

## Investigating Algerian EFL Teachers' Perception towards Intercultural Competence in Teaching Literature

التحقيق في تصور الأساتذة الجزائريين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه الكفاءة بين الثقافات في

تدريس الأدب

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### Abstract:

Intercultural competence is considered a significant element in foreign language learning and teaching, it allows learners to be aware not only of their own culture but also the target one. Along this line of thought, intercultural awareness has emerged to be an important part of conceptualizing the intercultural dimension to teaching literature in Algerian universities. This paper aims to examine Algerian English foreign language (EFL) teachers' perception of intercultural competence in teaching literary texts. Data were primarily gathered through a questionnaire webbed to 50 teachers of literature from different universities in Algeria. The findings revealed that Algerian EFL literature teachers held positive attitudes towards the importance of intercultural competence in teaching literary texts and producing intercultural competent learners. The study recommends that literature teachers are proposed to integrate culture into the teaching of literature and develop their intercultural competencies.

**Keywords:** Teaching Literature, Teaching Culture, EFL Literature Teachers, Intercultural Competence.

ملخص البحث

تعد الكفاءة بين الثقافات عنصرا مهما في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية وتدريسها، فإنها تتيح للمتعلمين أن يكونوا على دراية ليس فقط بثقافتهم فحسب ولكن أيضا بالثقافة المستهدفة. وعلى هذا المنوال من التفكير، برز الوعي بين

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الثقافات ليكون جزءا مهما من تصور البعد بين الثقافات لتعليم الأدب في الجامعات الجزائرية. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى دراسة تصور أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية في الجزائر في الكفاءة بين الثقافات في تدريس النصوص الأدبية. تم جمع البيانات في المقام الأول من خلال استبيان لفائدة 50 مدرسا للأدب من جامعات مختلفة في الجزائر. كشفت النتائج أن أساتذة الأدب باللغة الإنجليزية في الجزائر اتبعوا مواقف إيجابية نحو أهمية الكفاءة بين الثقافات في تدريس النصوص الأدبية وإنتاج متعلمين أكفاء بين الثقافات. و توصي الدراسة بأن أساتذة الأدب يقترح عليهم دمج الثقافة في تدريس النصوص الأدبية وتطوير كفاءاتهم بين الثقافات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس الأدب ، تدريس الثقافة ، مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية للغة الأجنبية ، الكفاءة بين الثقافات.



## **I. Introduction**

Teaching a foreign language should not necessarily focus on teaching the linguistic system but also the cultural system of the target language. Language learning will be incomplete without intercultural communication competence which has become an important strategy to learn a specific language. In this regard, Byram et al. (2002) state that “learners need not just knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (p. 7). At the Algerian university level, EFL learners are expected to be competent in the learning of literature; they are expected to have a linguistic competence, in which they can construct sentences that depend on a specific cultural context, in addition to intercultural competence (IC) that may help them in understanding, and analyzing different literary texts. Therefore, the debate about whether to integrate culture in the EFL classes is now outdated; the focus now is on whether intercultural competence has an effect in teaching literature to foreign language learners according to EFL Algerian teachers.

The present paper aims, first, to demonstrate the usefulness of integrating culture in teaching EFL learners; and second, the most important thing to be investigated is how teachers in certain Algerian Universities perceive the impact of integrating foreign cultures in teaching literature to EFL classes to produce culturally competent learners. No study dealt with the current situation of teaching literature with the intercultural competence in the Algerian context, so there is a gap that should be filled. Accordingly, this research endeavors to address the research questions as follows:

1. To what extent does culture integration in the teaching of literary texts would affect EFL students' learning?

2. How do Algerian EFL teachers of literature perceive the importance of intercultural competence in teaching literature?

To get deeper insights into this research subject, it is first necessary to review the place of literature in EFL contexts, approaches to teach literature for EFL learners, the nature of culture in EFL classrooms, defining the concept of IC, and explaining IC's Byram's model. The article then proceeds with the methodology of the study, results, discussion, and EFL teaching implications.

## **II. Literature, Culture and Intercultural Competence in EFL Teaching**

### **1. Literature Teaching in the EFL Context**

Literature has always been inspiring in the field of intercultural education. It was seen as an essential element that creates any society's cultural identity. Understanding literature proved to be challenging and difficult among the different literary theorists.

Applying literature to teaching a language has recently gained great attention in the field of applied linguistics. "The issue of teaching language through literature first came out at the King's College conference on education held in Cambridge in 1963. The importance of literary texts as useful tools in the language teaching/learning process was highlighted in this conference while the traditional approach was called into question for its incapacity to develop language skills and communicative abilities" (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014, p. 249).

The concept of literature is so vast; no single definition is conventionally decided; each scholar has his own view on the nature of literature within the field of foreign language teaching, even EFL learners themselves view and perceive literature in different ways.

The Encyclopedic dictionary converges into the very simplest definition that literature comprises "writings that are valued as works of art, especially fiction, drama and poetry" (1994, 527). On the other hand, Diyanni believes that literature has a great value "though transports us to the world, created by imagination, yet evokes our emotions of love, sorrow, joy, and pity, and thus enhances our appreciation and understanding of life" (2002, 2-7). Accordingly, literature offers knowledge, understanding, and appreciation, and it has a valuable role in the field of education and a valid place in language learning.

Lazar (1993, 19) urges on the incorporation of literature into EFL teaching and learning, she suggests:

Literature may have a wider educational function in the classroom in that it can help to stimulate the imagination of our students, to develop their critical abilities, and to increase their emotional awareness. If we ask our students to respond personally to the texts we give them, they will become increasingly confident about expressing their own ideas and emotions in English.

Literature is considered a significant source for EFL learners; it helps them to improve their linguistic skills due to the various stylistic features that literature includes, to be self-confident in expressing and sharing their ideas about different subject matters, also, it enables them to gain insight into the target culture. By the same token, Adler (1972) strongly puts a strong emphasis on the personal involvement or empathy that literature may create and enhance in the reader. He suggests that personal involvement is the closest contact between the reader and the author on one side and between the reader and the characters and the events in a given text on the other side. In this sense; by integrating literature in EFL teaching, the EFL learners would be more inspired to improve their language awareness and cultural insights about the target language.

The ultimate aim of literature in EFL classes can be summarized as it was suggested in the conference on literature teaching at Maghribi University held in Fes: (Arab,1993)

- The inclusion of literature in EFL classes has to inculcate a thorough competence and performance in the English language.
- To familiarize students with the various literary genres by enacting certain "recognition strategies" applied to the characteristic structures; of poetry, and of drama.
- To have a better understanding of the societies where works of literature in English are written and read.
- To evaluate the literariness of a text, i.e., to assess the literary devices used in a specific text, and this helps readers to read and process literary text systematically.

For the crucial role that literature plays in language teaching and learning and due to the great advantage to the learners' linguistic, cultural, and personal development, many approaches have been integrated into EFL teaching that teachers may adopt in teaching literary texts. Carter and Long (1991) suggested three approaches: the cultural approach, the language-based

approach, and the personal growth approach. Recently, Savvidou (2004) has promoted an integrated approach to literature teaching.

### **The Language-Based Approach**

This approach tends to be a student-centered approach; it deals with the study of the language of the text to equip the students with linguistic techniques in order to allow them to comprehend and interpret the text. Within this approach, Lazar (2000, p.27) asserts that “Literary texts are thus seen as a resource one among many types of texts which provide stimulating language activities”.

### **The Cultural Approach**

This approach is considered a teacher-centered approach, and it represents the traditional approach to teaching literature. Carter and Long (1991) state that:

Teaching literature within a cultural model enables the students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own and space and to come to perceive traditions of thought, feeling, and artistic form within heritage literature of such cultures endows. (p 02)

Learners are supposed to read and explore the literary texts and then interpret the social, political, and historical background of the text.

### **The Personal Growth Approach**

This approach is so beneficial for encouraging learners to increase their personal pleasure when reading literary texts; they get with the content of the text. As it was named by Lazar (2000), it is a personal enrichment approach. Carter and Long (1991, 3) mention that the personal growth approach enables the students to “achieve an engagement with the reading of literary text and helps them to grow as individuals”. In other terms, Learners are encouraged to make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences with those expressed in the text. Subsequently, the role of the teacher in this approach is obviously important since the selection of the texts should be of interest to learners so that they can be active participants both intellectually and emotionally.

### **The Integrated Approach**

The three literature teaching approaches discussed above are interconnected and complete each other. This led Savvidou (2004) to promote an approach that integrates the three approaches. The integrated approach encourages the learners’ personal development; as it enhances their language

skills and cultural awareness. That is to say, it aims at exploiting literary texts to the whole, i.e., linguistically, culturally, and psychologically with the appropriate selection of the text.

## 2. From Cultural to Intercultural Competence

### a. Culture in English Language Teaching (ELT)

“There are as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities” (Hinkel, 1999, p.1). So, the concept of Culture is a challenging term to be defined, and researchers attempted to define the concept of culture in a variety of ways in a variety of disciplines and ended up with meaningfully different definitions.

According to Kramsch (1993), culture is "a social construct, the product of self and other perceptions" (205), whereas McCarthy and Carter (1994) have defined culture, from a social discourse perspective, as "the social knowledge and interactive skills which are required in addition to knowledge of the language system" (p.151-152). Therefore, all the scholars emphasize the idea that culture is social as it includes the rules of social life, values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and ways of behaviours, and also skill on how to think, act and interact with each other.

Culture has two main orientations; *Capital-C culture* and *small-c culture*. Chastain (1988) distinguished between the big “C” culture and the small “c” culture, where the former is regarded as visible culture, it is related to world literature, world civilization, geography, and arts. Whereas the latter is regarded as invisible culture, it refers to the social beliefs, values, customs, traditions, attitudes, and norms. In this context, Paige et al. (1999, 2003) state:

The Big “c” field represents a set of facts related to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals, and customs of a target speech society.... It has been utilized heavily by many L2/FL/ELT language practitioners to teach a target culture. The small “c” field, on the other hand, refers to the invisible and deeper sense of a target culture; that is, the typical sociocultural values, norms, and beliefs, taking into consideration such sociocultural variables as age, gender, and social status.

Kramsch (1993, p 01) argues that “culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one”. In other words, culture should not be taught as a separate part of

language teaching, but it should be considered as an essential skill to learn like the four linguistic skills.

#### **b. Intercultural Competence**

"Language is not a culture-free code, distinct from the way people think and behave, but, rather it plays a major role in the perpetuation of culture, particularly in its printed form" (Kramsch, 1998, p.8). Incorporating culture into language teaching enables learners to develop their communicative competence in the target language and to communicate effectively and appropriately. (Alptekin, 2002, p58-59).

The use of the term "intercultural" reflects the view that EFL learners have to gain insight into both their own culture and the foreign one(s). Intercultural communicative competence refers to the skill and the ability to understand and be more aware of the cultural attributes of a given society, how they differ from their own culture, and the skill of being able to interact with multiple identities and their own individuality (Kramsch, 1993). Salo-Lee(2006, p.81) defined 'competence' as a set of abilities and skills that permit appropriate behavior, whether words or actions in a particular situation.

The concept of intercultural competence is variously defined by different experts. They resulted in confusion in addressing the same issue, and have suggested several models for IC in an attempt to identify its components and to limit its scope. The term ICC was coined for the first time by Byram (1994), and it is viewed by many researchers as the extension of communicative competence.

The term 'intercultural competence' is used mostly to refer to intercultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. Byram (2000) refers to IC as "the ability to interact effectively with people of cultures other than one's own" (p. 297). Meanwhile, Spitzberg & Changnon (2009) define IC as "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world" (p. 7). As Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) suggested, "To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be eager to change their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures" (p. 416). Subsequently, it can be stated that the person who has knowledge of one or more cultures and the ability to discover and act in intercultural suitable ways is an intercultural competent person.

#### **Byram's Model**

Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is one of the most prominent IC models, mainly because this model is specifically designed for the language classroom. According to Byram's well-developed model (1997):

Intercultural communicative competence requires certain attitudes, knowledge, and skills in addition to linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence. The attitudes include curiosity and openness as well as readiness to see other cultures and the speaker's own without being judgmental. The required knowledge is of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction. (p. 51)

Byram's ICC model is primarily proposed for the purpose of FL education. The explication of the five saviors in the model allows foreign language teachers to design their syllabus and plan their teaching in a good manner that helps EFL learners to grasp the knowledge. This model comprises four competencies; linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. The latter is in turn divided into five interdependent components (*saviors*), which are known to be "the most fully worked-out specification of intercultural competence, which involves the varieties of knowledge and skills needed to mediate between different cultures" (Corbett, 2003, p. 31). Those components are:

1. Intercultural attitudes (*savoir être*): curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures, and belief about one's own.
2. Knowledge (*savoir*): of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction. Byram (1997) distinguishes two types of knowledge; Knowledge of societal groups and their practices in the country of the individual or in the country of the interlocutor and knowledge of the process of social interaction and the individual one.
3. Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*): the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it, and relate it to documents or events from one's own.



4. Skills of discovery and Interaction (savoir apprendre/faire): the ability to learn and obtain new knowledge, attitudes, and skills of a culture and cultural practices.
5. Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager): an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. It is the ability to make EFL learners conscious in any evaluative response to others.

The discussion above proves that "language is not only a product of culture but is also a symbol of culture (Byram, 1997). As Buttjes' noted: (1990, p.55)

Communicative competence, especially in intercultural interaction, must be seen as more than a purely linguistic decoding facility. Since language and culture are so intimately interrelated in the experience of the both native and foreign speakers, cultural competence must be involved at all stages of such an encounter.

Consequently, language and culture are interrelated, and this relationship is axiomatic, they cannot be separated, and should be both taken into consideration in building up EFL learners' communicative competence.

### III. Methodology

The researcher applied a mixed method that is appropriate for data collection and analysis for this research. This study is conducted to figure out the perception of EFL Algerian literature teachers towards intercultural competence in the teaching of literary texts. Data were collected through a questionnaire which was administrated to a sample of 50 EFL teachers of literature from different universities in Algeria. The questionnaire was self-designed by the researcher, and it was analyzed by Excel. It covers the following areas: the participants' personal details, teaching literature in EFL classrooms, integrating culture in EFL teaching, and the last part about the importance of intercultural competence in the process of teaching literary texts for EFL learners.

### IV. Results

#### 1. General details about the participants

After analyzing the data gathered by the questionnaire, results showed that 50 EFL teachers of literature hold different academic degrees; Master (Ph. D. students), Magister, and Ph.D. Their experience in teaching at

university ranged from less than 5 years to more than 20 years, as table no (1) shows:

Participants	Academic Level	Years of experience in teaching English ( Literature)
50 teachers	Master (Ph.D. students) = 06 Magister = 13 Ph.D. = 31	Less than 5 years = 05 5-10 = 20 11-15 = 12 16-20 = 06 More than 20 years = 07

## 2. Teaching Literature in EFL Classrooms:

### a. Strategies to Teach Literature in EFL context:

According to the answers about teachers' strategies that they use most to teach literature in EFL classes, it seems that all the methods are in the same center that is the focus on the students' needs. Their strategies can be summarized as follows:

- Reading novels and analyzing the social, cultural, and historical aspects that they embody. Also shedding light on how literature can delineate culture and contribute to providing insights about a specific group of people.
- Teaching literature theoretically, then moving to text study, and usually including activities prepared on worksheets Reading and analyzing the text is the most effective strategy.
- Students are asked to read a literary work and apply theories of literary criticism to understand the work from that angle.
- Focusing on literary devices and practicing inference activities in order to develop the critical thinking skills of students.
- Arousing curiosity by trying to connect what to teach to the real world. Relatability seems to resonate with all students.
- Using short stories, videos, and movies, audiobooks, portfolios, projects, text analysis, reading strategies (PDP), then creative writing activities.
- Using an integrated method.

### b. Reading Comprehension Problems and Motivation Level for EFL Learners in Literature Courses:

The researcher has suggested some reading comprehension problems for exploring the difficulties experienced by EFL learners at the university when reading and analyzing English literary texts. Fig.01 illustrates the responses of the EFL teachers of literature:

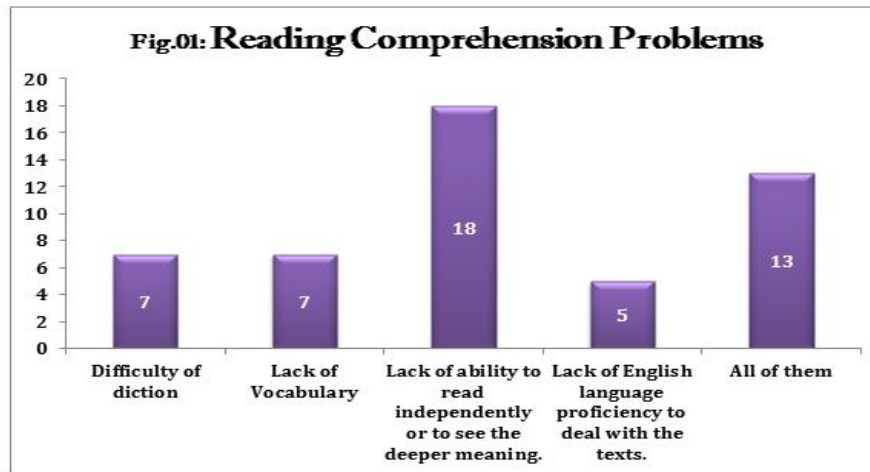


Fig 01 illustrates the main problems that EFL learners face when they read and try to analyze literary texts. From Fig 01, 18 teachers observe that the lack of ability to read independently or to see the deeper meaning is the major difficulty for learners. Whereas, other 13 teachers notice that all the mentioned difficulties are concerned. 7 teachers for each of these problems; the difficulty of diction and lack of vocabulary, perceive that these two problems hinder the learners from the well understanding of the literary texts. Finally, the other 5 teachers found that the problem behind non-understanding of texts is due to the lack of English language proficiency to deal with the texts.

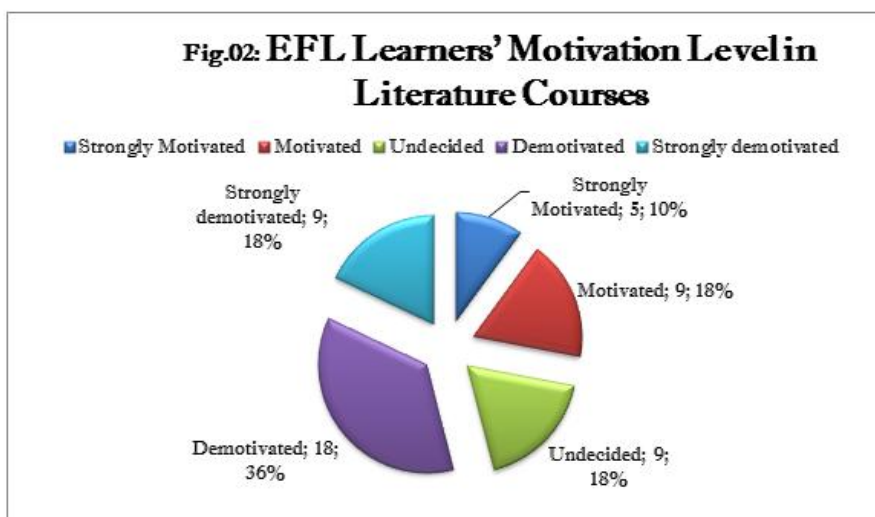


Fig 02 shows the percentage of motivation level of EFL learners during literature courses. Surprisingly, 35% of them are demotivated and 18% are strongly demotivated, and this considered a big problem that teachers should care about. Concerning those who are motivated, they are 18% motivated and 10% strongly motivated. The other 18% of teachers were unsure about their students' level of motivation. So, the big percentage goes for learners who are demotivated when they are studying literature.

### 3. The Incorporation of Culture in EFL Teaching:

To promote the intercultural learning process, EFL teachers are expected not to teach only the linguistic features of the foreign language, but also the cultural one, as Kramsch (1993, 1) stated, culture "is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them." Language is a vehicle of culture, thus students would avoid using the mother tongue to maximize their communication skills by adhering to the target culture. Ideas, beliefs, life experiences are found in the literary texts, so they are goldmines for integrating the language skills to express oneself in different channels (writing or speaking).

EFL teachers need to have extra knowledge, competencies, and skills, they also need to mediate between the native language and the target

language of one's culture to help learners enhance their intercultural communication in an intercultural world and promote attitudes of respect and tolerance towards people from other cultures. So, this area deals with the presentation of data from the questionnaire about the integration of culture and the importance of intercultural competence in EFL Learning in Algerian universities.

**a. Benefits of Culture Incorporation in EFL Teaching:**

Various opinions, attitudes, and arguments were presented by EFL literature teachers when they asked to give their opinions about how does culture integration in the teaching of literary texts would affect EFL students learning. Their answers can be summarized as follows:

- Culture surely affects students positively since they will acquire new knowledge about the world culture. Moreover, they will compare it with their own culture. This will increase their respect for others' cultures, and develop their pride towards their own culture.
- EFL students who are familiar with foreign cultures (Western culture) understand better literary works written by Westerners. For example, a student who is not familiar with Greek mythology and biblical traditions cannot understand Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
- Culture is called the fifth skill of language learning. The more students are involved in the EFL culture the easier they become involved in reading as culture itself and in analyzing the literary studies.
- Culture integration in the foreign language classroom would much affect EFL students learning as language is a carrier of culture whilst culture enriches and molds language.
- Learning a language in a particular country works for hand in hand with the culture of the given location. Thus, the two are amalgamated to a big extent. Learners would learn the language accordingly with cultural influences.
- There is no doubt that the way we perceive culture impacts greatly our learning of the language. So if culture is properly integrated then learners' level would improve qualitatively.
- The students should establish a sphere of interculturality with the literary text by being familiar with the other culture which will help them get more adequate understanding.

- Culture affects the teaching of literary texts positively as they would benefit from new insights related to customs, beliefs, and traditions, in addition to vocabulary acquisition.
- Looking at a different world through a different culture will help learners engage and act globally.
- It would be a great help with enhancing inter-and cross-cultural awareness understanding, interpreting, and particularly savoring literature.
- Cultural sensitivities, ideologies, and stereotyping affect learning.
- It helps in learning realistically and authentically; acquisition of vocabulary items and grammar patterns in context; developing critical thinking and other higher-order skills such as analytical spirit and problem-solving; promoting communicative competence and creating fluent speakers, fluent readers, and fluent writers; activating schematic knowledge for a deeper retaining and comprehension; comparing and contrasting native culture to target one.

**b. The Importance of Intercultural Competence in Teaching Literature:**

Items	Classification									
	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
Intercultural competence motivates EFL learners to learn more foreign languages.	22	44 %	23	46 %	5	10 %	/	/	/	/
The intercultural competence would equip EFL learners with the cultural background that is necessary in literary analysis.	21	42 %	22	44 %	7	14 %	/	/	/	/
It helps learners to be familiar with the cultural context it belongs to. So, It breaks the ice upon understanding literary texts.	27	54 %	21	42 %	2	4 %	/	/	/	/
It widens their perception of the world in general and in the target language in particular.	24	48 %	20	40 %	6	12 %	/	/	/	/

*Table no. 2. The Importance of Intercultural Competence in Teaching Literature***V. Discussion:**

According to the findings of this study, results revealed that Algerian EFL teachers of literature are conscious about the effect in which intercultural competence may have on the teaching of literary texts. Working of literature can move toward a number of ways. From the above-mentioned strategies of teaching literature to EFL learners, it is obvious that literature aims to connect the student with the text meaningfully in order to acquire a full understanding of literary texts. By applying a diversity of ways in literature courses, EFL teachers emphasize learners' needs, interests, levels, and what makes them active learners. In short, they try to apply all the critical thinking strategies that are appropriate for the objectives of the lectures as well as the needs of their learners. These techniques can benefit language learners depending on how they are paired with other procedures, such as the nature of classroom activities.

The findings obtained from Fig 01 and Fig2 demonstrated that EFL learners are facing problems in interpreting literary texts when they are exposed to read, understand and analyze specific English literary texts, especially when they have never been exposed to before. Most of the teachers (36%) observe that the lack of ability to read independently or to see the deeper meaning is the main problem added to the lack of motivation as it appeared in the results of Fig 02. Since EFL learners used to be passive learners; they depend on the teacher's explanation and analysis of the text (teacher's centered), so they fail to be self-confident in reading independently and interpreting literary texts, they tend to copy what other people say or think of a text instead of trying to decode the meaning of the text itself, as if they tend to shut an eye upon the text's keys. Teachers should take responsibility to overcome the reasons behind the failure of their students in participating and sharing their ideas in literature courses by motivating them, selecting texts that suit their needs and interests, and making a debate between the teacher and the students, also a discussion between the students with each other, so that learners feel released to express their thoughts and criticize issues within texts, learn vocabularies and increase their English language proficiency and diction when dealing with literary texts.

Furthermore, All the answers of the teachers, about how does culture integration in the teaching of literary texts would affect EFL students learning, shed light on the importance of culture incorporation into foreign language teaching of literature. Accordingly, Chlopek (2008) states that EFL

teachers should inspire learners to “compare their native culture to other cultures, to evaluate critically and interpret the results of such comparisons, and to apply this knowledge successfully in both verbal and non-verbal communication, for both transactional and interactional purposes”, so that learners would enhance their intercultural communication for a successful culturally communication in different contexts. Learning a foreign language cannot be reduced to the direct teaching of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) or the teaching of linguistic skills like phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary, but it also requires cultural and intercultural awareness. The introduction of culture in the process of learning a foreign language is supported by teachers in Algerian universities since it has many benefits as they mentioned above.

In regard to literature teachers’ perceptions towards the importance of Intercultural Competence in Teaching Literature in Algerian universities, Table 2 shows that most of the teachers encourage intercultural learning. From the results, it can be deduced that literature may open the doors for EFL learners to be intercultural competent; the more they are intercultural competent, the more they can understand, analyze and interpret literary texts. Interculturality gives the learner an extra lens to use, so instead of seeing or analyzing a literary work from one angle, he/she broadens his/her scope of perception and understanding by adding more diverse knowledge to his/her score; If the students do not have any/only a little knowledge of the foreign culture, then their interpretation of a literary text will remain at the surface level of the text, they cannot read between and behind the lines of that text, so it widens their horizon of knowledge. Additionally, a text cannot be separated from its context; a literary text is after all a manifestation of the foreign culture, so interpreting a foreign literary text means intercultural communicating with its components and ideas. Moreover, it would curb the possibility of being negatively influenced by the foreign culture, so it would encourage communicating effectively and overcoming culture shocks. Consequently, acquiring cultural skills helps EFL learners in enhancing their ability in both interpretation and criticism of literary texts, and constructing bridges of understanding and co-existence with the "Other" through getting exposure to their culture and acting with the knowledge of this culture.

## VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study has attempted to investigate Algerian EFL teachers’ perception of the importance of intercultural competence in teaching



literature. Based on the findings and discussions, the research revealed that EFL teachers of literature in Algeria acknowledged the positive impact of intercultural competence on the teaching of literary texts, they supported the role of culture in their EFL learning, but they suggested the need for a greater understanding of how to focus on culture in their own EFL classes. Literary texts are cultural and anthropological productions that can be employed to teach foreign culture(s). Teaching literary texts should be set within intercultural teaching, that's why teachers of literature should be initiated to teach pedagogy of intercultural communication. As cross-cultural communication is inevitable, integrating culture in learning foreign languages' classes would be considered as a weapon since it has a significant role in enhancing EFL learners' intercultural awareness. Therefore, this study recommends that EFL teachers of literature must enrich their own cultural knowledge and promote authentic literary texts for intercultural understanding among students to see things from different perspectives, examine the origins and implications of values and beliefs, widen their worldview, and analyze the construction of knowledge, cultures, and identities. Thus, besides language learning, making connections between global and local contexts, and develop positive attitudes towards people from all over the world, and understanding their cultures is an imperative and pertinent skill to meet the learners' needs and an essential goal of 21<sup>st</sup>-century education to bridge the gaps between the classroom and the world.

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