-60)*

When asked to reflect on the course, the majority of the students stated that generalizations may impede intercultural openness and understanding and hence should be avoided.

Consciousness of the benefits of ICLT and awareness of the negative effects of lack of such dimensions, however, does not mean that people are implementing them in real life situations as indicated in their relapses in stereotyping and otherization, and in the limitations of ICLT. However, the discussion below regarding ICLT may add more insights into the need for and the success of ICLT in the future.

#### *4.3.6. Students' suggestions for better intercultural education*

##### *4.3.6.1. It should be obligatory*

The suggestions given by the learners in both focus group discussions and interviews regarding ICLT were revealing. Their observations and the diary entries indicated that it was well received. Most students in both focus group discussions and interviews recommended that the course should be obligatory and a part of the national curriculum. Most students believed that ICLT should have been taught at an earlier age because of its lasting beneficial effects and relevance to their lives. For this reason they felt that they should have been taught IC at an early age. The students seemed to be conscious of the need for IC in their context. Both interviewees in Cycle 2 also made similar suggestions. Eddy added that the course should be taught at an early age at home because people carry out what their parents teach them. To Eddy, the course teaches respect, tolerance and understanding. These skills would not be forgotten, and if they are mutual (*Eddy, 129-130*) they will make life easier. He repeatedly said,

*It should be obligatory. These skills should be taught at home too because we carry out what our parents teach us (...) When you learn things in your childhood, you never forget them and you'll apply them when you grow up. Life will be easier. (Eddy, 129-130, 151-153)*

Many students believed that everyone should learn these competencies. A student recommended that students should not be deprived of the benefits of such a course, He emphatically said, “*We learned many things, while other students from different classes did not*” (*F2S3, 343*). In answer to whether other students should take it, Shady associated the need for the intercultural course with its potential positive outcome. The

learners would acquire new knowledge about other countries which may help them to deal with ambiguity and to avoid stereotyping. He said, *“Everyone should take this course in order to see things clearly and acquire new information about other countries in order to avoid culture shock and stereotyping”* (Shady, 125-127).

Several students in both focus group discussions and interviews also stressed the importance of a dissemination task where parents, learners, the press, state, schools and education can play important roles in spreading such competencies. The above comments suggest a need for IC because of a lack of such intercultural competencies. They also confirmed my belief that IC should be incorporated in ELT not only in my context but also in the Lebanese context as a whole.

#### *4.3.6.2. The teachers' IC - at their time they weren't raised to believe in tolerance of others*

The participants emphasized that teachers would need to have an awareness of ICC at an early age in order to be able to implement it in class and in their daily lives. Students stated that while at school teachers were not raised to believe in tolerance. One student stated, *“He might know that what he is advising his student is correct but he can't act upon it because he wasn't raised upon it”* (FIS6, 307-308), while another thought that teachers *“were not raised to believe in tolerance of others”* (FIS4, 305-305). Several learners added that teachers' lack of intercultural competencies may have negative effects on learners. One student stated, *“Some teachers put students' hopes down and demoralize them”* (FIS6, 244). He recalled his past experience about intolerance and the lack of IC of one teacher. He said,



*I was a student in a public school and when such discussions were held the teacher had a bad influence. For example, I remember the day Gebran Tueini was assassinated I received a message on my cell phone and I told the teacher the bad news. He reacted in a very impolite way and dishonored the martyr.*  
(FIS6, 346-247)

The aforementioned incident between the student and his teacher can be an example of intentional or unintentional intolerance in the Lebanese context. For this reason, I felt that IC should be included in teachers' in-service training.

#### *4.3.6.3. The importance of movies in ICLT*

The needs of the learners in my context are different from those who are in constant contact with the English speaking countries. Real life experiences through encountering foreigners as opposed to reading about them and classroom discussions are potentially more useful. To improve ICLT, which was based mostly on class discussions, most students suggested adding movies. To a probe question, a student stated that watching movies in an ICLT context can introduce learners to different cultures and facilitate learning the language through listening. Another concurred, saying, *"Through this technique, we are introduced to different cultures and see them at the same time. So this would facilitate learning the language"* (F2S3, 371-372). It also can be used as a vehicle for teaching learners to avoid stereotyping. I wrote, "The learners valued the movie segments they saw in the classroom" (E11, May 2, 2011). Most of the students agreed with S4 who claimed that watching movies might help them understand cultural differences and avoid stereotyping. He said,

*While watching Pocahontas I saw how the Indian culture hated the white people and thought that they are evil. At the same time, the white people thought the same about the Indians. But when Pocahontas and the white man loved and understood each others' culture after facing many problems, peace prevailed.*  
(F2S4, 378-381)

It seemed that movies can be an important means of raising awareness about essentialism and stereotypes. As they did not encounter foreign cultures in other ways, and upon their recommendations in the classroom discussions, I considered ways to improve their IC and my ICLT- hence more movie segments were introduced in Cycle 3.

#### *4.3.7. The students' reflections on the limitations of ICLT*

##### *4.3.7.1. Loss of the local culture*

Several argued that this approach was not without its limitations. For example, two students stated the skill of relating and comparing their culture and the target culture may present the West as a good model. By imitating or taking the West as a model one might develop preferences for the target culture regardless of its weaknesses or defects. This may result in a loss of one's culture: *"But development is affecting us negatively since we are copying Europe's bad habits"* (F1S6, 177-178), and *"We are not supposed to change our culture and thoughts to adjust with progress, they aren't always right"* (F1S4, 182-183).

It seemed that the civil war and continuous unrest in Lebanon have weakened the participants' cultural identity. However, teaching IC does not need to weaken learners' identity. On the contrary, it has the potential to stabilize their identity by helping them

adopt a third place or an IS identity (Bredella, 2003; Jin and Cortazzy, 1988; Kramsch, 1993). Some of the activities, in particular, the debate about ‘terrorism’ where students discussed Western and Arab assumptions of terrorism stereotypes did not seem helpful in promoting the objectives of ICLT: intercultural understanding within the local culture and between the local culture and the target culture. Students agreed that change is welcomed only if it does not contradict our culture and habits. One of them said, “*We have to be tolerant but within certain limits. We should not tolerate what doesn’t seem compatible with our societies and cultures*” (F1S1, 226-227). The students seem to be saying that tolerance, which the intercultural approach aims to teach, can be taken too far.

The intercultural approach made a few students feel uncomfortable and inferior. One student stated, “*We feel that we are retarded*” (F2S1, 220). Comparing their culture to the Western culture, some students felt a little bit backward and basic. I felt that I should promote critical cultural awareness with a reflective stance instead of unintentionally lapsing back into the contrastive approach that had previously been used in the IEP class. The aim should be not only to understand but also to interpret differences.

#### 4.3.7.2. *We are learning but not practicing*

A few learners believed that discussions of religious and political issues, specifically within their culture, may lead to conflict in the classroom. It seemed that fixed schemata or lack of flexibility may be the main source of conflict for them. One student commented: “*Such discussions in a society that isn’t uniform may lead to fights*” (F1S5, 269). He was referring to the Lebanese diverse cultures. There is always fear of

the possibility of sectarian clashes and political conflicts among students. He also thought that they were learning openness and tolerance but they were not practicing them in real life, specifically within their own culture: *“We are learning how to respect the others and tolerate the differences in opinions but we are not applying it. We always fight about silly political issues and forget what we have learned”* (FIS5, 197-198).

These observations showed that they had an awareness of this problem - perhaps enhanced by the discussion of such issues in the course. Quite optimistic respondents believed that there was hope: *“Now it doesn’t seem to be successful, maybe one day it will”* (FIS6, 215), and *“We hope that one day we will really be able to make it, and this won’t be too far off. We won’t be ruled again by the past generation”* (FIS5, 216-217).

The latter student implied an urgent need for change in the Lebanese context. He felt that the change should start with changing politicians and religious leaders who lack IC and influence their followers tremendously with their narrow-minded perspectives and attitudes.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **EVALUATION OF CYCLE 2 AND CHANGES TO THE INTERVENTION**

#### **5.1. Evaluation of Cycle 2**

At the beginning of each Cycle, as noted in the diary, I introduced Byram's (2006) five savors to the students, discussing their meanings and objectives. The focus in Cycle 2 was to introduce the students to Byram's (2006) *savoirs*. My aim was to develop students' IC to avoid stereotypes and otherization. I also aimed to meet the objectives of the traditional course that is to improve their language knowledge (Section 2.11), and to engage them. The findings from Cycle 2 reveal that some of the objectives of the intervention were met. The activities in the intervention raised the learners' intercultural awareness, improved their language knowledge and engaged them. They were quite successful, except for the activities "Social stereotypes", "Journey to the Unconscious" and the terrorism topic (Table 1).

"Social stereotypes" dealt with gender stereotypes. The topic was well received in Cycle 1 even though there were only a few female students. The male students in Cycle 2, however, seemed not to be interested in this issue. It did not stimulate debate, as was the case with terrorism. Nevertheless, I kept it in Cycle 3 because I believed that gender discrimination and otherization of women is a cultural issue and common in the Lebanese context and the Arab world.

The activities “Who is talking funny?”, “Preferences”, “Tu es Anglaise”, and “I speak English, and I am literate” raised the students’ awareness about English as a global language. They thought that English is an important tool to interact successfully with differences and to meet their goals in the future. They also seemed motivated and engaged with the English language.

The activity “Non-verbal communication and body language”, “Formulating hypotheses: culture assimilator” were very successful. The students enjoyed them very much. As evidenced in the data above and in my diary, they also kept referring to the new knowledge the activities provided them with as a means to avoid intercultural misunderstanding. Regarding “*Journey to the Unconscious*”, it was a source of intercultural awareness. The students referred to the Spanish student who experienced a culture shock as a result of his lack of IC. However, it was not engaging. As recorded in the diary, “most students did not like the activity. This may be due to the length of the text and the difficulty of the language. I had to explain many concepts and words. It should have been given longer time” (E7, April 4, 2011).

The intervention was not successful in terms of otherization and stereotypes avoidance. It did not seem to affect the learners’ fixed schemata. Otherizing and stereotyping the West related to the learners’ associating the English language with the English speaking countries, in particular the US. Through their mediated experiences, the media and their sectarian and political affiliations, the West becomes the other. They claimed that they should not generalize and stereotype, and that there was a change in their attitude towards otherness. Nevertheless, the comments about openness and tolerance in real life, ‘*we are*

*learning but not practicing*’, was food for thought. The dichotomy ‘us’ and ‘them’ noticeably recurred in their discourse.

The issue of terrorism was the primary source of the students’ negative attitudes towards the West. The purpose behind discussing such a topic was to raise awareness about terrorism stereotypes and not to reinforce them. Nevertheless, I did not want to exclude stereotypes and otherization; I wanted to help the learners recognize, confront, and address them (Byram, 2004). In hindsight I felt that I should have relinquished my teacher/researcher neutrality during the students’ discussions and debates. I also felt that had I allowed more time for the activity, “Not like you”, the aim of which is perspective taking, the outcome might have been different (*E11, May 2, 2011*). Perspective taking or decentering are crucial for developing IC (Byram, 2006; ICOPROMO, 2007). They presuppose the ability to look at reality from different viewpoints and to see things from somebody else’s perspective.

The activity Terrorism (Appendix 8 and Section 4.1.3) raised the learners’ awareness about different cultural assumptions, but it did not help the students develop IC and did not lead to non-essentialism and stereotype avoidance. Students relapsed into stereotyping and otherization, as noted above. The contrastive approach between the two cultural assumptions might have led to such attitudes (McKay, 2002). This approach was practiced in their IEP 003 reading course. I noted in the diary there must be a need for interpretation as opposed to immediate understanding of Western and Arab assumption that is Arabs are terrorists versus Arabs are freedom fighters (see Section 2.10.1, Appendix 11).

## *5.2. Change to the intervention*

Informed by Cycle 2, I shifted the focus of the intervention in Cycle 3 and made some changes in my ICLT practice to help students decenter, developing CCA. I reconstructed the activity on terrorism, kept the activities “Perspective taking: Not like you” and “Non-verbal communication” (ICOPROMO, 2007) and “Social Stereotypes” (Santos and Fabricio, 2006), and added more movie segments (Table 5, Appendix 9).

I kept the activity on terrorism because the students were interested in political and religious discussions (Section 4.1.3). However, direct discussion of such topics is discouraged because of the potential for real conflicts and tensions. I noted in the diary, “Before dealing with such an issue, I informed the head of division about my intention to include terrorism in my study. We were aware that this sensitive issue might challenge their beliefs and conceptions and create tension and conflict in the class, in particular, by anti-Western students, who might find it offensive” (E12, May 9, 2011). Therefore, I chose an experiential learning approach which allowed debating of these issues in an indirect way. Through simulation/role playing, the learners had the opportunity to deal with a problem similar to one found in a real life situation and present it in a simplified, dynamic way (Sauvé et al., 2007; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2000). I asked the students to look at the issues from different angles. I allowed them to decide on roles such as a mother of a victim, a sheikh, and an American lawyer. I wrote “No one was willing to take on the role of the sheikh.” (E7, August 9, 2011). I directed them to do research from the standpoint of their roles.

During the simulation, I kept referring the learners back to Byram’s (2006) framework whenever I felt conflict arising in the class. I also tried to encourage them to adopt a



critical culture awareness stance (Byram, 1997; 2006) and to avoid otherization and stereotypes (Holliday et al., 2004). Even the most anti-Western students played their role well, drawing on human rights, democracy, openness and tolerance. They concluded that IC was the best means to solve issues such as stereotyping and violence in the world.

Action research and ICLT entail empowering students by giving them a voice, as discussed above. As noted in the diary, “ In their suggestions for improving ICLT, students showed a preference for movie clips and seemed more engaged in the resulting activities and discussions. I tried to create a balance. I did not try to please but to engage them in the course” (E1 June 30, 2011). Movies and videos can have positive effects on students’ interest, motivation and language learning such as vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and speaking skills. Intercultural training with movies can be useful and a great medium not only to learn English but also to facilitate intercultural learning (Roell, 2010). I found [warmupsfollowups.blogspot.com/search/label/Stereotypes](http://warmupsfollowups.blogspot.com/search/label/Stereotypes) to be a convenient, useful movie segments source (Table 5; Appendix, 9). The intended outcome was to raise awareness about different stereotypes, avoid intercultural misunderstandings and promote decentring along with their linguistic knowledge i.e. vocabulary building (see also 3.8.3).

After the intervention and the final exam, I carried out the focus group discussions and individual interviews. The data analysis will be presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FOR CYCLE 3**

I carried out Cycle 3 in the summer semester of 2011. Informed by the above insights gained from Cycle 2, the aim in this Cycle was to incorporate IC along with raising awareness about stereotypes in general and decentering as a focal point. Addressing the same research questions that guided this study, I asked the same questions. What changed were the intervention and the students. I taught the same IEP Reading Skills 003 course but with different students. After thoroughly reading and revisiting the data from the two focus group discussions, the semi-structured interviewees and the diary, the following major themes and sub-themes emerged.

#### **6.1. Attitudes towards the English language and culture**

It is worth noting that the students did not show explicit negative attitudes toward the English language/culture, I noted in the diary (E8, August 16, 2011). As noted later, the students stated that they used to have negative attitudes towards differences, in particular towards the West. After taking the course, they claimed that their attitudes changed. Positive attitudes towards otherness and stereotype avoidance, at the local and global levels, were implied.

##### *6.1.1. Learning real English: Language and culture*

As to their attitude towards the English language, the students dissociated the language from the English speaking countries. Based on their reflections on their previous English learning experiences and as a result of taking the intercultural course the students seemed to have developed the belief that learning both language and culture is equally important and complementary. Most students in both sets of data approved of ICLT because it did

not only teach language but also culture. The majority of the students even gave more importance to culture in ELT. For example, two students stated,

*I think they are complementary, culture and language. Culture can teach language. When you are in the middle of a country, you will need to learn the language in order to know how to communicate with those people. (F3S3, 103-104)*

*Like us Arabs, we all speak the same language but each Arab country has different habits and traditions, therefore culture is more important. (F3S1, 98-99)*

It was also believed that learning language from a linguistic perspective is not enough. What is more important, useful, and beneficial for students is to learn about the culture of the language. In an answer to a claim that culture is not relevant and has no place in the language classroom, one student put it this way:

*Like now we are learning English language, we are learning about another culture as well, although we are learning the language if we know everything about the culture, we would know the language better. We would know how to interact with them more easily, and how to talk to them, and everything. Language alone is not enough; language is part of the wide sea of culture, so when we get to know the culture we would have more experience. So it's very important that we know the culture. (F4S5, 73-78)*

One of the competencies, non-verbal communication, discussed in class, was considered by most students as another distinctive cultural feature in the course. It allows communicating across cultures. Knowing, for example, the meaning of a gesture in different countries may facilitate learning the language. It may also help avoid culture shock, as the following students said: *“In the US, the shway shway [slowly slowly] Arabic gesture has no meaning” (F3S6, 63)* and *“In Egypt, a gesture that we do with our hands in Lebanon has a threatening, insulting meaning in Egypt” (F3S6, 71-72).*

During the discussion regarding the advice they would like to give to English lecturers, the students concurred with what was mentioned by S4. The student stated that for the first time in one year (this was his second semester) he felt that they were taught ‘real English’. He said, *“In one year of learning English, this is the first semester we feel that we learned real English” (F4S4, 393-394).* To be ‘real’ an English course should include culture because culture cannot be separated from the language, the student seemed to imply.

The students felt that knowing the language, that is speaking and writing, may not help avoid cultural misunderstandings. One student, for example, stated that the English language learner should know the language in combination with knowledge about and an understanding of the other person’s cultural universe. He went beyond the classroom context to illustrate this point, saying,

*Language cannot be separated from culture because if you learn the language and you don’t know the culture it means you don’t know the language even if you speak and write it. For example, many European diplomats when they want*

*to learn Arabic they are sent to the Arab countries to interact with people and see how they live. Then they will know how to use specific words and when and the emotions behind using specific expressions. Many centers teach English as a language, grammar and vocabulary. They focus on those issues and they become perfect in the language and sometimes even better than the natives, but they would have a gap, which is culture. They will get lost when they travel, even they know the language but not much more than making a standard sentence. (F4S2, 121-130)*

This students' well developed awareness of what knowing a language means should help him adopt an IS role (Lamb, 2009) and avoid otherization and stereotyping.

## **6.2. The effect of ICLT on the learners' intercultural skills**

### *6.2.1. The effect on attitude towards the local culture and the target culture*

The discussions about attitudes such as openness and tolerance made learners feel the need for an awareness of the attitude dimension. When asked about their feelings when discussing those attitudes, most students answered positively. They said they felt "comfortable". They did not have to worry about conflicts and misunderstandings when discussing issues or dealing with their friends who were from different religions and regions. The following observations illustrated this point,

*We feel comfortable talking about anything without worrying about problems; we can get your idea through, either we accept it or we defend it in a respectful way. (F3S6, 154-156)*

*It was a first step into serious conversation, helped us for future debates and discussions, and taught us how to get into discussions and deal with our friends in class and avoid misunderstandings. (F3S1, 157-159)*

These show the importance of dialogic relations that promote intercultural dimensions and that can fill a void emerging from lack of openness, tolerance and stereotype avoidance. It also seemed that ‘anything’ in the context of the intercultural course might be ‘discussing sensitive issues’, which was avoided to prevent conflicts in the classroom.

As a result of the discussions about openness and tolerance, the students in the focus group discussions and interviews displayed positive attitudes towards differences, particularly within their context where sectarianism is an issue. They claimed that these attitudes helped respect the other who could be from different religions or different countries. One student pointed out: *“For example, there are many students from different religions and countries at our university and now we find ourselves more tolerant towards them” (F3S2, 152-153).*

The attitude dimension seemed to ease the discomfort that was dominant when students from different religious and political affiliations interacted. The intercultural dimensions seemed to help the students to be open-minded and to get rid of their preconceived ideas. One student stated, *“It taught us to get through our ideas with our classmates, irrespective of our religious differences. It taught us not to hurt them and avoid getting into trouble with them” (F3S3, 160-161).*

Several students believed in the effectiveness of the attitude dimensions beyond the classroom setting. Embodying a sample of the larger society, it was thought that those acquired dimensions and skills, particularly tolerance and understanding could be transferred from the classroom to society at large. Consequently, chaos and misunderstandings would be avoided. One student said, *“The classroom is a sample of the society, and the way we learn how to deal in class will eventually help us learn how to deal with people in society”* (F3S2, 171-172).

The students believed that with communication and sharing of ideas one could learn to tolerate and solve misunderstandings. To live harmoniously with diversity, avoiding prejudices, dialogue, discussions and tolerance specifically in the learners’ context were recommended. Students implied that they were implementing those dimensions in their daily life. As an example, two students said,

*In universities, we learn to listen to each other through dialogue and discussions and this would prepare us to live in a society where we can tolerate others same as in university. When we get used to listen to each other and share ideas lovingly, so in the outside the same should happen. This role should last for a long time so we would get along on the long term and move forward and advance in our thinking.* (F4S2, 194-198)

*When we discuss ideas, we can learn to tolerate the others (...) and get into discussions that might solve certain problems. Although both might be wrong, we might reach consensus and solve differences.* (F4S3, 199-203)

Another student believed that those who took the course would be more privileged in being able to deal with differences whether on the local or global level than those who did not acquire such dimensions. He said,

*Now we can face any problem in a more open minded way and find it easier than other people. When other people might not even notice it as quickly as us, and when they see it the conversation will be smoother. (F3S6, 177-179)*

Cycle 2 appeared to have had a rather negative effect on the students, e.g. the West was the enemy (4.1.3), that Cycle 3 corrected. Besides, the students' observations confirmed my belief that changing my practice by focusing on the decentring skill was useful and that there was a need for openness and tolerance in the Lebanese context. However, ICLT is a process that needs time. I felt I should look more closely at the language they used. As noted below, the language of stereotyping is still prevalent in their discourse.

The majority of the students in both focus group discussions and interviews seemed to develop openness, tolerance, and flexibility towards the target culture. They explicitly explained that there had been a change in their attitude towards otherness. They said that they accept difference now. The flexibility they acquired seemed to help them to change their fixed schemata. When asked about the advantages of relating and interpreting their culture and the foreign culture, for example, a student overtly stated,

*It changed our opinion about certain countries. They have a certain way of thinking that could be right and this taught us not to stereotype people of these*



*countries. We should have information about their culture to know how to deal with them. It helped us to be more open-minded and not to be stuck in our old habits and traditions, to see the advantages and disadvantages of our culture and the advantages and disadvantages of foreign cultures. (F3S4, 127-132)*

The interviewees claimed that the course had a positive effect on their attitudes towards difference. In answer to the probe question about his view of his culture, in particular with respect to English speaking countries, Rony observed that the course had a great impact on his beliefs and attitudes. For example, he had had a negative opinion about the West. After taking the course, there was a drastic change in his attitude towards foreign countries, even towards an Arab country he used to live in. He developed respect towards other cultures in order to earn their respect, he said. He saw this attitude as of mutual benefit. He explained that the new knowledge may create a good image of the Arabs and may leave a better impression in the West. When asked whether he would have described a foreign country differently if he had not taken the intercultural course, Rony stated,

*About my culture, maybe, but about a foreign culture, it would have been impossible; I would have definitely talked negatively about them. I learned that for people to respect my culture I have to respect theirs in the same way. I left Saudi Arabia last February. When I came back and people asked me about it, I used to curse them. I used to say I will study here and never go back, but now I would speak well about them. They are good, generous people. Before I wasn't like that, now I learned I have to respect others and their cultures in order for them to talk well about the Lebanese and that we are educated people who want to improve their country. (Rony, 141-148)*

Rony's words show that ICLT can be effective in changing attitudes, stereotypes and otherization avoidance. It is a means to reflect on and question these attitudes. It can be inferred that attitudes should be bi-directional, whether at the local or global level. Change and improvement begin with questioning one's attitudes, especially in the Lebanese context. It also starts with decentering. Decentering was the focus of the activity "Not like you" (ICOPROMO, 2007) and the activity on terrorism. For example, one student said that ICLT *"taught us to understand others and put ourselves in their place and vice versa"* (F3S5, 162).

ICLT raised the learners' awareness about the importance of knowledge, understanding and openness to other cultures. They believed that such skills may help to find a common ground and solutions to controversial issues. The new perspectives ICLT offered seemed to be the cause of change in attitudes and beliefs. For example, Rony's curiosity and knowledge discovery skills were developed and introduced new ideas. He believed that adopting intercultural skills is a good way to know more about issues and to find ways for self-improvement and also for improving the Arab image in the West. He said,

*Yes, of course interested because it is important to us to have a new idea and try to find common grounds, especially in controversial topics, like in the topic of terrorism, the image that Arabs have about the west or the stereotyping on Arabs. When I took this course I wanted to know how they think about us and how we see them and what we should do to improve our image. (Rony, 97-101)*

As noted in the diary, terrorism in this Cycle was not looked at through an essentialist lens, Arab terrorism versus Western terrorism. Terrorism is a global issue that needs a solution (E8, August 16, 2011). ‘All Arabs are terrorists’ was an attitude that defamed Arabs’ image in the West, according to the students. Improving the Arab image can be done through peaceful means like negotiation. As most students suggested, *“With terrorism we know that negotiation is the best way to solve the problem. That’s it”* (F4S4, 219- 220). These changes may be attributed to the discussions the students engaged in Cycle 3.

The students added that tolerance is mutual whether on the local or global level (E8, August 16, 2011). For example, one said, *“We should be tolerant but not let them offend our culture. They should accept our culture the same way as we accept theirs”* (F3S2, 137-138). This comment confirmed my belief and the learners’ beliefs, as noted later and in the diary, that IC should be obligatory and developed at an early age to become bi-directional not only in the Lebanese context but also globally (E8 August 16, 2011).

#### *6.2.2. ICC challenges stereotyping in the local culture and the target culture*

Developing IC was effective in the context of this study. The course raised learners’ awareness about the presence of stereotyping in different situations. When asked about their view of the ICC, several students underscored their awareness about stereotyping, drawing on the movie segments from *Pocahontas* and *My life in Ruins*. Accordingly, learners stated that ICC contributed towards challenging stereotypes and finding solutions to intercultural misunderstandings. Three students put it thus: *“The advantage as I said is that we shouldn’t generalize”* (F4S6, 185); *“Intercultural communicative competence facilitates solving stereotypes and eliminating ideas that lead to conflicts*

*among people” (F4S3, 38-39); and “One learns that stereotypes are not true. You should communicate with people to know how they think and how they live” (F4S3, 146-147). The movie segments activities seemed to shed light on and to raise awareness about the inaccuracy of stereotypes in general (E4, E5, and E6 August 2011).*

Rony and Mike also claimed that they learned to avoid stereotyping. Rony drew on scientific research to refute stereotyping, while Mike believed that he was more privileged than those who did not take the course in being able to avoid stereotyping. Rony claimed that the cause for such a change in attitudes and beliefs towards different cultures, the local culture and the target culture, was in the discussions, the readings, and the movies he had been exposed to during the course. He thought that misconceptions usually arise from lack of knowledge. Rony felt that one should not generalize, drawing conclusions from a small sample. He said,

*The debates we had, the movies we watched about these topics, the texts we read, focused on cultural issues. We shouldn't always consider to stereotype, especially if we have the right information. Stereotyping could be useful in some situations when you don't have enough knowledge about a topic, but you should avoid this, you can't judge a whole culture only by meeting 2 or 3 people from that culture. Even nowadays when companies conduct research on a certain topic, they research a lot but they don't generalize. They say we had a sample and reached these conclusions. They wouldn't say all Americans are like that, they would say that they got this conclusion through the specific way of research on a sample of a certain number of people. Before that, we used to stereotype much more easily. (Rony, 150-159)*

Rony was aware of the side effects of positive stereotyping. However, he felt that positive stereotypes may sometimes be beneficial. Accordingly, he adopted positive attitudes towards other cultures, expecting to gain their respect. The change they underwent is expressed below in their newly acquired IC. He said that he replaced his negativity towards differences with positive attitudes towards his own as well as towards other cultures. With respect to his own culture, he said,

*I would definitely show him the bright side, as Lebanese are very loving, hospitable, generous, we like foreigners, we have freedom, we respect each other and others' opinions, we are educated. I'd show them all aspects of our culture, the way we like to dress and so on. (Rony, 119-122)*

Drawing on his experiences in Saudi Arabia, Rony stressed the positive cultural aspects of that country, such as generosity and education, although he was aware of the high rate of illiteracy and poverty there. He said,

*I might be biased to the positives in my own culture but even in other cultures I would also describe the positive side too. I lived in Saudi Arabia for four years. If you ask me to describe them, I would say that they are generous and educated people, although if you looked at the negative side, they have a big problem with illiteracy and poverty. The way some people think there might make you wonder whether they come from Mars. (Rony, 130-134)*

The use of ‘some’ reflects stereotype avoidance. In the future, I felt that I should have raised awareness about the negative effects of positive stereotypes. Both negative and positive stereotypes can be equally dangerous. Positive stereotyping was discussed in the movie segment activities (Appendix 9) but it was not given enough time due to time constraints (E8, August 16, 2011)].

ICLT challenged the learners’ tendency to generalize and stereotype. It seemed that the learners became more critical and analytical. They became reflective as noted here. *My Life in Ruins* presents Arabs as terrorists in an amusing way. The movie conveys a message, namely the Americans’ stereotype of Arabs. However, one cannot generalize based on one example where just one director looks at Arabs as terrorists (E6, August 24, 2011), as two students put it,

*One of the disadvantages could be like when we watch a video about the misunderstanding between two cultures. We see only one example. We shouldn’t generalize from this example. We get biased against Americans who say Arabs are terrorists based on only one movie. That’s wrong. I’m sure that not all Americans would say that. In this movie the director has a certain opinion.*  
(F4S6, 177-181)

*The director is conveying his opinion which is also the opinion of a part of the population.* (F4S2, 182-183)

Expressions such as ‘not all Americans’, and ‘part of the population’ are a sign of development of IC. It can also be inferred that more materials should be offered to convey clearer ideas about the West’s views of Arabs.

IC was a means for mutual learning from cultural differences, hence the learners' culture improvement. Taking the West as a model, Rony thought that the course will help him to improve his culture and correct its inherent mistakes. He implied that lack of IC led to the civil war. Therefore, he is ready to adopt qualities that enhance the local culture and avoid but not reject, or in other words, tolerate what is contradictory to his culture. He said, *"I learned to take positive things from their culture that I can apply in my own culture and learn from their mistakes, not reject them but try to avoid them"* (Rony, 115-116).

Like Rony, Mike claimed that the course was the reason behind changes in his attitude and challenging stereotypes. As with his attitude towards the West, he is aware of people's tendency to stereotype Americans negatively, but he seemed to have moved beyond that. He stated that before taking the course America was the enemy. However, after taking the course he would describe English speaking countries, more specifically the US, differently. He said,

*One shouldn't take a bad impression about Americans, that they are better than us. Although America is the enemy, it's a country just like any other in the world. We have to take into consideration the good things in their culture and learn from it. And if I have to describe a developed country, I think this is an example of what we have to be in the future. And if it's about an underdeveloped country, we must get forward.* (Mike, 98-103)

It seemed that the West was a role model to Mike, compared to the backwardness that was caused by religious and political conflicts and unrest dominant in the Lebanese context. Mike is aware that his culture is less developed than that of the West but was ready to defend his culture, starting with a deficit model. He said,

*I tell him that our culture is developing; we're imitating the West; we're becoming like them. They shouldn't think that they are better or more developed than us; it's a matter of time. (Mike, 87-89)*

Mike was aware that his culture is flawed. He implicitly referred to the sectarian conflicts that have plagued Lebanon for so long. He did not think that the problems are just somebody else's fault, such as interference from other countries, but real shortcomings in his culture such as a lack of open-mindedness and tolerance. At the same time, he was hopeful as he noted changes in the younger generation. He said, *"We're improving. Now we have the ability to accept others. Our new generation is very open-minded and tolerant"* (Mike, 91-92). He suggested that the new generation will replace bad habits like narrow-mindedness and stereotypes with openness and tolerance towards otherness.

Mike acknowledged the benefits of the course on his attitudes towards otherness. To him, it seemed that acceptance of and communication with differences may be prerequisites to understanding others. In answer to "Would you have described it in the same way if I had asked you to do this before the course?" he said,

*Of course not. Now I have a general idea about what other people think; there are different points of view. So if I'm not conscious of all these things, I will be*



*definitely intolerant and I will take into consideration every single word I hear without knowing if it's right or wrong. Thanks to this course, I learned that I should accept the other and vice versa. Also there should be an interaction between cultures so that each country learns from the other one. (Mike, 106-111)*

The impact of the course seemed to encompass changes in his behavior and way of thinking. He said he will avoid stereotyping and encourage others to do the same to build successful relationships. He said,

*If I travel abroad, I will know how to deal with the people there, learn from them, correct the wrong prejudices they have about us, ask them to correct my wrong perceptions of them, and maybe we will become friends. So if I hadn't taken this course, I would've acted differently. I would have been prejudging and stereotyping. (...) There are numerous differences between cultures, but after I took this course I learnt that I should take many things into consideration which means that many people have wrong ideas about us and vice versa. So we should overcome these meaningless ideas through dialogue. (Mike, 125-129, 132-135)*

When dealing with differences, Mike thought that there should be negotiations about mutual stereotypes and prejudices. This helps to overcome them and find solutions to intercultural misunderstanding. Although the course was short, awareness about the skills students acquired may be transferred to the learners' contexts. However, as noted earlier, the students relapsed in otherizing. I should have raised more awareness about the language of stereotyping i.e. 'We' vs. 'They' and 'Us' vs. 'Them'.

### 6.3. Students' approval of the course

Being the main stakeholders in the English education process, learners' opinion about ICLT was crucial. When asked to reflect on ICLT, it seemed that students in both focus group discussions and interviews showed a positive attitude towards ICLT. It was described as “necessary”, “important”, “useful”, “helpful”, “complete”, and a “full package” course. The reasons are discussed below.

#### 6.3.1. *The course was more than that: more than a Standard English course*

ICLT was different from the traditional English courses the learners had had in the past. It emphasized culture and social context and introduced other intercultural dimensions such as knowledge about different cultures. The students seemed to be critical of their previous disengaging and de-motivating English education. Mike stated,

*At school, we studied English for an hour per week. It was very classical, I mean grammar, phrases and something like that; we didn't learn about other cultures and we didn't use to attend the course anyway. So the difference is that the ICC course introduced us to other cultures and traditions; how to deal with others, how they think. (Mike, 14-18)*

Referring to *Mosaic 2: Reading* and to his English language education, Mike was also critical of the ineffective behaviorist and cognitive approaches that had been dominant in his school. He particularly referred to the IEP English language teaching which basically stressed language knowledge. He said:

*The old course was taught in an old way of teaching, a lot of memorizing that you would ultimately forget during the weekend. The problem could be from the book, the teacher, or the management; it was difficult and the student only cared about passing it without learning. (Rony, 35-38)*

The course also taught Rony other skills such as listening to others and respecting different points of view. When asked about what he learned from the intercultural course, he said,

*How we listen to each other, how we discuss, how we research information and decide which one is useful, how we think, how we respect each other and others' opinions, especially when we were having debates. It was more than a Standard English course. (Rony, 9-11)*

To Mike what seemed to make the course important was that it went beyond learning linguistics. He did not use to take his previous language courses seriously. He believed that reflection on topics, discussions with peers and with the teacher made the course useful and important. The discussions in class seemed to help the students to explore deeper cultural issues such as stereotyping and prejudices. Mike said,

*The English course is very helpful and important because it introduces us to other cultures and we went deep into it. We haven't learnt the language only but the English culture and traditions, too, how Americans have stereotypes and prejudices about Arabs and vice versa. (Mike, 2-5)*

*[Did you find it helpful?]*

*Yes, it was very helpful. I've never learnt a language that way before. At school, we learned French for 10 years or maybe more but I don't know how to speak this language because we didn't use to take the French courses seriously; it was all about grammar; no discussions or new information; we used to learn grammar and how to compose a sentence, we didn't go deep into the language.*  
(Mike, 7-12)

Evidently, ICLT along with socio-cultural thought was a source of engagement and motivation.

As with their previous experiences with ICC learning, the majority of the students in both focus group discussions and interviews and diary (E1, June 30, 2011) claimed that they had never before been taught ICC. On the contrary, the stress had always been on teaching the language. One student said: *"I personally learned all this here. Before, we didn't have such an exposure (F3S6, 182).* Students might be referring to the traditional way of learning. To them, however, language is more than that, more than knowing grammar. Language is about other skills and competencies. The learners referred to the behaviorist and cognitive approaches that ignored culture. This statement summarizes their opinion: *"language is more than subject, verb, object, for example" (F4S3, 92).*

### *6.3.2. The effect of the course on learners' linguistic skills: it facilitates learning*

Students in the focus group discussions and interviews believed that teaching culture makes language acquisition easier. One student stated, *"If we learned culture at school, it would have been easier to grasp the language"* (F4S6, 252-253). Several students stated that their reading, speaking and listening skills improved considerably through reading texts, discussions, role playing, and watching movies. One student declared that ICLT improved his language skills: *"It made the reading task much easier"* (F4S5, 48-49). The other interviewees also made similar comments. For example, Mike mentioned that ICLT improved his *"speaking skill through discussions and the listening skill through the movies. Role playing was very useful, too"* (Mike, 62-63). It seemed that regarding linguistic competence the objective of the intercultural course and the traditional course were compatible (Liddicoat, 2008).

### *6.3.3. The students' reflections on the importance of ICLT*

#### *6.3.3.1. Cultural knowledge may facilitate communication and minimize misunderstanding*

Belief in the inseparability of language and culture had an implication on the importance of the intercultural approach. Students perceived ICLT as a vehicle for teaching salient intercultural competencies, the knowledge dimension. Several students thought knowledge about different cultures may facilitate intercultural skills and minimize misunderstanding. They felt that it develops awareness of appropriate communication between people from different cultures which may reduce misunderstanding. This is illustrated in the following comments: *"When you know about other cultures, you facilitate the communication with others"* (F4S3, 19) and *"When we get to know other cultures, we minimize misunderstanding"* (F4S5, 22).

The knowledge dimension would trigger learners' curiosity to know about differences and this may result in knowing how people relate to others and interact, avoiding disagreement, as the following students put it: *"Develop our knowledge and know more about other cultures"* (F4S4, 5); *"Curiosity of getting information about other cultures and about other countries"* (F4S6, 4); and *"Communication between two or more cultures about for example how they live, how they see things, how cultures relate to each other"* (F4S3, 2-3).

#### 6.3.3.2. *The skill of relating and interpreting: to improve the local culture*

When asked about the advantages and disadvantages of the relating and interpreting skill, the majority of the students in both focus group discussions and interviews thought that it has advantages. Drawing on *Pocahontas*, *My Life in Ruins* and *An American Carol* and the discussions that followed, the students felt that the course raised their awareness about new knowledge concerning stereotypes. Reflecting on the course, several students identified different types of stereotypes that may exist when people from different cultures meet. For example, several expressed themselves as follows:

*It's nice to see two people from two different countries, and to see how they think, how they deal with each other, how they greet and deal with each other.*

*It's interesting to discover new stuff about them, especially what we don't know because we live in our own country. (F3S6, 13-16)*

*And to see how they judge other people from different cultures, like when she said that the Canadians are tipsy and the Australians give orders. They get an idea about them before even meeting them. (F3S2, 17-18)*

*To have ideas about other cultures how they think. It gave us hints on how to deal with foreigners and not to be prejudiced against them because what is acceptable for us might not be acceptable for them. (F3S5, 20-21)*

The advantages of relating and interpreting helped raise awareness of qualities such as acceptance, tolerance and prejudice avoidance. These qualities are illustrated in the following comment: *“It taught us how to avoid misunderstanding and prejudice”* (F3S3, 116). They will be able to avoid misunderstandings because they learned not to ‘cross the line’ and hurt others. The language they used, however, reflected their tendency to talk in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Similarly, several students in F4 also valued cultural differences and the potential for improving one’s culture. The skill of relating and interpreting was a means to recognize problems in one’s culture when they compared different cultures. It may provide the students with the opportunity to learn and improve their culture, as one student said,

*We would have an advantage to check the other’s culture to compare with our own to see how advanced or primitive our own culture is. We should look at the others around us and learn from them; if we don’t look at the others we won’t learn from them and improve our culture. (F4S5, 148-151)*

A few students thought that intercultural comparison should lead to ethnocentrism avoidance. They were critical of Arab ethnocentrism which they felt was the cause of the underdevelopment of their country. For example, one student said that intercultural knowledge through exchanging of ideas was basic for improvement:

*It's not enough to compare, but we have to learn lessons. (...) we should not say that our culture is the best. You should look at the others. Maybe the other is doing the same; he is looking at you and learning. (F4S2, 159-164)*

It seemed that the skill of relating and interpreting had met the objectives as noted above. It taught the students not only to compare and contrast cultures but also to critically reflect on them.

#### *6.3.3.3. Attitude dimension: we need something like that*

The students seemed to hold a particular stance towards openness and tolerance. The discussions about attitudes as discussed above made them feel comfortable because it met their local and future needs, it was relevant to their context, and it strengthened their personality.

The students held a particular stance towards the attitudes dimension, in particular openness and tolerance. They believed that such attitudes may meet their local and future needs. Also, if they want to study or work in a foreign country, the attitude dimension is essential. One of them said, *“Openness is very important because we get introduced to another culture. So when we travel abroad it would be useful. We could*



*know how to live with them and accept them. So openness is very important” (F4S5, 211-213).*

One interviewee described the benefits of openness and tolerance in the Lebanese context in terms of its necessity. Due to lack of job opportunities, Rony believed that the Lebanese needed such helpful intercultural competencies as a point of departure to deal appropriately and effectively with differences. He said,

*On the long term, they will benefit a lot in their life. In Lebanon there are not many jobs, and many people go to the Gulf for work. As Lebanese, we need something like that. It is important for us when we go abroad, when you leave without even knowing what to expect or how to behave, you will face many problems; it will be a good base for us abroad. (Rony, 178-181)*

The issues of intolerance, stereotypes and otherization are relevant to their lives (E5, E6 and E7, 2011). The answerers seemed be aware of the reasons and causes of conflicts in their lives. They believed in the benefits of ICC in developing alternatives and solutions. For example, one student said, *“Even the topics that we discussed stemmed from our daily life, they were not new to us” (F4S2, 57-58).*

In an answer to a question about the usefulness of the course, Rony answered, *“It included many topics from our daily lives, not topics unknown to us, like terrorism, discrimination, stereotyping, and topics from our daily lives” (Rony, 46-47).* This echoed the other students’ belief that their ELT avoided discussing the aforementioned issues because these issues might lead to conflict in the classroom.

When asked the reason for stressing the topic of terrorism even though other topics were discussed, Rony thought that the course could be a point of departure to deal with this and other issues. He said,

*Also, there is stereotyping between males and females, especially in the Arab world, more than abroad. It's practically nonexistent abroad; but today here, we still have problems with women, they are expected not to do things because they are women. In this course, we learned how to think and how to approach stuff.*  
(Rony, 103-106)

Rony stated that the textbook did not stress the intercultural dimensions that were important and relevant to his future. When asked to reflect on the course he said,

*If we only learned literally from the book, ok we would have learned, but I consider the ICC course has more importance because it didn't only focus on teaching but focused on information relevant to one's culture and traditions, political issues and everyday life. Ok, we are learning a lot but also it should be relevant for us in our daily life and our future. We are here to study but ultimately we have a life. I am not spending all my life in university. I should learn though my studies information relevant to my culture and others' cultures. This is very important. Some people pay a lot of money to travel and learn about these kinds of things.* (Rony, 162-169)

The interviewees explicitly expressed the need for such intercultural dimensions for their future. Rony also believed that the acquired knowledge may have long-lasting effects. Such competencies will not be forgotten. It seemed that there was a need for a higher level of knowledge that could be internalized and used in the daily life of the learners and in the future.

The interviewees also claimed that the course had a great impact on their personality. Rony, for example, felt that ICLT strengthened his personality and prepared him for the future. He stated that this approach introduced him to new ways of thinking, a new language, even a new body language and new cultures. He stated,

*I only learned this in this class. It affected our personality, this course in English. If you interact with other people, like now, I would know about their body language, at least a part of it, and how they think; the English course taught me a way of thinking, a new language, and a new culture. (Rony, 72-75)*

The development of the above attitudes must be the driving force for developing a new identity, that is an IS identity or a global identity, and for challenging stereotypes and otherization. The student must be referring to the newly acquired ‘third place identity’ that allowed him to decenter and to see that cultures are social constructs rather than natural entities.

#### *6.3.4. Suggestions for better intercultural education*

##### *6.3.4.1. The course should be given more time*

With respect to intercultural benefits, several students believed that it should be given more time. When asked whether there were any problems with the course, most students emphasized that they did not find any problem. However, several students complained about time constraints. The course was given in the summer semester which is shorter than the fall and spring semesters. The students believed that the course should have been given more time to allow them to learn more about the language and do more research about topics they like to discuss. With more time, the course would become more beneficial as illustrated in the following comment,

*I believe that it wasn't given enough importance; it was part of a course we took. I believe that if we gave it more importance, it would have been very beneficial to our life. If you compare the number of hours with the importance of the course, you would see it was not enough. I think it's more important. It should have been given more hours. I think it would be beneficial to us. (Rony, 217-221)*

Calling for more time can be food for thought. IC is a process, a long-life journey (Byram, 2006). For this reason, the students suggested incorporating it in the educational policy in their context and the Lebanese context.

##### *6.3.4.2. The course should be obligatory*

Showing awareness of the importance and usefulness of IC in their context and the global context, most of the students in both focus group discussions, interviews and the diary had several suggestions regarding ICLT. They felt it should be compulsory and a

part of Lebanon's educational policy. For example, one student suggested that IC should be taught at schools and universities. He said, *"This should be made a compulsory course by the government. It ought to be taught as a course not only in universities but also in schools"* (F3S3, 226-228).

One reason for making ICLT obligatory was its usefulness to develop IC that can help solve problems in the learners' contexts. Accordingly, it was suggested that the course should be added or it should replace other courses: *"But now we should solve our current problems, so they can add it to the philosophy course or replace it"* (F3S65, 232-233).

Another reason for including IC in ELT was that other students should have the opportunity to take the course because it dealt with important, relevant issues such as cultural differences, terrorism, and gender discrimination. For example, Rony suggested: *"But the course as we learned it, we got more than the English language; people outside the class wouldn't have learned it. Like the cultures of other countries, terrorism, gender discrimination"* (24-26). It could also be inferred, when another student recommended, *"Everyone should know about other cultures even if they don't want to learn English"* (Mike, 34-35) that there was not enough mutual openness to other cultures in his context or in the Lebanese context.

#### 6.3.4.3. *The textbook is not enough*

Clearly, the students' suggestions reflected dissatisfaction with teaching the 'textbook'. They thought that many other intercultural issues had to be taken into consideration through different techniques and approaches. To improve ICLT, several students

suggested that teachers should not only teach in the traditional way based on the textbook and that they should supplement the coursework with research which widens and deepens the imagination. One student put it as a problem, *“Now the book is one aspect and it’s not enough, it should be accompanied with research”* (F4S2, 273-274). IC should be given more importance because it was more useful and interesting than the traditional course and because it provided them with skills they needed. For example, one student said, *“It should be given much more importance than that. Through this approach now we are learning all the skills that are useful and interesting to us”* (F4S5, 313-314). It can be inferred from the learners’ observations that the skills that IC offered are more useful and interesting than what is traditionally taught in class.

For this reason, new topics that may deal with socio-cultural issues and that may be interesting and relevant to students’ lives were recommended. Rony made the following suggestion, *“We should increase awareness on many interesting topics, including topics like when we talked about terrorism, very important to us and to our culture”* (Rony, 242-244). Several students recommended movies, research, projects, and open discussions as new tools to better intercultural knowledge and practical thinking. For example, they said,

*By discussing things we would know other people’s opinions. (F4S5, 340)*

*Projects, assignments, presentations, discussions, open discussions among students are important because getting the idea is not enough. One should know how to use it or to develop it and hear what other people think about it. (F4S2, 276-278)*

In addition to students' valuable suggestions for better ICLT which show potential openness to otherness, the advantages of ICLT seemed to outweigh its disadvantages as expressed by the students below.

#### *6.3.5. Limitations of learning ICC*

##### *6.3.5.1. Giving up the local culture*

Two main limitations needed to be acknowledged in this Cycle. When asked about the drawbacks of such an approach, a few students voiced certain concerns. One student in F4 said that the only drawback was that one may relinquish his own culture when comparing the unrest in the local culture to the comfort offered, for example, by the American culture. He stated,

*This might be when someone likes another culture more. It might cause immigration when you get to know another culture and find it is better than your own, like an Arab culture because Arabs spend a lot of their time fighting with each others. He would see that the Americans are living peaceful, secure live so he would want to go to the US. This would cause immigration. (F4S5, 172-176)*

Here the student must have been referring to the upheavals that have been devastating Lebanon for many decades, hence the emigration of thousands of Lebanese.

#### *6.3.6. Evaluation of Cycle 3*

Changes in the students' attitudes towards otherness between Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 appeared to suggest a role for the changes in the intervention and a role for more focus on promoting IC, the decentering skill, and stereotype avoidance. The activities in the intervention seemed to be effective, except for the gender stereotypes activities. The

aim of this activity was to challenge essentialist and stereotypical social identities. As in Cycle 2, the male majority in this Cycle was not concerned about the gender issue (E1, June 30, 2011; E3, August 12, 2011).

Avoiding the judgmental and evaluative contrastive approach, thinking “of differences rather than deficits” (Gutierrez and Rogolf, 2003, p.19), and focusing on development of a third culture seemed to be effective even with sensitive topics such as terrorism. Contrasting attitudes might have been the reason for the students’ negativity in Cycle 2. In Cycle 3, I asked them to focus on similarities rather than differences (Mckay, 2003). I also stressed discussions about and critical reflections on the issues. The movie segments also conveyed the message that stereotypes exist not only between Arabs and Westerners but also between other different cultures. They also seemed to have been effective in raising awareness about different types of stereotyping that had the potential to cause global intercultural misunderstandings. They were also engaging.

Raising awareness of decentering through reading the “Not like you” was more effective in Cycle 3 than in Cycle 2. It was given more time. I noted in the diary, “Most students agreed that one should put himself in the place of other to understand and accept differences, in particular in the Lebanese context” (E2, July 5, 2011). The change in the intervention, that is, the terrorism activity where students were asked to do role playing, was also successful (Appendix 8; Extract 8 August 16; Section 3.8.3). After dividing the class into groups that represented the Western perspective and another group that represented the Arab perspective and encouraging them to decenter, I asked each group to do research about these different perspectives before the role playing. The curiosity to know more about the issue through doing research about the



two perspectives helped question their mediated experience. The students developed tolerance and openness towards difference, hence stereotype and otherization avoidance. IC can fill a void. It particularly resulted in a central dimension to IC, empathy or decentering.

The students were aware of the side effects of positive and negative stereotyping. As noted above, they believed that adopting positive stereotypes towards other cultures more specifically towards the West can be useful. I should have included more materials or carried out more discussions about the negative effects of positive stereotypes and about the language of stereotypes in general (E8, August 16, 2011). The students' approval of ICLT, however, does not guarantee a change in ELT in Lebanon. Hence, I had to explore other stakeholders' perspectives, namely two administrators and two volunteer lecturers.

#### **6.4. Administrators' and lecturers' perspectives: ICLT in the IEP classes**

Although one cannot generalize based on data gathered from four individuals, the administrators' and teachers' views may have implications for the future of ICLT in the IEP Reading Skills 003 course and may be similar to the views of some administrators and teachers in other settings. I also assured confidentiality and used member checking with them to ensure trustworthiness (Section 3.5.2. and Section 3.5.3).

The head of the division, Suha, an American married to a Lebanese, was in charge of the whole English program. She speaks English and minimal Arabic. The coordinator of the IEP courses, Lloyd, a British married to a Lebanese, was in charge of the IEP

program. Lloyd had taught English as in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and France. He speaks French, German and Arabic.

The two volunteer teachers Maya and Oudy (Pseudonyms) are Lebanese who have been teaching the IEP courses for more than ten years. Both hold graduate degrees. Oudy studied in Lebanon and speaks French and English. Maya studied in Lebanon and had intercultural experiences by studying in the UK. The interviews were carried out in English. They were transcribed verbatim by a student assistant. Quotes from their interviews are presented in numbered lines. The semi-structured interviews sought to explore the extent to which both administrators and lecturers are likely to welcome ICLT and what the limitations are (Appendix 6, Appendix 7).

Before starting the interviews, I distributed a paper that explained the meaning of teaching ICC and showed them some of the intercultural activities in the Reading Skills 003 course. The administrators and the lecturers knew about ICC either from the explanation given before the interviews or from previous discussions about my research. I kept the data analysis within the framework presented in the literature review and related wherever possible the data to research question three which addressed my concerns about the feasibility of ICLT. The findings from the interviews are presented in four major themes: different attitudes towards ICLT, different views about the importance of ICLT, limitations to ICLT and suggestions for better IC education.

#### 6.4.1. Different attitudes towards ICLT

##### 6.4.1.1. The management: ICLT should not take place at the foundational level

It seemed that the curriculum requirements had a bearing on the importance of ICLT in particular at the IEP level. Importance was given to teaching language from a cognitive perspective rather than from an intercultural perspective. Although approving of ICLT at the outset, Suha commented that this endeavor should not take place at the foundational level and we should wait until students developed their English proficiency. She said,

*I would say that maybe that doesn't need to happen as much not until the skills start to become integrated. At the foundational levels, the intensive English level where we're separating the language skills, (...) I see culture playing a very important role once we get into integrating skills in our system that would be at the 101 level. (Suha, 59-64)*

Although they were aware of English as an international language, it could be inferred from the four participants' answers that language was associated with the English native speaking countries where the native speaker competence was the aim. For example, Suha stated: *"I am trying to make the students more aware of an Anglophone mentality, of an Anglophone way of thinking, a perspective, so they can understand why they are using the language the way they are using it"* (Suha, 49-50).

Lloyd also emphasized that teaching culture was a low priority in the studied context. He said, *"For me it is a low priority in the classroom, compared to specific linguistic aims"* (137-138). He believed that the focus in ELT should be on teaching language

with occasional explanations of cultural references when necessary. This view of language was the reason behind neglecting global language/culture at the English foundational level.

#### *6.4.1.2. The teachers: Lack of awareness about ICLT importance*

I found, however, discrepancies between the administrators' and lecturers' stances towards ICLT. The latter seemed to approve of ICLT. In practice, they believed and sometimes tried to include IC in their teaching. Maya sometimes tried to promote the attitude dimension. However, both lecturers thought that the emphasis as noted above was basically on linguistic competence. The following comment illustrates their stance:

*I try to encourage them to accept different points of view and put themselves in the place of others. This is what I do sometimes in addition to the activities in Mosaic. But we are all under the constraint of time, especially that we don't feel that the department is keen on applying this. It's not part of the syllabus. We are not instructed to focus on this. The teachers are not totally aware of its importance. (Maya, 154- 159)*

The lecturers observed that the objectives at the IEP level were teaching English for academic purposes. The hierarchical structure at UOB entails that teachers meet the syllabus requirements. The interviewees believed that ICC is not a requirement in the teaching process.

#### 6.4.2. Different views about the importance of ICLT

##### 6.4.2.1. There is a need for IC

It can be inferred from the following that there is a need for IC in Lebanon, in particular the attitudes dimension. When asked about the benefit of ICLT, Lloyd stated, *“I can’t see any specific benefit from teaching ICC” (11)*, while Suha found it beneficial but not important at the foundational level.

The lecturers though showed some approval of ICLT. For example, Maya stressed that teaching the attitudes dimension can be very beneficial. Having the multicultural Lebanese context and the Lebanese prejudices and misunderstandings in mind, she stressed the importance of ICLT in a post civil war context. Maya thought that by raising learners’ cultural awareness and teaching attitudes skills such as understanding and tolerance is beneficial for citizen formation. She said,

*I see many benefits. I would like to relate this to the Lebanese context. It is a multicultural country that has been through a civil war. There is a lot of misunderstanding between different cultural groups in Lebanon, a lot of prejudice against each other. I think that raising cultural awareness, encouraging students to put themselves in the shoes of others and trying to understand their attitude and their views is extremely important for citizen formation, a modern citizen who you know respects the values of democracy, tolerance and who accepts the other. So I am sure it is important, especially in the Lebanese context. (Maya, 24-31)*

The lecturers acknowledged intolerance and otherization in the studied context. They thought that ICLT is needed for citizens’ civic formation.

#### 6.4.2.2. ICLT can improve language learning

The point of departure of ICLT is language competence. ICLT goes beyond communicative competence to include important cultural dimensions (Byram, 2006).

When asked about the potential benefits of ICLT, Suha, Maya, and Oudy corroborated that ICLT may have immediate benefits on learners' linguistic skills. However, the lecturers were more explicit about it. For example, Oudy indicated that teaching culture will influence students' linguistic ability and prepare them for higher English level. He said:

*Another potential benefit I see is that this will prepare them for the upcoming language courses that they will be taking in our communication skills program because in intensive English it is only a step towards the next levels that we offer in our university which are 101, 102, and 203, and these are language courses.*  
(Oudy, 42-45)

I seemed that the lecturers believe that ICLT will not contradict the aims of the curriculum and its language courses because it can improve the learners' linguistic proficiency.

#### 6.4.3. Limitations to ICLT

##### 6.4.3.1. Geo-political and historical limitations

Culture cannot be separated from the learners' context, history and politics (Holliday et al., 2004). When asked whether they saw any potential problems with ICLT, the interviewees expressed certain concerns. Due to the political tensions in the area, Oudy

thought that students had negative attitudes towards the West, more specifically towards the US, the issue of terrorism, and US policy in the Middle East. He said,

*(...) this negative attitude towards the West is the result of different factors.*

*Politics is one of them: the way the West, for example, regards some Arabs as terrorists, the foreign policy of the West regarding Arab countries, the invasion of certain western countries of other Arab countries. You know many different factors (...). Now, the teacher in this situation is really stuck. He doesn't know what to do. (Oudy, 249-252, 253-254, 254-255).*

In spite of their proficiency in ELT, the interviewees felt lecturers may find themselves stuck in an ambiguous situation. For this reason, lecturers' intercultural competencies are essential in the classroom, hence, lecturers' need for intercultural training.

Although he had never experienced problems in his teaching career, Lloyd showed concerns about the strong religious, political and national feelings, and the tensions that may arise from teaching culture. When asked about the limitations to ICLT, he maintained,

*Occasionally, yes, when there strong feelings about elements of culture, from either the teacher or the students; this can be especially delicate in questions of religion and where there are wide differences between cultures on certain points, this can occasionally cause tension perhaps and not only between the teacher and the students but also between students. There might be students who have different attitudes within the class. This might cause tension. (Lloyd, 21-24)*

Having lived in Lebanon for a long time seemed to raise Lloyd's awareness about the lack of tolerance among the Lebanese, including lecturers and students. It seemed, however, that Lloyd along with the other participants held a particular attitude towards these issues. He preferred avoiding such issues instead of challenging them.

Lloyd thought English might be associated with colonialism which may result in digging up old tensions. He added that students have their own culture; therefore, values are arbitrary and some might think that some values are superior. No culture should be considered superior. He said,

*As I say, there is the risk of confusing a target language with a target culture, especially in countries where there has been a history of colonialism and imperialism. It risks the dragging up of old ideas which no longer have any place in the modern world, as if there is a culture that people should aspire to. I don't think there is a culture that people should aspire to; people come already with their own culture. If they are interested in learning about a specific country and its culture, then they should specifically study this. I don't think it should come as part of the language course. (Lloyd, 89-96)*

Associating English with the English speaking countries may awaken colonial sentiments, thus otherization (Holliday et al., 2004). Lloyd seemed to ignore global English/culture, which can challenge such feelings. In addition, ICLT aims to raise awareness about learners' cultural identity and challenge cultural biases and ethnocentrism.



#### 6.4.3.2. Practical limitations for ICLT

As to ICLT practical limitations, the interviewees had similar concerns. They argued that teaching culture at the foundational level may create certain limitations. For example, Suha felt that there was lack of appropriate materials, lack of teachers' intercultural training, and time shortage which created hindrances to ICLT. The following illustrates the interviewees' concerns:

*We are trying to get our students to a very high level of language proficiency in a relatively short time. We don't have the luxury of the twelve years of regular schooling. You need to have materials (...) you will need to have teachers who can lead discussions about different kinds of situations that would require tolerance or understanding and that sort of thing. (Suha, 94-95, 139-142)*

It seemed that they were not aware that these practical limitations can be overcome with making more effort to realize ICC in ELT.

#### 6.4.4. Suggestions for better IC education

##### 6.4.4.1. Including ICLT in ELT

The three interviewees' suggestions for better intercultural education are promising. Both lecturers thought that the *Mosaic* series cannot cover all the required skills. For example, Oudy said, "*A book of 10 chapters cannot cover everything*" (Oudy, 159-160). The textbook, however, can be a point of departure to develop IC: "*The Mosaic series is a good start because it does allow for this kind of in-teaching to happen*" (Oudy, 145-146).

Both interviewees suggested that those who are in charge of the English program should take the initiative to implement ICC in ELT. Teaching culture should be included as an objective in the syllabus, workshops and teacher training sessions. These activities would meet students' intrinsic motivation along with their socio-cultural needs. Maya said,

*I think that this should not be left only to the teachers. I think it should be on the departmental level. There should be an awareness of this in the department. I think the department should really require this; it should be in the syllabus. I think the department should have some workshops, training the teachers and raising their awareness. I think ICC workshops for teachers should be done sooner or later, and it should be included in the syllabus as one of the objectives because it's very important. It's part of citizen education in this country especially that our students graduate and end up in the Gulf, in the US, and all over the world. I think this decision is to be taken on the departmental level.*  
(Maya, 192-200)

At the end of the interview, Suha seemed to have second thoughts about ICLT. She considered the interview as revealing and promised to take ICLT into consideration in the future. She said, *"Well, I think I realized from this interview that we should make it more of a conscious element in our division in the English department"* (Suha, 177-178). She said that she will put it on the next year's agenda and include it in the 'Tool of the Trade' workshop that takes place in the English Division to discuss innovative ideas for practice. She said, *"Through our professional development initiative our Tools of the Trade program, I think we should put that on the agenda for next year"* (Suha, 181-

182). There was lack of awareness about IC in my context. However, Suha's new attitude along with the lecturers' approval of and their belief in the benefits and the need for seemed to be promising.

I have analyzed and presented the main findings from Cycle 3 and evaluated the intervention in realizing its objectives. This chapter also explored and analyzed lecturers' and administrators' opinion about the success or failure of the feasibility of ICLT in Lebanon.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter I will analyze and summarize the findings from Cycle 2 and Cycle 3, with the view to answering the research questions presented in Section 1.4 and below. Following the spring semester (Cycle 2) and the summer semester (Cycle 3), the following six major themes emerged from the students' answers to the first two research questions, and from the stakeholders' answers (students, administrators and lecturers) to the third research question. In the process, I will refer back to the research questions, the literature review, the methodology, and the contexts underpinning this AR study. As indicated above, due to lack of base-line data such as pre-intervention interviews or pre-intervention survey, only the diary enabled me to detect changes in attitude from beginning to the end of the intervention.

#### **7.1. The students' attitudes towards the English language/culture**

The first research question was:

1. What are the participants' attitudes about the foreign language cultures, countries and peoples associated with the English language they are learning and towards the language itself?

ICLT developed the learners' positive attitudes towards the English language. It was thought that English is a tool that has a universal role and serves various functions.

Most participants in both Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 did not show any negative attitudes towards the language itself. This was due to the participants' belief in the power of the language as a tool in intercultural communication. For example, the comments "*English is everywhere*" (Shady, 11), English is "*a lingua franca*" (F2S3, 29), and a "*common*

*language*” (*Eddy*, 3), reflect the participants’ view of English. People are not confined to the national or cultural borders nowadays; learners need to interact with otherness on the local and global levels. Accordingly, English is a global means to communicate better with differences whether on the local or global levels (Crystal, 2003; Holliday et al., 2004; Byram, 2006; ICOPROMO, 2007; Kramsch, 2009).

In Cycle 2 and Cycle 3, the students believed in the usefulness of English to meet people’s extrinsic motivation (Gardner, 1985). For example, students felt that English would help them to succeed in life. As recorded in the data entries, this extrinsic motivation might have been due to their awareness of the importance of English in the world market (E1, February 28, 2011). It might also have stemmed from their mediated experience, for example, Eddy’s relative’s experience in the Gulf (*Eddy*, 2-9). The reason for the positive attitudes towards English was not because of inherent qualities in the English Language as compared to other languages but because the students considered English as the best means to meet people’s extrinsic motivation.

Rooted within the sociocultural paradigm and adhering to the non-essentialist view of culture, ICLT emphasizes the role of culture, and social and cultural contexts (Byram, 2006; Hall, 2002; Holliday et al., 2004; Lantolf et al., 2009; Lamb, 2009; Risager, 2000; Secru, 2005). The importance of English lies in being a cultural tool to socialize and interact with others. Through ICLT, the students were able to ‘get inside’ the concepts and beliefs of terrorism from different views, Western and Arab, in particular in Cycle 3 (E8, August 8, 2011). They were able to realize that beliefs and values are relative and culturally bound.

Several learners in both Cycles thought English is a tool to reduce barriers among cultures and minimize misunderstandings (*F4S5*, 22-23). The students were aware that stereotypes exist amongst cultures (E6, August 2, 2011). For example, they felt that stereotypes exist between Arabs and the West because of the lack of a common language that could help them communicate better and reduce barriers among countries (*Eddy*, 44-49), especially Western stereotypes against Arabs after September 11, 2001. The student felt that this attitude should be challenged through the Arab-English language media (*Eddy*, 142). The student believed that it is not language that changes people's thinking, but it is access to information through English. In this context, English is the tool for making information available.

English cannot be separated from its context and from the world (Byram, 2006). English, in particular in Cycle 2, is the language of the enemy. In Section 4.1.3., the discourse on colonialism reappeared in conjunction with the English language (Lamb, 2009; Pennycook, 1998, cited in Holliday et al., 2004, p. 110; Pennycook, 2007). The above stances are related to the local socio-political contexts and are not separate from Western politics in the region and the legacy of colonialism (Byram, 1997; 2006; Holliday et al., 2004).

Discussions about tolerance and openness generated, at times, outcomes that contradicted the aims of ICLT. At such times they tended to reinforce essentialism and awaken dormant feelings about the colonial era (Said, 1978, cited in Holliday et al., 2004, p. 93). In Cycle 2, most students thought that the West, especially the US, is driven by the ambition to dominate the world politically and economically (*FIS3*, 228-

229). In the context of the Arab world they thought that the West, especially the US supported Israel against Arabs. They also believed that the West cared only about its economic interests, world dominance and superiority (*FIS3*, 329-220; *FIS4*, 230-232). Such beliefs create mistrust and bring back the specter of colonialism, values which might have triggered the learners' negative attitude towards the West (Lamb, 2009; Holliday et al., 2004).

The above attitudes led the students into thinking about 'Us and Them' (Holliday et al., 2004). For example, when asked to describe their culture to a foreigner, most students looked at the West through a large culture lens 'Us' versus 'Them' (Ibid.). Essentialism represents the West as the 'other' imagined community (Lamb, 2009). As revealed in the demographic information in Section 3.8., Appendix 2 and 3, and the data presentation and analyses, most students had never experienced otherness (Holliday et al., 2004). On the contrary, mediated experiences from their immediate familiar contexts or through the "media saturated society" dominate the learners' sense of reality and the way they define themselves and the Western world (Strinati, 1997, cited in Holliday et al., 2004, p. 109). They have fixed schemata which seem to stem mostly from their mediated experiences (Holliday et al., 2004), political considerations and "historical baggage" (Hall, 2002, p. 75) which increase essentialism. In brief, the other is the enemy.

Stereotyping and otherizing Western values were obvious in most students' answers in Cycle 2 (see Table 3). The students adopted particular perspectives on the Western world using a language that reflected their cultural world view (Gee, 1999, cited in Holliday et al., 2004, p. 74-75). They were critical of Western values and ways of life.

It seemed that the intervention, in particular, the discussion on terrorism, helped express already existing values, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, political considerations and historical grievances (Hall, 2002). The following negative attributes reflect their stereotypes about the West: “*corrupt*”, “*little religious beliefs*”, “*too much freedom*” (FIS3, 22-24), “*family disintegration*”, and “*high rate of suicide*” (Shady, 65-67). The learners adopted an essentialist view of Western values, one which views other cultures as mistaken and one’s own as the norm (Holliday et al., 2004).

The above mentioned attitudes strengthened my beliefs that the NS should not be a model to adopt in ELT (Lamb, 2009; Pavlenko and Norton, 2007; Prodromou, 1997; Timmis, 2002; Sifakis, 2004). The ICOPROMO Project activities such as “Preferences” and “I speak English and I am literate” did not appear to be successful in breaking with the thought ‘English is the language of the enemy’ in Section 4.1.3. In practice, English is usually associated with the native speaking countries, as the teachers and administrators stated above (Crystal, 2003). The students seemed to have associated it with the historical baggage of some English speaking countries that is colonialism; hence they otherized the West (Holliday et al., 2004).

In addition, as indicated in the evaluation of Cycle 2 (Chapter 5), it seems that the issue of terrorism had had a major influence on students’ attitudes towards the West. On the local Lebanese level, with their diverse sects and political affiliations with the West and certain Arab countries, they have their own perspectives. Cultural factors, such as history, politics, and religion affect stereotyping. Several students indicated that terrorism is the most relevant topic to their context and to the global context (E7 and E8, August 2011). They prioritized the issue of terrorism stereotypes, considering it more



important and more relevant than other issues such as gender stereotypes. Accordingly, in Cycle 3 I aimed to raise awareness about stereotypes in general and to focus on critical cultural awareness and decentering (Byram, 2006). I also kept reminding the students of the principles that underpin this study, namely ICC and non-essentialism, whenever I felt tension lurking in the air during the discussions and the activities in the class (E9, August 16, 2011). In addition, the activities in the intervention, in particular the movie segments, made them aware that stereotypes and otherization are not limited to the East and the West. They exist everywhere in the world and should be deconstructed (Byram, 2006; Holliday et al., 2004).

As to the learners in Cycle 3, they developed a different attitude towards the English language and the English culture. The learners seem to have developed particular attitudes towards ICLT because they felt it taught them “*real English*” (F4S5, 393-394) which parallels the non-essentialist view of the English language/culture (Crystal, 2003; Holliday et al., 2004; Lamb, 2009). Unlike the students in Cycle 2, they looked at the English language/culture from an intercultural perspective and non-essentialist view. Consequently, this view seems to have had a more positive effect on their attitudes towards difference on the local and the global levels, specifically towards the West, as discussed below in answer to the second research question.

## **7.2. The effects of ICLT on the students’ attitudes towards otherness**

The second research question was:

1. How can ICLT affect these attitudes? More specifically, how can ICLT texts and tasks contribute to learners developing ICC or, on the contrary, otherizing and stereotyping?

I explored the effects of ICLT in helping the participants in both Cycles to develop intercultural competence and stereotype avoidance within their culture and towards the target culture. It is worth noting that the responses to teaching intercultural skills are very individual. Each skill has a different result according to the student, as discussed above and presented below.

In both Cycles, most students felt that the intercultural course was useful and helpful. For example, in Cycle 2, the students felt that ICLT is authentic and relevant to their lives (E7, August 19, 2011). The attitude or *savoir comprendre* skill raised their cultural awareness and encouraged them to reflect on their own culture. One student used to believe that his culture is worthless: “*we are retarded*” (F2S5, 173-176). The student seemed to allude to the Lebanese civil war which has damaged not only the infrastructure in Lebanon but also the youths’ attitude towards their culture and the other within the same country. They are also still psychologically and physically confined to their regions, sects and political parties. This attitude creates a hindrance to openness and interaction with the other but also a hindrance to intercultural awareness. After taking the course, the participants pointed out that they now look at their culture differently (F2S4, 178-182). Now, it is important for the same students to talk about their cultures because they look at it from an intercultural, non-essentialist perspective. They developed openness towards otherness within their local culture.

Although believing that the West is the enemy, as noted above, the participants stated that they had developed the potential to see other perspectives. ICLT caused some change in the learners’ attitudes towards the target culture (Sections 4.2.1., 4.2.2 and 4.2.3). The learners felt that the West could be a model to look up to. It is important to

question the taken-for-granted in the local culture and to try to improve instead of stereotyping and otherizing (Byram, 2006; ICOPROMO, 2007). In answer to the advantages and disadvantages of relating and interpreting (*savoir comprendre*) themes in both cultures the students stated that this skill helped them evaluate and learn lessons from the target culture to improve their culture. They acknowledged weaknesses in their culture and tried to learn lessons from the West to correct them. The observations *“Knowing other perspective makes us capable of knowing our mistakes” (F1S1, 176-177)* shows the learners’ willingness to be open towards otherness. Their aim was to improve their culture. They may be referring to Lebanon’s civil war and its aftermath which they are still suffering from. They looked up to the West as a model when they compared it to their culture. They questioned the taken-for-granted in their culture along with its shortcomings without being specific about any one of them (Byram, 2006).

ICLT seems to have been more successful in developing the learners’ IC and non-essentialism in Cycle 3 than in Cycle 2. As noted in the diary and in Section 3.8.3.1, this might be due to the change in focus and in practice that had informed Cycle 3. In the latter Cycle, the discussions about openness and tolerance seemed to meet its objectives. One of the objectives of ICC is to educate people for intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2006). The majority of the students agreed that there was a change towards difference. For example, the students stated that they had developed positive attitudes towards differences, in particular within their culture where sectarianism is an issue. They seemed to develop openness, tolerance, flexibility and stereotype avoidance: *“we are tolerant towards each other” (F3S2, 152-153)*. This change had implications on their way of thinking, too. *“We should accept each other to live together in the same country” (F4S6, 192- 193)* was a common observation.

The same change affected feelings towards the West. With respect to English speaking countries, ICLT has also a great impact on the interviewees' beliefs and attitudes in Cycle 3. The students did not explicitly show negative attitudes towards the target culture. The students reported that they had had negative opinions about the West. After taking the course, there was a change in their attitudes towards it and towards other foreign countries (*Rony, 130-134*). However, a few students claimed that tolerance should be mutual: "*They should accept our culture the same way as we accept theirs*" (*F3S2, 137-138*). In other words, attitudes should be mutual to be effective. I wrote, "The students' observations confirmed my beliefs in the importance of introducing ICLT as obligatory in English language education in order to be effective hence mutual between people from different cultures" (E8, August 16, 2011).

The change in the intervention regarding the activity on terrorism (simulation/role playing, interpreting instead of only comparing and contrasting attitudes and decentring) had been the reason for the students' acquired attitudes towards otherness (E8, August, 16 2011). ICLT raised the learners' awareness about the importance of Byram's (2006) framework to find solutions to controversial issues. In other words, they seemed to refer to the decentering and perspective-taking skills (ICOPROMO, 2007; Byram, 2006). The change helped students to know more about the issue and to find ways for self-improvement and for improving the Arab image in the West (*Rony, 23*). They developed a new perspective: with terrorism negotiation is the best solution (*F4S4, 219-220*; E2, July 5, 2011; E8, August 16, 2011). In addition, there was a new belief: in order to earn respect for one's culture one should respect the other's culture. Students

explained, for example, that the new knowledge may create a good image of the Arabs and may leave a better impression in the West.

Some students went even further to imply the IS competence (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). They believed that those who experienced intercultural language learning will be more prepared to deal with differences whether on the local or global level than those who did not acquire such dimensions. Mike said, *“Those who never took this course before won’t be able to deal with foreigners. You find them isolated, prejudging and stereotyping them and vice versa”* (Mike, 123-125). Acquiring Byram’s intercultural competencies might be translated in acquiring the IS identity that can survive or mediate between cultures (Rony, 11- 13). We can infer from most learners’ answers that ICLT had a great impact on their identity. It introduced the learners to new ways of thinking, a new language, and new cultures.

The students, in particular in Cycle 3, claimed that they were implementing those dimensions in their daily life (F4S3, 206-210). They were in favor of living harmoniously with diversity, prejudice avoidance, dialogue, discussions and tolerance (E8, August, 16, 2011). Communication and sharing ideas may lead to tolerance and problem solving. Embodying a sample of the larger society, it is believed that those acquired dimensions and skills may be transferred from the classroom to society at large (F4S2, 206-210). This could help avoid misunderstanding (F3S2, 171-172), as discussed below.

### *7.2.1. The effect of the course: stereotype avoidances*

In both Cycles, the participants indicated that ICLT contributed to challenging stereotypes. Even though ICLT triggered negative feelings towards the West in Cycle 2, it helped develop better attitudes towards differences in general. The student who resented the West admitted that not all Westerners are against Arabs (*F1S3, 17-18*). Shady stated that he used to judge people (*Shady, 29-30*). The students developed the knowledge that they should not generalize by drawing conclusions from a small sample: “*but you should avoid this, you can’t judge a whole culture only by meeting 2 or 3 people from that culture*” (*Rony, 153-154; E2 Jul 5, 2011y; E8, August 16, 2011*). They learned to accept other cultures and avoid stereotyping (*Eddy, 15-18*). As a result, this change helped the students build relationships with friends from different regions and to respect people from different sects.

ICLT with a focus on decentring seems to be effective. Judging a whole culture drawing on a small sample should be avoided. The students in Cycle 3 claimed that ICLT was the reason behind changes in attitude and in challenging stereotyping. This change was due to the movie segments, readings in the intervention, the discussions about openness, tolerance, and to sharing ideas (*F4S6, 196*) (*F4S3, 41-42; F4S3, 154-155*). ICLT also affected their perceptions towards values that may be different from their cultural values (*E4, July 19, 2011*). In class, for example, most students stated that they are not making generalizations anymore and that they learned to respect the other.

As with attitudes towards the local culture, the students stated that there was a change, too. For example, Mike was aware of people’s tendency to stereotype Americans negatively, but he seemed to have moved beyond that. He stated that before taking the

course “*America was the enemy*” (Mike, 98-103). After taking the course, however, he would describe the target culture, more specifically the US, differently. In addition, the impact of the course seemed to encompass changes in the learners’ way of thinking. ICLT developed their knowledge and triggered their curiosity to know about the target culture. For example, Mike stated, “*This course gave me the chance to know more about other cultures, so if I want to travel to an English speaking country, I have a general idea about its people now*” (Mike, 80-82). In other words, he believes he will be able to relate to their attitudes and stereotypes.

Critical understanding of one’s culture and questioning the taken-for-granted is also a crucial part of being interculturally competent for the students in Cycle 3 (Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 2006). For example, several students felt that their culture is flawed (Mike, 87-89). The sectarian conflicts that have plagued Lebanon for so long seemed to influence the learners’ opinion about their culture (E6, August 2, 2011). For example, Mike felt that there are real shortcomings in his culture’s lack of open-mindedness and tolerance. He hoped that the new generation will lead the change by being open to differences and by “*replacing our bad habits with good ones*” (Mike, 91-92). ICLT is the tool that provided the student with the hope to live harmoniously with differences (E6, August 2, 2011).

The students believe that avoiding stereotyping may help find solutions to intercultural misunderstandings through dialogic relations (Dysthe, 2002). As one student recommended, “*dialogue and conversations*” (F3S1, 175-159; E6, August 2, 2011) are the alternatives to find solutions, develop tolerance, and challenge stereotypes

particularly terrorism stereotypes (*Mike, 126-129*). For this reason, they believe, as noted above, they are more privileged than those who have not taken the course.

Conscious that stereotyping may lead to misunderstandings, students reported that they developed openness, tolerance, accepting, respecting and understanding others (E). They believe that generalization should be avoided, and that they are avoiding it by changing attitudes towards people from different religions and different cultures (*F2S2, 202-203*).

ICLT raised their awareness about new knowledge such as stereotype avoidance, as discussed in Section 4.2.3.2. in Cycle 2 and in Section 6.2.2. in Cycle 3. In line with Kolb (1984) and Liddicoat (2008), the learners translated through reflection into formation and applying new knowledge to a new situation. Consequently, misunderstanding is avoided because the participants learned not to “*cross the line and hurt others*” (*F3S3, 120-121*).

Stereotypes can be positive and negative, but both are dangerous (Byram, 1997, p. 20). Positive stereotypes were discussed in the classroom (E4, July 19, 2011). The students were aware of the side effects of positive stereotyping; however, they believed that adopting positive attitudes towards other cultures more specifically towards the West can be useful. One student stated that he expected to gain Westerners’ respect. He said that he replaced his negativity attitude towards differences with positive attitudes towards his own Arab culture as well as towards other cultures (*Rony, 119-122*). As this was an aspect of the study that emerged only during the discussions in Cycle 3, it is



recommended that more materials be included in the future to carry on with more discussions on the negative effects of positive stereotypes.

ICLT cannot be implemented if it is resisted by the stakeholders in my context. For this, the findings below in answer to the third research question may confirm or disconfirm the success of ICLT.

### **7.3. The stakeholders' reasons for wanting or not wanting the intercultural course**

The third and final research question was:

1. To what extent is ICLT likely to be welcomed by all stakeholders? What are some of the limitations one has to overcome?

There were differences among the stakeholders' views, i.e., the students, administrators and lecturers towards ICLT. As evidenced in the data from both Cycles along with the data from the administrators and lecturers and the diary, the majority of the students seem to be most excited about ICLT. The majority of the stakeholders reported that the intercultural approach was new to them.

A salient reason for the students in both Cycles to welcome ICLT was its break with the traditional, structural, audio-lingual model and cognitive approaches to teaching/learning English (Byram, 2006; Lantolf et al., 2009; Risager, 2000). The learners were critical of their previous language/culture learning that dominated their language courses. This statement summarizes their opinion: language is "*more than subject-verb-object*" (F4S3, 92). The students were critical of the communicative approach they were used to, which neglected culture or looked at language as a static entity (Liddicoat, 2002). In brief, the students were taught language/culture as factual

information for test purposes as discussed in Section 2.10.1. The stress was on teaching English for academic purposes to meet university requirements and potentially to meet the students' need for English in the global market (Bacha et al., 2008), as noted by the stakeholders in Section 6.4.

The students seem to be aware that their IEP English courses had neglected teaching language from an intercultural perspective. In their discussions about the importance of language to culture, and vice versa, most students reported that ELT is more than reading, speaking, and listening: *"It is much more than that"* (F4S2, 99). Students indicated that ICLT does not teach the book: *"There's a big difference"* (Eddy, 22), and *"because it was other than using the book. We won't use what we learned in the book. We will forget them and only remember the information concerning culture"* (Eddy 27-28). Other students believed that knowledge of the language is incomplete if not accompanied with intercultural cultural knowledge. Accordingly, the students stated that ICLT was much deeper than the traditional course (Brown, 1994). Across the two Cycles, there is consistent approval in the data concerning the knowledge dimension the new course offered. When asked to reflect on ICLT, the students explained that they learned about different cultures, specifically different customs, norms, and ways of thinking and perceptions.

It may be inferred from the above discussion that most students became aware of these different approaches e.g. small culture and large culture approaches (Kramsch, 1993; Weaver, 1986). The traditional course, as discussed earlier, adopts the large culture view or culture with a big C, treating culture as a fifth skill (Damen, 1987). Learning always takes place in a specific socio-cultural context (Byram, 2006; Brown, 2000;

Kramersch, 2008; Lamb, 2009). ICLT is rich in useful cultural knowledge that can be beneficial to them now and in the future, as discussed in Section 6.3.1. For example, as one of the competencies discussed in class, non-verbal communication was considered by most students, in both Cycles, a distinctive cultural feature in the course (E6, March 28, 2011; E3, July 12, 2011). Knowing, for example, the meaning of a gesture in different countries may facilitate learning the language and may help avoid culture shock. Students related this new knowledge to their previous knowledge. They referred to a hand gesture that could be misunderstood between people in Lebanon and even another Arab country, Egypt.

There was lack of awareness of ICLT in my context. For example, culture is a low priority for Lloyd (*Lloyd, 137-138*). As to the head of the division, it should not take place, in particular, at the foundational level (*Suha, 63-68*). Consequently, these attitudes towards integrating language and culture in ELT affect practice in the IEP classrooms because it is not required by the English department (*Maya, 154-159*). Although *Mosaic 2: Reading* includes culture ICLT went beyond communicative competence in ELT. It introduced and helped develop other important, relevant, and useful dimensions and skills of which the other stakeholders, the administrators and lecturers, might not be aware of, as indicated by the latter. Maya believes that there might be a lack of awareness of the importance of ICLT in their context (*154-159*); therefore, the new demand of the global world and the learners' new needs and purposes are not met.

ICLT which is constructivist in nature was a valuable experience for the students. It was a means to a new experience with the English language. The students indicated that

the traditional course neglected dialogical relationship (*F3S1*, 157-159; E7, August 9, 2011). From my experience as an IEP teacher, we are used to having discussions in the traditional course. But sensitive religious and political issues are avoided because they may create conflicts and tensions, as corroborated by the administrators and lecturers in Section 6.4. However, the discussions about issues that were considered sensitive in the context of the intercultural course using Praxis (Negueruela, 2003; Lantolf et al., 2009; Lantolf, 2008) or theory in practice that is Byram's framework and Holliday et al.'s view of culture helped the students to explore deeper cultural issues such as stereotyping and prejudice (*Mike*, 1-2). Research, reflection, discussions with peers, and discussions with the teacher about sensitive topics rendered the course important, useful, and tension free.

In addition, ICLT gave the students a voice in the choice and discussion of topics that are relevant to their lives and that they like to discuss (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009; Lantolf et al., 2009). They discussed terrorism which was considered very sensitive and avoided by the stakeholders. ICLT allowed the students to be actively involved in the process of meaning and knowledge construction instead of merely being passive receivers of information. It allowed them to discuss relevant sensitive issues without being involved in conflict (E8, August 16, 2011). It emerged that cultural similarities and differences, as noted by several students, should be taught to be practiced in real life. Cultural similarities and differences were used carefully when dealing with values and sensitive issues in the context of the intercultural course. Such an experience, for example using Byram's (2006) framework along with a socio-cultural approach in dealing with sensitive issues, can alleviate the lecturers' and the administrators' fear of tensions and conflicts in the classroom.

ICLT does not, in fact, contradict the IEP objectives. As to the management's concerns about the learners' language competence, ICLT teaches and improves English proficiency. As noted above, ICLT has the potential to facilitate learning and improving learners' reading, listening and speaking. The lecturers believed so as well (*Oudy*, 249-255). Comparing and contrasting different cultural issues were included in the IEP class but to add more factual knowledge about the local culture and target culture, and to enhance the learners' linguistic proficiency (Section 2.10.1). However, students were disengaged with their learning of English as noted below, which affects negatively their language proficiency (Svalberg, 2007, 2009).

ICLT was engaging, according to the students. When asked whether ICLT enhanced his engagement and participation, Rony said it did (*Rony*, 22). Students were disengaged with their traditional English learning (E8, August 16). For example, Mike stated, "*we didn't use to attend this course*" (3). Another student found a problem in English in the IEP courses: "*The problem could be from the book, teacher, or the management; it was difficult and the student only cared about passing it without learning*" (*Rony*, 36-38). In line with Brown's (2000) and Lantolf et al.'s (2009) findings, meeting the learners' needs and purposes is motivating; therefore, the integration of language and culture in teaching English was motivating (Brown, 1994).

One reason why ICLT is motivating may be because it can strengthen the learners' identity (*Rony*, 72-75). ICLT has the potential to provide the learners with a new, IS identity. The negative attitudes towards the target culture discussed in Cycle 2 above, was not the reason behind the learners' de-motivation and disengagement. In this study,

in particular in Cycle 3, the intercultural activities and discussions raised the learners' awareness about the importance of English as a global language, which is not associated with the NS identity (Byram, 2006; Holliday et al., 2004; Lamb, 2009; Macaro, 2003). The students were expected to take on a NS identity as 'ideal self' and future guide, hence they were demotivated (Lamb, 2009). ICLT, however, showed them that there was an alternative. They were provided with tools to construct IS identities and this seemed to motivate them.

The learners were willing to adopt the IS identity, as noted below. The students enjoyed their new role as ethnographers through doing research and their new role as intercultural mediators (Roberts et al., 2001). As indicated in Section 5.2 and in the diary (Appendix 11), they conducted research about terrorism stereotypes and did simulation/role playing, each within their roles, not only from Arab and Western perspectives but also from individual perspectives to reach this conclusion, 'negotiation is the best solution' (F4S4, 219-220). Their willingness to create a third place identity or to decenter was due to the intercultural skills they acquired during the intercultural course, as noted below. The learners indirectly refer to Byram's (2006) framework, mediating between cultures to find a 'third place' identity (Kramsch, 2009). One student went beyond the classroom context to illustrate this point stating that diplomats are sent to foreign countries to acquire the IS identity (F4S2, 130-138) while the students are acquiring it in their classroom by taking the intercultural course.

The administrators and lecturers, on the other hand, are trying to help the students achieve NS competencies through ELT. For example, the head of the division underscored the "*Anglophone competence*" (Suha, 49-50) to meet the learners' extrinsic

motivation (Gardner, 1985). However, knowing the language structures and vocabulary may improve language proficiency, but it cannot help to avoid intercultural misunderstanding (Alptekin, 2002; Byram, 2006; Alvarez, 2007; Clouet, 2006; 2008). Even an English NS should be interculturally competent (Hyde, 2001, 1998). In my context, the NS should not be an ideal model. The English language learner should consider himself/herself a “*diplomat*” (F4S2, 121-130) who can mediate between different cultures, using foreign language competence in combination with knowledge about and an understanding of the other person’s cultural, and social universe (Kramsch, 1993; Jaeger, 2001; Corbett 2003; Liddicoat; 2008; Byram, 2006).

#### **7.4. The stakeholders’ reflections on the importance of IC or the five *savoirs***

As for the other stakeholders, Suha believed that ICLT should not be implemented at the foundational level while Lloyd, as noted above, did not approve of it at all. The lecturers, on the other hand, appeared to be more in favor of adopting ICC in particular the attitude dimension.

##### *7.4.1. Cultural knowledge or *savoirs**

As evidenced from the data, the theoretical input, Byram’s (2006) *savoirs* and skills and Holliday et al.’s (2004) non-essentialism can explain learners’ responsiveness to the course. The data indicate, however, that the participants were selective about which elements of Byram’s (2006) intercultural model they responded to.

The students in both Cycles appreciated the *savoirs* they experienced in their ELT. As noted in Section 4.3.5.1. and Section 6.3.3.1, and in the diary cultural knowledge was the source of most students’ responsiveness to the course (Byram, 2006). Due to the

change in the intervention in Cycle 3, cultural knowledge was apparently also appreciated and seen from a more practical angle. Participants felt that it was important to be acquainted with differences and develop the savoir dimension (E8, August 16). The students believed that the Westerners' lack of knowledge or savoirs might be the reason behind their stereotypes concerning Arabs. Knowledge can facilitate communication with different peoples and may reduce or avoid misunderstanding (F4S3, 19; F4S5, 22-23). Most students agreed that this knowledge or savoirs would result in knowing how people relate to and interact with others (Byram, 2006). Referring to the movie segments, they believed that knowledge can raise awareness about different types of stereotypes and thus avoid disagreement (F3S2, 17-18). In line with Byram (2006), the students pointed out that savoirs will create curiosity to know more about differences.

#### *7.4.2. Savoir apprendre/faire: knowledge discovery skill can avoid cultural misunderstanding*

Knowledge discovery or savoir apprendre/faire is a pre-condition for raising cultural awareness, avoiding misunderstanding, and coping with ambiguity (Byram, 2006; ICOPROMO, 2007). When asked to reflect on ICLT, the learners in both Cycles underscored the savoir/apprendre faire skills. In particular, the activities “The Committee from Kuwait” and “Journey into the Unconscious” along with other activities and discussions raised their awareness about the importance of this skill, as indicated in Section 4.3.5.2 and Section 6.3.3.1. Before dealing with cultural differences, the students had felt that doing research may raise people's awareness about differences in behavior and ways of thinking. For example, one student suggested doing research before encountering differences to avoid cultural shock (F1S4, 49-51). It may



be inferred from the participants' answers in both Cycles that when interacting with a document or an event new understanding and knowledge of cultures may trigger curiosity to know more about differences. This skill can result in becoming acquainted with different perceptions and behaviors.

#### *7.4.3. The skill of relating and interpreting (savoir comprendre): to improve and raise awareness about stereotypes*

When asked about the advantages and disadvantages of the relating and interpreting skills or savoir comprendre, the majority of the students in both Cycles thought that it mainly has advantages. In spite of their relapses into stereotypes and otherization (in particular toward the target culture), this skill helped the students in Cycle 2 to question the taken-for-granted to improve their own culture. The students in Cycle 3 also valued the savoir comprendre skill stating that it was a means to recognize problems in one's culture, learn from the target culture, and improve their culture. The students felt that being open to other cultures through the savoir comprendre skill is useful and beneficial for they improve and raise awareness about stereotypes, as discussed above.

The teacher/researcher is also a learner in AR (Burns, 2010; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). As noted above, I decided to change the focus of my research and make some changes in my practice. I stressed the savoir comprendre skills, and the savoir s'engager. I asked the students to do more research to understand other perspectives. I also asked them to do simulation/role playing (Section 5.2) to help them decenter and avoid stereotyping and essentialism. The result was a relative lack of negative attitudes or a change in attitudes towards differences within the local culture and the target culture. By avoiding the contrastive approach that was used in Cycle 2, I was probably

better able to raise learners' awareness about essential intercultural competencies, i.e., openness and tolerance. Drawing on the activities in the intervention, such as the movie segments from *Pocahontas*, *My Life in Ruins*, and *An American Carol* and the discussions that followed the students reflected on the issue and identified different types of stereotypes that exist when people from different cultures meet. In addition to the above, experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Liddicoat, 2008) and dialogical relations (Dysthe, 2002; Lantolft et al., 2009), with a focus on *savoir s'engager*, (perspective taking or decentring) also helped to identify and avoid stereotyping instead of reinforcing it. The advantages of the above *savoirs* resulted in valuing the below *savoir etre*.

#### 7.4.4. *Attitudes (Savoir etre)*

*Savoir etre* or decentering (Byram, 2006; ICOPROMO, 2007) was one of the competencies discussed through the activities in the intervention. Within the framework of this study, the most salient reason for the students wanting the course was this attitudes dimension. It is likely that the administrators have a highly developed *savoir etre* which they practice in their daily lives. However, ICLT, whose core is *savoir etre*, was not considered appropriate for the students. In their discussions about the limitations of ICLT in Section 5.4.3.1., the administrators and lecturers feared that ICLT might trigger tensions, conflicts, and arouse dormant, negative feelings towards differences. Despite this, being in constant contact with the students, the lecturers had different attitudes toward ICLT, in particular towards the *savoir etre* dimension.

There was agreement between the lecturers and the students regarding the importance and need for this dimension. The students in both Cycles and in the diary expressed the

importance of developing the *savoir etre* to avoid misunderstanding. ICLT helped them “roll away from narrow mindedness and fanaticism” (Shady, 14-17; E7, August 9, and E8, August 16, 2011).

“The Committee from Kuwait” was an indirect means to discuss and deal with different religious traditions in the classroom. The learners felt that people should show respect and empathy to avoid misunderstanding. The activity “Not Like You” along with the movie segments from *Pocahontas* helped the learners to reflect on their attitudes towards differences. For example, one student in Cycle 3 felt that people should decenter: “*They should put themselves in the place of the other*” (F3S6, 59-60).

The students acknowledged that the lack of *savoir etre* can lead to generalization and otherization (E8, August 16, 2011). They acknowledge the existence and the practice of generalizations and stereotyping that are religious and political stereotypes. For example, in Lebanon, there is a common belief that all Shiites belong to the Hezbollah political party. Students also showed awareness about other types of stereotypes practice, providing further examples about national stereotypes. It is generally believed that all Syrians are bad, all Filipinas are maids, and all Egyptians are gas station workers. They encounter such attitudes on a daily basis.

After altering the intervention and the practice in Cycle 3, discussions about *savoir etre* brought about acknowledging, valuing and practicing the *savoir etre* dimension. When asked about their feelings when they discussed those attitudes, most students answered positively, they felt “*comfortable*” (F3S6, 154-156). With ICLT, they did not have to worry about conflicts and misunderstanding when discussing or dealing with their

friends who are from different religions and regions. ICLT produced a new climate that is much needed in the Lebanese context.

The two lecturers and students believe that the *savoir etre* dimension is necessary. In particular, *savoir etre* can meet the learners' local needs through "*serious conversation*" about issues that are relevant to their lives in the Lebanese context (*F3S1*, 157-159). Discussing sensitive topics was a taboo in our classrooms for fear of triggering tensions and conflicts among students, as stated above by management and teachers in Section 5.4.2.1 and in Section 5.4.3.1. However, the teachers and the students believed that *savoir etre* is important and necessary, in particular in the Lebanese context to face these fears and to form a well functioning modern citizen (Maya, 24-21).

When the students related the concepts of terrorism, discrimination, and stereotyping to their immediate or mediated experience, they clearly had in mind the last few decades in Lebanon's bloody history. They were aware of the reasons and causes of conflicts in the context of their lives. Accordingly, they believed in the benefits of the *savoir etre* dimension in developing alternatives and solutions. As one student put it, "*we need something like that*" (Rony, 179). The student also felt that the development of intercultural competence is not temporary (Holliday et al., 2004). The acquired knowledge will not be forgotten (*Eddy*, 151-153; *Rony*, 35-39) and may have long lasting effects.

The majority of the stakeholders thought that *savoir etre* would also be useful if people wanted to study or work in foreign countries (*F4S5*, 221-223). Due to lack of job

opportunities, they believed that the Lebanese need such helpful intercultural competencies as a point of departure to deal appropriately and effectively in new working situations (Deardorff, 2006; Deardoff and Hunter, 2006).

The effect of ICLT can be also transferred to other situations (Byram, 2006). My aim was to develop IC and raise awareness about stereotypes, such as gender, cultural, and religious discrimination. When asked about the reason for stressing the topic of terrorism one interviewee indicated that IC could be a point of departure to deal with this and other important issues (Rony, 35). IC represents a higher level of knowledge that can be internalized and used in the daily lives of the learners in the future. As the lecturers and students believe, the *savoir etre* can fill a void in people's lives.

#### **7.5. The stakeholders' reflections on the limitations of ICLT**

In addition to the administrators' and lecturers' fears of conflict and tension, which could be avoided by incorporating IC in their ELT, the data reveal that the advantages of the intercultural approach outweigh its disadvantages. ICLT made some students feel uncomfortable. It triggered inferiority complex in them when compared with the West (Lamb, 2009). Comparing their culture to the Western culture, the students felt a bit backward (*F2S1*, 220). Taking the West as a model, people might develop preferences for the target culture regardless of its weaknesses. This fear was reiterated by Lloyd: "*I don't think there is a culture that people aspire to*" (Lloyd, 89-90). It was also stated that one may relinquish his/her own culture when comparing the unrest in the local culture to the comfort provided, for example, by the American culture (*F4S5*, 174-176). However, ICLT aims to raise the learners' intercultural awareness and strengthen their cultural identities not to weaken them (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999; Bredella, 2003; Byram,

2006). Lebanon witnessed the emigration of a large number of its people during and after the civil war. The students above may be referring to the upheavals that devastated and still devastate their country. Alternatively, the lack of IC in the Lebanese context is the ‘backwardness’ that leads to relinquishing one’s culture. As for the tolerance that the intercultural approach aims to develop, several students believed that tolerance can be taken too far. Tolerance should be mutual to work out intercultural differences. Accordingly, it should be included in ELT, as suggested below.

#### **7.6. The stakeholders’ suggestions for better intercultural education**

The suggestions of the stakeholders are revealing, useful and helpful. To improve the course, which was based mostly on readings, discussions in Cycle 2, and movie segments in Cycle 3, most students suggested adding more movie segments. Students believed that such pedagogic techniques can help improve language acquisition and help understand cultural differences (Roell, 2010).

The majority, except for Lloyd, felt that ICLT should be taken into consideration. In both Cycles, there was unanimity that ICLT should be obligatory and a part of the national curriculum. They believed that no one should be deprived of the benefits of such needed beneficial skills because of their lasting effects and relevance to their lives. The two teachers agreed with the students: there is a need for ICLT in the Lebanese context and beyond (*Maya, 24-31*). Several students stressed the importance of dissemination where parents, learners, the press, the state, schools and academic programs can play important roles in spreading such important competencies. The students suggested that the course should have been taught at an early age to also include teachers (Sercu et al., 2005). The following comment: “*At their time they*

*weren't raised to believe in tolerance"* (FIS4, 304-305) elicited the following realization. It was felt that stereotypes and otherization have been the reason behind the above mentioned weaknesses and backwardness in the Lebanese context.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTION AND IMPLICATION**

This chapter will draw together the key issues that resulted from the analysis of the data in the light of the theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter Two. The focus will be on revisiting the main objectives of the study and then summarizing the original knowledge that emerges from the research. This chapter will also offer a critical evaluation of the research and its limitations, and highlight new directions for further research in the future.

#### **8.1. Original research objectives**

Aware of the changes that societies are undergoing and the increasing interest in intercultural communication, special attention was accorded to such changes and interests, reconsidering the goals, content and methodology of ELT in my context. Due to recurring unrest in Lebanon and lack of job opportunities, most students will meet with otherness in the local and the global world. I tried to create opportunities for my students to prepare them for the future. As a teacher/researcher, I provided them with tools that might help them to avoid problems that result from otherizing and stereotyping in their context and in the global communities. To meet these objectives Byram's (2006) intercultural competencies and Holliday et al.'s (2004) non-essentialist view of culture along with a social constructivist theory (Lantolf et al., 2009; Gutierrez and Vossoughi, 2010) and dialogic relations (Dysthe, 2002) were adopted with the intention to help realize the objectives of this thesis.

I carried out an AR study to address the issues presented in Chapter Three. The overarching aim of this AR study was to develop IC and non-essentialism, causing a



change and improvement in those attitudes in my immediate context, the Lebanese context, and other contexts where sectarian and political conflicts are rife. Evidence of the realization of the initial objectives was obtained through learners and other stakeholders, such as teachers and administrators. The questions posed during the focus groups discussions and semi-structured interview protocols allowed the emergence of major themes and a number of sub-themes in each Cycle.

The intended change includes teaching language from an intercultural perspective. In the IEP reading class, teaching the traditional course with a focus on the textbook in use, *Mosaic 2: Reading*, was required to improve learners'. As indicated above, the textbook teaches culture but as a fifth skills or teaches language plus culture (Damen, 1987; Kramsch, 1993). Accordingly, the writers suggest transcending the CC boundaries to take account of the different views and perspectives of people in different cultures.

Trying to imitate the NS competence is unattainable and might not meet the learners' needs. Even the NS for the English speaking countries need these skills. In addition to the NS's CC, learners need to establish relationships with documents and events through the negotiation of meaning. They need to take on the IS's role and develop their intercultural competencies to meet the needs of the global world.

English language education based on linguistic competence, sociolinguist competence and discourse competence helps improve learners' CC (Byram, 1997; 2006). It fails, however, to help them to deal effectively and appropriately when encountering differences. Accordingly, learners need Byram's (2006) intercultural dimensions, i.e.,

attitude, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness. Byram's Model may increase their intercultural competencies, creating a third place identity and a potential to avoid stereotyping and otherization.

Also, critical cultural awareness, which is at the core of this model, is badly needed in the Lebanese context because cultural and religious diversity have been a source of constant unrest. The other is seen as affiliated either with the East or the West, hence intolerance, tensions and potential conflicts. There is an urgent need for IC to challenge such attitudes. Accordingly, I tried to produce a change in my context, altering the content of my teaching and developing learner stereotype avoidance.

Breaking with the old culture of learning and teaching, however, can be difficult. It can be resisted by stakeholders because of their beliefs that their ultimate goal is to achieve proficiency in English and that ICLT cannot contribute to this. However, in my context, there was flexibility. The study made them realize that ICLT can improve learners' language proficiency. Teachers can form a link between different positions, finding a suitable mix that can meet the culture of learning, the curriculum requirements as well as the students' needs and purposes. They can give equal importance to both approaches in their practice, teaching the traditional course and implementing the intercultural approach, trying to achieve the intended outcomes.

This AR study shows that teaching language from an intercultural perspective can engage students. An outsider researcher might not be able to gain the same insights and knowledge because he/she might miss the knowledge of the classroom culture. I learned about my students' learning approach preferences i.e. learning language from an

intercultural perspective with a sociocultural approach to learning, and about the source of their disengagement. Accordingly, I played a central role in helping students develop their own knowledge and meet their current and future needs for developing ICC and stereotype avoidance. As a teacher/researcher, I followed Vygotsky's guiding principle of commitment to praxis that encourages incorporating theory and practical activities to promote development and change. I used experiential learning along with dialogical relations in a collaborative atmosphere. I promoted gradual absorption of knowledge and ideas through continual exposure rather than deliberate learning.

## **8.2. Contribution of the study**

Through this study, I have contributed to new forms of educational research and practice within the field of study. Awareness of ICC is scarce in the Lebanese context. I have also filled a gap in the existing body of literature on intercultural competence in the Lebanese context. As a result, other teachers/researchers will benefit from this study, making up for lack of similar research.

In post civil war Lebanon, there is a definite need for developing openness, tolerance, and stereotype avoidance. I have shown that it is possible to conduct ICLT in my context without the classroom descending into the chaos the administrators and lecturers seemed to fear and warn against. There are similar contexts in the Middle East and in the world where sectarian and political conflicts dominate because of lack of openness and tolerance. ICLT should be included in ELT to help solve controversial issues.

My participation in this AR study has affected the way I look at my students. Students' perceptions regarding intercultural issues allowed me to get insight into their

perspectives. Therefore, any change and improvement should be stimulated by their range of vision and needs. Language/culture should be better looked at from a non-essentialist perspective. In other words, language/culture should not be dealt with as facts to be tested. Integration of language and culture in ELT facilitates and improves learning the language. Students in other IEP classes or other classes from other disciplines should not be denied the privilege of also experiencing ICLT in their classrooms.

### **8.3. Limitations**

Connecting this study with my philosophical assumptions, I am conscious that it might be criticized because it fails to generalize its findings in a positive sense. Due to the interpretive nature of AR, it is true that the study is not representative, which affects its replicability in parallel situations. I was more concerned about its responsiveness and about the subjectivity of the participants rather than about its confirmability. I traded off the generalizability of traditional research against the uniqueness of the study in relation to the context and the urgent needs of the participants.

As for the findings, they might lack confirmability. The perceptions of the participants might not be the same as those of other students in similar situations. However, this study provided a detailed description of the research process and findings so that someone else who wants to do similar research can be informed by this study. The findings can also bring about further research in other settings where there are ongoing political and religious tensions.

This study was made possible by the cooperation of my students. However, missing the female voice might weaken the validity of the research. Therefore, future research might focus on including more female voices, as research done by Forsman (2006) shows that that girls seem better able to decenter and respect differences than boys. This should give food for thought in the Lebanese context.

#### **8.4. Implications of the study**

The integration of intercultural competence will be an ongoing quest in my classrooms. How to strike the right balance between teaching language (as structure) and culture, however, needs further research. Students at the foundational level also need to know grammar and vocabulary. Teaching the textbook can improve learners' linguistic ability in these respects. The values I promoted, however, enhance the core syllabus. The topics in the textbook can be approached from an intercultural perspective, using a socio-cultural approach to teaching language/culture. More intercultural materials and more movie segments that deal with intercultural misunderstandings should be included. Byram's (2006) model and Holliday et al.'s (2004) non-essentialism could be useful also in teaching other skills, such as listening, speaking, and writing. This approach could also be used in other university contexts in Lebanon and elsewhere.

AR could be used to break down the classroom isolation (Burns 2010). My experience in the IEP reading class was unique. In future, I would like to conduct collaborative AR with other teachers in other IEP classes. I will also aim to disseminate the benefits of ICLT in other university contexts through workshops and seminars. Some teachers display political intolerance, a major factor of otherization in the Lebanese context. There is a need for teachers to be agents for spreading IC and non-essentialism

instead of reinforcing them. Thus, it is recommended that IC be included in teachers' education and training (Sowden, 2007).

Implementing ICLT could have substantive consequences for lecturers. They are aware that there are underlying tensions, and expressed in this study that they did not wish to trigger conflicts. They avoid discussing sensitive issues and problems because they want to avoid chaos and misunderstanding. The findings of this study may encourage them to include ICLT in their practices. If so, this study has shown that it is possible to diffuse highly volatile contexts by constantly reminding students of Byram's (2006) principles.

ICC is a process that needs time. I suggest raising awareness about ICC at an early age by including it in the Lebanese national curriculum. Immediate or complete change in learners' attitudes and beliefs after one intercultural course should not be expected. However, there is hope. Frequent and continuous implementation of the intercultural approach may still yield results. For this reason, I suggest that ICLT be obligatory in the Lebanese context and in other similar contexts in the world.

### **8.5. The importance of the study**

Although this AR study was conducted with a small sample of IEP students in each cycle, it was a source of learning in action and on action. It gave me the chance to reflect and to analyze both my teaching practices and my values or philosophy. As a teacher, I sat back and reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching practices in my context. As a researcher, I tried to improve and effect change through conducting AR in a systematic way. As a result, I have developed greater confidence in AR, a better

understanding of how to engage students, develop their intercultural competencies, promote stereotype avoidance and meet their current and future needs. In conclusion, I can state that the course fulfilled my objectives to realize my values, to improve my ICLT, and to develop the learners' intercultural competence and stereotype avoidance.

# Appendices

Appendix1. Table 1: The intervention

Action Research Cycles	Traditional Course Book: <i>Mosaic 2—Reading (10 Chapters)</i>	Intervention Activities as Supplementary Materials	Data Collection / Participants	Sessions two hours per week on Wednesdays
Cycle 1: Pilot Study Fall Semester 2010--11	Week 1 - Chap 1	<i>Stating the problem; reading textbook critical review; literature review; planning the intervention:</i>	Teacher/Researcher (Myself) and IEP 003 students	
	2—Chap 1-2	Introduction: ICC/Diary		2 hours
	3—Chap 2	- Who is talking funny?		2 hours
	4—Chap 3	- Preferences		2 hours
	5—Chap 3-4	- Tu es anglaise		2 hours
	6—Chap 4	- Non-verbal communication and body language		2 hours
	7—Chap 5	- Journey into the unconscious		2 hours
	8—Chap 5-6	-Formulating hypothesis: Cultural assimilator <i>The Committee from Kuwait</i> - Social stereotypes (Gender discrimination) - I speak English, I am literate		2 hours
	9—Chap 6	-Perspective taking : Not like you ( including a movie segment: Pocahontas)		2 hours
	11—Chap 7-8	-Terrorism: Reading/Debate		2 hours
	12—Chap 8-9			
	13—HOLIDAY		Diary	
	14—Chap 10 Final Exam		FGD*/End of week 15 -Students (3 groups—6 students each)	
	15—		Interviews/ 3 volunteer students	
Cycle 2: Spring Semester 2011	February 21st/ June 10th/ Week 1 - Chap 1	-----	Teacher/Researcher (myself) and IEP 003 students	
	2—Chap 1-2	Introduction : ICC / Diary		2 hours
	3—Chap 2	- Who is talking funny?		2 hours
	4—Chap 3	- Preferences		2 hours
	5—Chap 3- 4	- Tu es anglaise		2 hours
	6—Chap 4	- Non-verbal communication and body language		2 hours
	7—Chap 5	- Journey into the unconscious		2 hours
	8—Chap 5-6	- Cultural assimilator - Social stereotypes (Gender discrimination)		2 hours
	9—Chap 6	- I speak English, I am literate		2 hours
	10—Chap 7			
	11—Chap 7-8	-Perspective taking : <b>Not like you</b> ( with a movie segment: Pocahontas)		2 hours
	12—Chap 8	-Terrorism: Reading /Debate		2 hours
	13—Chap 9-10		Diary	
	14—Chap 10 Final Exam		FGD*/End of week 15 -Students (2 groups—6 students each)	
	15—		Interviews/ 2 volunteer students	
Cycle 3: Summer Semester 2011	Week 1 - June 30th-August 25th /Chap 1-2	-Introduction : ICC / Diary	Teacher/Researcher (myself) and IEP 003 students	2 hours
	2—Chap 2-3	- Perspective taking : Not like you ( with a movie segment: Pocahontas)		2 hours
	3—Chap 3-4	- Non-verbal communication - Social stereotypes (Gender discrimination)		2 hours
	4—Chap 4-5	- <b>Movie segments:</b> My Life in Ruins	Semi-structured interviews (management and teachers)	2 hours
	5—Chap 5-6	-An American Carol		2 hours
	6—Chap 6-7	- My Big Fat Greek Wedding		2 hours
	7—Chap 7-8	-Terrorism (Reading )	- Diary	2 hours
	8—Chap 9-10	-Role playing (Terrorism) and Discussions	FGD*/End of week 9 -Students (2 groups—6 students each)	2 hours
	9—Final Exam		Interviews/ 2 volunteer students	

\* All FGDs and interviews took place aftr the final exams



## **Appendix 2. Students' personal Data**

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

**1. Gender:**

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

**2. What is your nationality?**

- ☐ Lebanese ☐ Non-Lebanese

**3. How long have you been studying foreign languages?**

- 1) 1 to 3 years  
2) 3 to 6 years  
3) 6 to 9 years  
4) More than 9 years

**4. Have you ever lived in a foreign country for a month or more?**

1. Yes  
2. No

**5. Have you ever attended a workshop or course on cultural awareness and/ or intercultural communication?**

1. Yes  
2. No

**Thank you.**

### Appendix 3. Students' demographic information

AR Cycles	Female	Male	Lebanese	Non- Lebanese	More than 6 years	Less than 6 years	lived in a foreign country	not lived in a foreign country	attended	not attended
Spring 2011	1	11	11	1	7	5	4	8	1	11
Summer 2011	1	11	10	2	9	3	3	9	2	10
Total	2	22	21	3	16	8	7	17	3	21

#### **Appendix 4. Students' focus group discussion questions**

1. When the expression 'intercultural communicative competence' is mentioned, what comes to your mind?
2. Some might think that culture is not relevant, or cannot/should not be taught so therefore has no place in the language classroom. Do you think that culture is important in language teaching?
3. How much importance do you attach to learning culture compared to learning language i.e. grammar and vocabulary?
4. What are the advantages or drawbacks of relating the themes, materials, activities that you are learning in your English class to your own cultural context or to the Lebanese cultural context'?
5. How do you feel about discussing things like openness and tolerance towards other peoples in your English class?
6. Do you think you were taught Intercultural C C in your English classes at school?
8. Do you have any advice for English teachers in Lebanon about ICC?
9. How do you think an intercultural approach to learning English could be improved?

## Appendix 5. Students' interview questions

Questions	Prompts/probes
How do you view the English course?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did the English course teach?</li> <li>2. Were there problems with the course?</li> <li>3. Did the 003 classes only need the course?</li> <li>4. What was the English language learning before?</li> </ol>
What is your opinion about the English course?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did you find it useful?</li> <li>2. Did you find it helpful?</li> <li>3. Was it different from the English course you had before</li> <li>4. Why was it different?</li> <li>5. What would happen if the English course was not implemented?</li> </ol>
How would you describe to a friend the effect of the English course on your language learning?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which skills were more developed?</li> <li>2. Which skills were not developed?</li> <li>3. Do you think the course enhanced your engagement in the classroom?</li> </ol>
How would you describe to a friend the effects of the English course on your inter- cultural knowledge?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If you were to describe your culture to a foreigner, what would you say?</li> <li>2. If you were to describe the foreign culture to a foreign friend, what would you say?</li> <li>3. Would you have to describe it in the same way if I had asked you to do this before the course?</li> <li>4. What do you think it was that made you change?</li> </ol>
How do you view the implementation of the English course in all the 003 classes?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you think the learners will like it?</li> <li>2. What do you think the learners will benefit?</li> <li>3. Do you think with the English course the learners would still do the same if they were in a different culture?</li> <li>4. Do you think with the English course the learners would behave the same in a different culture as they used to do before?</li> <li>5. Do you think with the English course the learners would think the same about cultural differences as they used to do before?</li> </ol>
Is there anything you would like to suggest to add to the English course?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you have any suggestions about how the English course could be improved?</li> <li>2. Do you think there were constraints in the English course?</li> <li>3. If yes, how would these constraints be reduced?</li> </ol>

## **Appendix 6. Managements' interview questions**

### *The chairperson and coordinator interview questions*

The interview will explore the opinion of the Chairperson of the English department and the coordinator of the Intensive English Program (IEP) about ICC and its place (present and future) in the department's English curriculum?

1. Some people suggest that we should be teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence on our English Language courses. What do you understand by culture teaching in a foreign language teaching context??
  - Do you see any potential benefits with teaching ICC?
  - Do you see any potential problems or drawbacks with it?
2. As a head of department/ as a coordinator of IEP. How much importance (if any) do you attach to teaching culture compared to teaching grammar and vocabulary and the four skills?
3. How do you feel about the suggestion that we should be teaching ICC on our English Language courses?
4. Do you feel that the aims and objectives of the English curriculum take an ICC point of view?
5. Do you think that the IEP teachers are taking an intercultural approach in their English teaching?
6. Are the IEP teachers skilled/ trained to teach using an ICC approach?
7. Do you feel the currently used teaching materials are promoting intercultural communicative competence? Explain.
8. What do you think we would need to do in the classroom in order to enhance the students' ICC?
9. Could ICC help the department fulfill its objectives? ( if yes, how)
10. In what ways, if any, was intercultural communication competence training included in your own education?
11. In what ways, if any, is intercultural communication competence included in your hiring policy?
12. Is there anything you would like to suggest, add, or to comment regarding ICC?

## **Appendix 7. Teachers' interview questions**

1. When the expression intercultural communicative competence is mentioned, what comes to your mind?
2. Do you see any potential benefits?
3. Do you see any potential problems/drawbacks?
4. How much importance do you attach to teaching culture compared to teaching language i.e. grammar and vocabulary?
5. What are the advantages or drawbacks of relating the themes, materials, activities that you are teaching in your English class to your own cultural context or to the Lebanese cultural context?
6. How do you feel about discussing things like openness and tolerance towards other peoples in your English class?
7. In what ways, if any way, ICC was included in your own education (school, university)?
8. Do you feel the currently used teaching materials (on the IEP course) are promoting intercultural communicative competence?
9. Do you feel that the aims and objectives of the English curriculum/syllabus take an ICC point of view?
10. Do you have any advice for English teachers in Lebanon about ICC?
11. Is there anything you would like to add to or comment on the English course?

## **Appendix 8. Reading lesson (530 Words): Terrorism Activity (AR Cycle 2 and 3)**

### **1998: US embassies in Africa bombed**

At least 200 people have been killed and more than 1,000 injured following explosions at United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The bombings took place within minutes of each other at around 1030 local time.

No-one has claimed responsibility but US officials suspect the attacks were the work of Osama bin Laden, an Islamic fundamentalist.

The first blast happened in the Tanzanian capital Dar es Salaam and the second, just five minutes later, in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city.

#### **US ambassador hurt**

The Nairobi explosion demolished a five-story office block sending it crashing onto the embassy next door.

The US Ambassador Prudence Bushnell was meeting Kenyan Trade Minister Joseph Kamotho at the nearby Ufundi Cooperative Bank at the time but was only slightly injured.

The blast could be heard 10 miles (16km) away and caused total chaos in the city centre.

Rufus Drabble, from the British High Commission, said there was a cloud of thick smoke over the city and helicopters hovered overhead... *(An Extract 163 Words)*

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/7/newsid\\_3131000/3131709.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/7/newsid_3131000/3131709.stm)

#### **Planned discussion:**

- Definition of terrorism (Arab Students)
- Definition of terrorism (American students)
- Who are the “freedom fighters”? (Age, sex, occupation, nationality...)
- Who are the “terrorists”? (Age, sex, occupation, nationality...)
- What do they do?
- Why do they do acts of violence? (Religious, social, economic... reasons)

-Is it justifiable (correct, right or wrong)?

- Does it represent the only means to counter injustice? What are the alternatives?

**Activity: Debate (Cycle 2)**

What are your suggestions to solve the problem of terrorism?

What are your suggestions to solve the problem of terrorism?

**Activity: Role playing/Simulation (Cycle 3)**

What are your suggestions to solve the problem of terrorism?

What are your suggestions to solve the problem of terrorism?



## **Appendix 9: Lesson (s): Movie segments**

### **My Big fat Greek Wedding, My Life in Ruins & An American Carol: Stereotypes**

These movies talk about stereotypes.

**A. Read some definitions of stereotypes. Work with a partner and think about at least three examples for each piece of information of the definitions.**

1. A simplified and fixed image of all members of a culture or group (Based on race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origins)
2. Generalization about people that are based on limited, sometimes inaccurate, information (from such sources as television, cartoons or comic books, minimal contact with one or more members of the group, second-hand information)
3. Initial prediction about strangers based on incomplete information about their culture, race, religion, or ethnicity
4. A single statement or attitude about a group of people that does not recognize the complex, multidimensional nature of human beings
5. Broad categories about people that fail to differentiate among individuals, peoples, and societies.

**B. Work in small groups. Discuss these items and decide whether they are true or false.**

1. ( ) Stereotypes can be positive or negative.
2. ( ) They are all unfair and misleading.
3. ( ) They reduce individuals to an inflexible image.
4. ( ) Human beings are unique and complex, so no one should be stereotyped.
5. ( ) They dehumanize people because they place all members of a group in one simple category.
6. ( ) Stereotypes can be true.
7. ( ) You can know a lot about a people if you know their stereotypes.
8. ( ) Stereotypes are not necessarily true, but there is a lot of reality in them.

**C. Share your opinions with the class.**

**D. Match the words about stereotypes with their definitions:**

1. Alienation
2. Attitude of superiority
3. Discrimination
4. Ethnocentrism
5. Intolerance
6. Prejudice
7. Racism
8. Scapegoat
9. Traits
10. Xenophobia

- ( ) a belief that one is better than others are
- ( ) fear or dislike of foreigners or strangers
- ( ) a feeling of being separate or not belonging

- ( ) special treatment (good or bad) based on race, religion, physical appearance, age or social class
- ( ) lack of kindness or understanding toward people who are different
- ( ) belief that one's own group (country, race or culture) is better than other
- ( ) characteristics, features
- ( ) A person or group who is given the blame for the mistakes or failures of others
- ( ) Belief that an ethnic group is superior or inferior than other groups
- ( ) A negative, unfair opinion about a person or group of people based on limited information or experience

**D. Watch the segment from the movie My Big Fat Greek Wedding and discuss the following questions:**

**1. What is the stereotyped information the main character gives about the Greek people concerning these issues:**

- a. People
- b. Families
- c. Food
- d. Marriages
- e. Dating relationships

**E. Now Watch the segment from the movie My Life in Ruins and identify the stereotyped information given about the following group of people:**

- a. Australians
- b. Americans
- c. Canadians

**F. Watch the third segment from the movie An American Carol and identify the director's stereotyped view of the following issues:**

- a. Arabs
- b. Political beliefs
- c. Marriages
- d. Their view about Americans
- e. Clothing
- f. Mexicans
- g. Cubans

**G. Class discussion: 1. Do you consider all the types depicted in the segments offensive? If not, which ones do you consider offensive? Explain it.**

**2. Why these people were pictured that way? Is there any truth about them?**

**3. How are the Brazilians (or your nationality) stereotyped by other people? Make a list of examples.**

**4. Are any of them true? Explain it.**

**5. How do you feel about the stereotypes attributed to Brazilians (or your nationality)?**

warmupsfollowups.blogspot.com/search/label/stereotypes

## **Appendix 10: Students' informed consent form**

Dear Students,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Ms Laure Roumi Salem, an EdD student of Applied Linguistics in the School of Education of the University of Leicester.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate your perceptions of intercultural communicative competence in English language teaching/learning and the intercultural dimensions of the supplementary English language teaching materials.

### **Procedures**

You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion. This will take no longer than an hour. After the preliminary analysis of the data, you may be invited to participate in an interview that will last for about half an hour. The aim is to obtain your opinion about the intercultural approach and materials used in your English language classroom.

### **Potential risks/discomforts and their minimization**

These procedures have no known risks.

### **Potential benefits**

Your personal experience of intercultural language learning will give some insights into your attitudes and beliefs about language learning, and other factors, and will help the development of intercultural communicative competence in English language teaching.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information obtained in this study will remain strictly confidential, will not be disclosed to other parties, and will be used for research purposes only. Codes and pseudonyms, not names, are used to ensure confidentiality.

### **Participants and withdrawal**

Your participation is voluntary. This means that you can choose to withdraw at any time without negative consequences for you.

### **Questions and concerns**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Ms Laure Roumi Salem at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

### **Signature**

I have read and understood the consent form above and agreed to participate in this study.

Name [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

---

Signature of participant [REDACTED]

## **Appendix 11: A sample reflective diary (AR Cycle 3, summer, 2011)**

This flow account diary (Coleman and Briggs, 2002) includes important information about the incorporation of the intercultural course in the IEP 003 reading class. The diary was written (in English) around 15 minutes after the intervention. Only Diary extract 8 is included due to word constraints.

### **Diary extract 8**

**Week 8, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

#### **Role playing (Terrorism) and classroom discussions**

- Task assigned in Week 7 for Wednesday August 16<sup>th</sup>

In the previous session, we agreed that students do research about terrorism within their roles (in pairs) i.e. a perpetrator, a mother of a victim, two lawyers i.e. a defendant of the perpetrator, a defendant of the victims, two Arab and Western students, two doctors, a priest and Muslim Sheikh. I cancelled the last roles because no one accepted to play the role of a Sheikh. There is a limit to tolerance when it comes to religion. Religious positions are unquestionable in the study context and in the Lebanese context.

The aim of the role playing activity was to decenter, that is to put themselves in the shoes of others. The students would understand and interpret different points of view through role playing. Then they had to do role paying in this session. We stressed research and interpretation of different points of view. We stressed critical culture awareness that may help the students to construct a third place culture to avoid misunderstanding. We stressed identifying assumptions and action, reflecting on, interpreting attitudes, exploring and suggesting alternatives.

It was a successful lesson. It seemed that doing research or knowledge discovery about different perspectives (each student within his role) helped students to put themselves in the shoes of others. With the activity about Terrorism, role playing was a useful means to decenter,

The students did not show negative attitudes towards the West. Even the students who had showed resentment against the West showed the ability to decenter. For example, the group that represented the Americans was able to distance themselves from their Arab identity and saw the issue from different angles e.g. ‘you might be right but violence won’t solve the issue’ was a common observation, and terrorism is a global issue that needs solution.

Mike who was intolerant towards the West in previous sessions implied that stereotyping is not accurate and fair. This excerpt from the students’ classroom discussion was illustrative:

-A US lawyer student: Arabs are terrorists. The Munich Massacre was a terrorist attack during the 1972 Olympic Games.

-Mike: if 1 or 2% of Arabs are terrorists, not all Arabs are terrorists. Don’t Categorize. You should have a better knowledge of Arabs.

-An Arab student: Terrorism is a war that everyone hates i.e. Arabs and Americans.

-Mike: Ousama Bin Laden Saudi nationality was revoked. Stop the War against Arabs, don’t Label Arabs as terrorists. Terrorism is wrong and you cannot categorize ‘all Arabs as terrorists’.

-US Lawyer: Who told you that? Not all Americans stereotype Arabs. Besides we believe killing is against human rights and there are other means to defend your rights...

Then Mike repeatedly suggested that the US should study about Islam to understand it better and to avoid prejudging against it. Eventually, in answer to my question, “what is the alternative”, the majority of students within their roles answered, “negotiations”.

Whole- class discussions followed in the 003 IEP class. The discussions were calm and rational. They discussed a sensitive issue without being involved in conflicts. I got the impression that the terrorism concept which was looked at from an essentialist perspective in the spring semester Cycle was perceived differently. Decentring and questioning the taken for granted must have been the reason behind such a new attitude. The students who presented the Western perspective were able to decenter and to present objectively their stances. A student (intolerant towards the West) who played the role of an American lawyer quoted human rights principles and democratic values to defend his position. As to those who presented the Arab perspective, they acknowledged that ‘not all American are against Arab causes’ and condemned violent acts whatever the issues were and suggested ‘negotiations’. Doing research enabled them to know more about both Arab and Western perspectives.

Positive stereotypes were dealt with too (In the first movie lesson and discussed again in this lesson). However, positive stereotypes seemed to be an alternative to negative stereotypes. (...). I felt I should stress the negative effects of positive stereotypes as well in future research. Besides, the language of stereotyping should also be stressed.

In their discussion after this role playing, the students felt that this course was not given much time. They suggested to make it obligatory and to develop it (at an early age) to become bidirectional not only in the Lebanese context but also globally. Accordingly, openness and tolerance will be mutual. They stressed that that intercultural competence is a need in Lebanon, a country with diverse cultures, sects and political affiliations, to resolve conflicts and/or avoid misunderstandings.

Most importantly, the students indicated that they enjoyed the class and they were engaged. Drawing on the discussion in the classroom and discussions with colleague who were teaching other 003 IEP classes, I noticed that the students' attendance during the semester was higher than students' attendance in other parallel reading classes.

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