

# Investigating The Effect of Attitudes on Learners’ Intercultural Awareness Development

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**Abstract**

*This article aims at investigating intercultural awareness development among Moroccan high school learners. It focuses on the central role of the ‘attitudes’ component in helping learners get involved in successful intercultural encounters. The study adopts Byram’s (1997) intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as an influential model that has brought intercultural education to the forefront of the teaching-learning process.*

*Research reveals that the concept of the native speaker as an ideal is no more valid. Instead, targeting intercultural speakers who can interact with the other with no communicative breakdowns should receive a primary goal. Developing the learners’ intercultural awareness has become essential to the success of intercultural encounters among interlocutors belonging to different cultures. This study employed a mixed-method design. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods, in the form of a questionnaire and program evaluation, were used to gather information. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data quantitatively.*

*The overall findings of attitudes showed unfavourable statistical scores. Universal values and cultural issues activities that are responsible for promoting positive attitudes have been proven to be decontextualised in the textbook high school students use in Morocco. Students are, therefore, unaware of target cultures as almost all teaching activities are language oriented. The results clearly demonstrated that learners have not developed the intercultural component as the teaching approach in Morocco does not target ICC as a primary goal.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, intercultural education is no longer a choice, but a necessity. The whole world has become a global village in which intercultural encounters take place on a daily basis. Risager (2000), therefore, argues that “teaching should be designed to offer learners opportunities to challenge their views of the target language and its users, to become aware of and reflect on possible stereotypes and prejudices concerning target-language countries and peoples” (as

quoted in Byram, 2021, p. x). otherwise, cultural issues are likely to arise due to a lack of understanding among people from different cultural backgrounds. Although people are social beings, they might find themselves unable to interact effectively. This is not because of the language barrier as it is likely to come across two persons speaking the same code, but communication fails. Either one or both interlocutors are simply “fluent fools”; they speak the language well, but miss its central part, i.e., its cultural dimension (Bennett, 1993, p. 16):

I arrived in London at last. The railway station was big, black and dark. I did not know the way to my hotel, so I asked a porter. I not only spoke English very carefully, but very clearly as well. The porter, however, could not understand me. I repeated my question several times and at last he understood. He answered me, but he spoke neither slowly nor clearly. 'I am a foreigner,' I said. Then he spoke slowly, but I could not understand him. My teacher never spoke English like that! The porter and I looked at each other and smiled. Then he said something and I understood it. 'You'll soon learn English!' he said. I wonder. In England, each person speaks a different language. The English understand each other, but I don't understand them! Do they speak English? (Alexander, 1967, p. 71)

The above quote is in fact a whole text entitled “Do the English speak English?” It raises the issue of a student whose proficiency in English does not help him interact with a native speaker.

Of course, such a text clearly shows that there is a problem with the way English is taught in different places, including Morocco. In so many classroom realities, mainly in middle and high schools, Moroccan teachers are still teaching the foreign language the same way raised by Alexander (ibid.) in the quote above. In other words, teachers focus on the code as a primary goal. Instead, they should target intercultural awareness by not only sensitizing learners to the cross-cultural comparisons between the two lingua-cultures but also working on knowledge, skills and attitudes (Byram, 1997; Baker, 2015).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The ideal native speaker**

A long time ago, it was believed that the foreign language learner could reach the levels of the native speaker's competence. Yet, since the 1980s this concept of the native speaker as a model has been criticised harshly as being “an unattainable ideal” (Byram, 2008, p. 57). The trouble of reaching native or even near-native competence, what is referred to in the literature as “native speakerness” (also “ideal nativeness”, “nativelikeness”, etc.) has been recently proved to be a kind of illusion that cannot be reached as “the criteria for determining” such a concept “are fuzzy and controversial” (Davies, 1991; Medgyes, 1994; Stern, 1983, as quoted in Byram, 2000, p. 436.).

High motivation to learn foreign languages has been justified differently throughout the research literature. Skehan (1998), for instance, relates exceptional learners in foreign language learning to their capacity to memorise a huge number of vocabulary items. He (ibid.) argues that these high achievers' exceptionality seems to be based on the possession of unusual

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memory abilities, i.e., the capacity to absorb large quantities of words. Thus, it becomes clear that Skehan's exceptional learners "seem to be essentially memory-driven learners" (Skehan, 1998, p. 215). Following Skehan's logic, it seems that foreign language learning is a matter of knowing the new code regardless of its cultural content. To what extent is this argument convincing? Actually, learning a new language is in fact far more than memorising vocabulary items, grammatical rules, pronunciation, and the like. Research shows that the native speaker could be a reference with regard to linguistic or grammatical competence but could not be so in relation to other competencies such as sociocultural competence, discourse competence or strategic competence. In other words, targeting the idealised model of the 'native speaker' as a goal is no more valid as the concept merely refers to a person who is ideal in certain features such as grammar, pronunciation and lexicon. Focusing on such a limited approach of "a theory of language" in which emphasis is put on learning language as a code, "learners do not begin to engage with language as a communicative reality but simply as an intellectual exercise or as a work requiring memorising" (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p. 16).

Literature shows that developing code proficiency cannot guarantee the learner's ability to interact with the target speaker. Such a learner would undoubtedly end up being able to form correct sentences, but unable to interact as they do not know the appropriate context when to use them. In other words, language teaching should not target the code, which is just a part of the whole package, i.e. 'culture'. Accordingly, separating language and culture in the teaching process would never work; "teaching language only will leave the learners social cripples" (McLeod, 1976, p. 217). Being taught this way, learners would undoubtedly get involved in very embarrassing situations in which the cultural dimension of the language would be a natural barrier and their language mastery would not help at all get out of the trouble. The outcome would simply be "a fluent fool ... who speaks a foreign language well but doesn't understand the social or philosophical content of the language" (Bennett, 1993, p. 16).

In brief, the idea was to target the native speaker as an ideal, but then it turned out to be like trying to achieve the unachievable. Being "imprecise and unusable" (Kramsch, as quoted in Byram, 1997, p. 32), the concept of 'native speaker' has been substituted by 'intercultural speaker'.

## **2.2 The intercultural speaker**

Rejecting the 'native speaker' as a model for the learner to follow is prevalent among researchers. It has been replaced by the 'intercultural speaker', 'intercultural mediator' or 'social agent' concepts which prove that the foreign language learner is in need of not only the knowledge and linguistic skills but also the ability to correctly use them in appropriate social contexts. Instead, foreign language teaching should be dealt with as "simply as a body of knowledge to be learnt but as a social practice" that learners have to be involved in for the sake of making connections with the target language culture (Kramsch, 1994 as quoted in Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p. 16). The intercultural dimension is an integral part of the success of the intercultural encounter. Thus, it is unanimously agreed upon, nowadays, that the objective behind learning foreign languages is to become an intercultural speaker, who is able to mingle with other people belonging to other cultures and make them understand and be understood while discussing any topic in a relaxed atmosphere.

The phrase ‘intercultural speaker’ was first introduced in 1997 by Byram and Zarate (Byram, 2008, p. 57). According to Byram (1997, p. 34), the intercultural speaker, as a new concept, necessitates acquiring certain *savoirs* including knowledge, attitudes, values and skills:

	<b>Skills</b> interpret and relate (savoir Comprendre)	
<b>Knowledge</b> of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (savoirs)	<b>Education</b> political education critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager)	<b>Attitudes</b> relativising self valuing other (savoir être)
	<b>Skills</b> discover and/or interact (savoir apprendre/faire)	

Figure 1: Factors in intercultural communication

It is evident that Byram’s (1997, p. 34) model of ICC is so comprehensive that it targets five “*savoirs*” to develop the cultural dimension in language teaching. However, this article sheds light on one *savoir*, that of ‘attitudes.’

It is worth noting that the component of ‘attitudes’ targets the ability to ‘decentre’ the learner’s own beliefs, values and behaviours. In other words, the learner develops the skill to take in new learnings that are not, most of the time, similar to theirs:

This means a willingness to relativise one’s own values, beliefs and behaviours, not to assume that they are the only possible and naturally correct ones, and to be able to see how they might look from an outsider’s perspective who has a different set of values, beliefs and behaviours. This can be called the ability to ‘decentre’. (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002, p. 12)

Byram (1997) raises the issue of early socialisation being behind the belief that the learners’ attitudes are “natural and unchangeable” (p. 35). Here comes the role of the intercultural teacher in relativising attitudes or “attitudes of decentring” as a way out of cultural issues or misunderstandings between the two cultures (Byram et al., op. cit.). Such a process is referred to as “re-socialisation” (Byram, 1997) or “alternation” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) of the self at the ‘attitudes’ level (as quoted in Byram, 1997, p. 34).

Both ‘distancing’ and ‘eye-contact maintaining’ are two examples that might best describe how the learner’s ability to relativise their own behaviours would help them avoid embarrassing situations. Firstly, considering space can easily bring about cultural misunderstandings. Moroccans and Germans are a case in point concerning the issue of distancing which is culture specific. While talking, Moroccans keep close as opposed to Germans who stand away from each other (the Ministry of National Education, 2007a, p.11). One can therefore imagine the embarrassing situation in which both persons would be; the Moroccan would get closer and closer, whereas the German would move away and away. Of course, it is normal to see two Moroccans talking in close proximity, which is not the case for Germans. On the part of Germans, this is a natural reaction when somebody’s personal space is threatened. “When your space is invaded, you react in a variety of ways. You may retreat, stand your ground, or sometimes even react violently” (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy,

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2013, p. 293). Hall (1990) also mentions the example of looking in the eye as a cultural issue between Arabs and Americans. With no intention of offending, Arabs look at Americans “with an intensity that makes” them feel uncomfortable (p. 161). Knowing that the way Arabs maintain eye contact is a learned behaviour during their primary socialisation would surely make a difference on the part of Americans. Having an idea about how Americans understand the way Arabs maintain eye contact would also help the latter in finding a way out of this cultural issue. In brief, attitudes play a decisive role in occupying the “third place” (Kramsch, 1993; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat and Crozet, 1999), “third space” or “hybridity” (Bhabha, 1994) or “third way” or “hybridisation” (House, 2007),

In light of the above, occupying the third place or the place between the two cultures is the ultimate goal behind the teaching-learning process. Reaching this in-between position, teachers, the agents entrusted with education, should stop focusing on the teaching of the code. Foreign language learning and teaching should aim at working on the intercultural speaker so as to prepare learners for effective intercultural communication. It is of paramount importance to raise the idea that it is not ‘competence’ which is targeted after all, but ‘awareness’ of the learner’s culture vis-à-vis the target one. Yet, a legitimate question to ask here is related to the possibility of achieving such a third place on the part of foreign language learners who depend merely on the classroom. Of course, the classroom is usually a place where a variety of activities, including different cultural issues and discussions, take place. On the other hand, the classroom is not enough to target interculturality (Byram, Nichols and Stevens, 2001). They, therefore, suggest that teachers should encourage learners “to investigate for themselves the otherness around them, either in their immediate physical environment or in their engagement with otherness which internationalisation and globalisation have brought into their world” (ibid., p. 3). In this way, teaching English, for example, should focus on broadening the learners’ intellectual potential. This will help them recognize that their way of viewing the world and doing things is not the only way. So, their contacts will increase, especially while chatting with foreigners on Facebook, Twitter and other social networking websites; their understanding and acceptance of other people’s ideas and cultures will expand. Accordingly, the third way under discussion is “a point of interaction, hybridity and exploration” (Crozet et al., 1999, p. 5), not a kind of observation or presentation of differences and similarities between the two lingua-cultures. Foreign language teaching is effective when learners are involved in action, exploring themselves those differences and similarities, not being taught or told about by the teacher.

It becomes evident that intercultural awareness is the ultimate goal the teaching process should target. Here comes the value of not only learning the other’s knowledge but also going beyond knowing the similarities and differences between different lingua-cultures to cover the target speaker’s attitudes, behaviours and the like (Baker, 2015). In other words, the classroom might target cultural awareness (CA), but intercultural awareness (ICA) is a real challenge that should be solved beyond the classroom walls. According to Byram et al. (2002), CA is an essential stage the learner should go through to reach ICA. Put differently, targeting the similarities and differences between the two lingua-cultures must be raised in order to pave the way for intercultural awareness to take place in foreign language teaching, and serve as a



gateway towards helping learners become intercultural speakers and then function in today's multicultural societies effectively.

### **3. Methodology**

This article seeks to investigate the issue of raising high school learners' intercultural awareness. In conducting this research, satisfactory answers were given to the following research questions which broadly encompass the area of attitudes:

1. To what extent is knowledge about target cultures explicitly stated in the textbook?
2. To what extent do the textbook activities raise universal values such as understanding, peace, tolerance, honesty, forgiveness, caring, etc.?
3. To what extent do the textbook activities raise cultural issues (e.g. distancing, slurping, burping, etc.) in the target community?

For the sake of coming up with both reliable and convincing answers to the research questions, this article employed a mixed-method design. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods, in the form of a questionnaire and program evaluation, were used to gather information.

A questionnaire was addressed to 147 teachers of English belonging to 30 high schools in Kenitra, Sidi Kacem and Sidi Slimane Provinces. The teachers participating in the study were randomly chosen. It is worth noting that this study did not take the participants' gender variable into consideration. However, the teachers' teaching experience was investigated as a variable that might make a difference in the development of learners' intercultural awareness. Accordingly, teachers were divided into four groups: the 1-3 years-of-experience group (21.10%), the 4-9 years-of-experience group (30.60%), the 10-20 years-of-experience group (27.20%) and the 21-30 years-of-experience group (21.10%). The questions were, therefore, designed in agreement with the attitudes Savoir raised in Byram's (1997) ICC model.

Data collection was also carried out qualitatively in the form of program evaluation. It was meant to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook and then act accordingly. Making sure of targeting the intercultural component in teaching English as a foreign language in Moroccan high schools, the present article evaluated second-year Bac textbook<sup>1</sup> in terms of 'attitudes'.

For the statistical analysis of the collected data, SPSS 17 version software was used. The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire involved descriptive statistics including percentages, frequencies, mean scores and standard deviations. Inferential statistics were also used to calculate the differences in the participants' responses. Accordingly, types of inferential statistics, such as Tukey test and f-test, were used to compare the groups' discrepancies.

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<sup>1</sup> "Gateway 2 to English", "Insights into English", and "Ticket 2 English" are the three officially-approved textbooks used by second-year Bac students in Morocco.

#### 4. Results

In answer to the current article's research questions, interesting results are presented below in the form of tables and figures.

As far as research question 1 is concerned, this article aimed at exploring the extent to which knowledge about target cultures is explicitly stated in the textbook. The participants were presented with five items related to the culture of the other, evaluating how much they were present in the educational program. They were then asked to evaluate them along a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all), 2 (to a small extent), 3 (to some extent), 4 (to a great extent) to 5 (completely).

Table 1. Distribution of mean scores for the component of knowledge

	N	Sum	Mean
To what extent are the target speaker's daily-life practices represented in the textbook activities?	147	153	1,04
To what extent are the textbook activities representative of the target culture's arts and literature?	147	158	1,07
To what extent do the textbook activities raise cultural stereotypes?	147	314	2,14
To what extent is knowledge about other English-speaking countries' cultures explicitly stated in the textbook (please, tick 'not at all' in case the textbook presents only the British and/or the American cultures)?	147	165	1,12
To what extent is knowledge about the cultures, for example, of the Germans, Italians, French, etc. explicitly stated in the textbook (please, tick 'not at all' in case the textbook presents only the English-speaking countries' cultures)?	147	170	1,16
Valid N (listwise)	147		

As the table shows, almost all participants evaluated the textbook activities to be void of the target speaker's daily-life practices. That is why, this essential type of small letter 'c' culture received the unfavourable mean score of 1.04. Similarly, item 2, regarding the extent to which the textbook activities were representative of the target culture's arts and literature, including plays, songs, poems and short stories, yielded a highly insignificant statistical result (1.07). Item 4 is no exception; nearly all the participants criticized the textbook for not including other English-speaking countries' cultures, such as Canada and Australia, in the textbook. Such an item received a very low score, 1.12, and, thus, fell within the range of 'not at all' as items 1 and 2. As a consequence, the textbook included, with rarity, American and British cultures, and said almost nothing about other English-speaking countries' cultures, let alone the cultures of the countries where English is spoken as a second or foreign language, as the case of Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands. Accordingly, item 5 received 1.16 as a mean score, and then fell within the range of 'not at all'. The highest mean score, 2.14, was attributed to the presentation of cultural stereotypes in the textbook (item 3). However, such a score is statistically unfavourable as it falls within the range of 'to a small extent'.

Having a look at the detailed crosstab below, all the participants, belonging to the three groups 4-9, 10-20 and 21-30 years of experience, expressed their negative attitudes towards the component of knowledge. To illustrate, they either ticked the option 'not at all' or 'to a

small extent', showing their feeling of disappointment at the negligence of such an essential component in the development of the learners' intercultural awareness. Surprisingly, the 1-3 years of experience group of participants showed a kind of inconsistency as their responses ranged, throughout the scale, between point 1 and point 5.

Table 2. Distribution of the frequencies and percentages of the four groups' participants for the component of knowledge

		How long have you been teaching English?									
		1 to 3 years		4 to 9 years		10 to 20 years		21 to 30 years		Total	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
To what extent are the target speaker's daily-life practices represented in the textbook activities?	not at all	28	90,3%	45	100,0%	40	100,0%	31	100,0%	144	98,0%
	to a small extent	1	3,2%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	1	,7%
	to some extent	1	3,2%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	1	,7%
	to a great extent	1	3,2%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	1	,7%
	Completely	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
To what extent are the textbook activities representative of the target culture's arts and literature?	not at all	23	74,2%	44	97,8%	40	100,0%	29	93,5%	136	92,5%
	to a small extent	8	25,8%	1	2,2%	0	,0%	2	6,5%	11	7,5%
	to some extent	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
	to a great extent	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
	Completely	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
To what extent do the textbook activities raise cultural stereotypes?	not at all	1	3,2%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	1	,7%
	to a small extent	23	74,2%	45	100,0%	27	67,5%	30	96,8%	125	85,0%
	to some extent	7	22,6%	0	,0%	13	32,5%	1	3,2%	21	14,3%
	to a great extent	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
	Completely	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
To what extent is knowledge about other English-speaking countries' cultures explicitly stated in the textbook (please, tick 'not at all' in case the textbook presents only the British and/or the American cultures)?	not at all	28	90,3%	39	86,7%	39	97,5%	27	87,1%	133	90,5%
	to a small extent	1	3,2%	6	13,3%	1	2,5%	4	12,9%	12	8,2%
	to some extent	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
	to a great extent	2	6,5%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	2	1,4%
	Completely	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
To what extent is knowledge about the cultures, for example, of the Germans, Italians, French, etc. explicitly stated in the textbook (please, tick 'not at all' in case the textbook presents only the English-speaking countries cultures)?	not at all	23	74,2%	43	95,6%	39	97,5%	29	93,5%	134	91,2%
	to a small extent	2	6,5%	2	4,4%	1	2,5%	2	6,5%	7	4,8%
	to some extent	3	9,7%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	3	2,0%
	to a great extent	2	6,5%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	2	1,4%
	Completely	1	3,2%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	1	,7%

For more reliability, an f-test was implemented to calculate the differences in the participants' answers with respect to the knowledge component. The results, in Table 3 below, showed significant differences among the four groups, indicating that the p-value (0.001) is less than the significance level (0.05).



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Table 3. ANOVA table for the 'knowledge' component

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1,359	3	,453	6,119	,001
Within Groups	10,586	143	,074		
Total	11,944	146			

Conducting means plots demonstrated another finding:

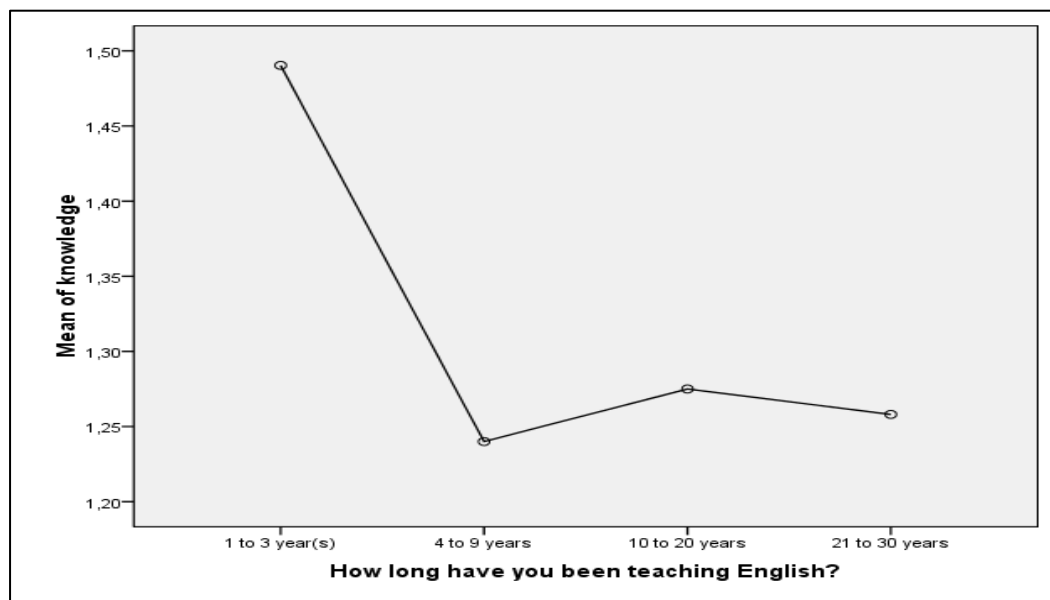


Figure 2. Means plots for the 'knowledge' component

As seen above, the three groups (4-30) results proved to be homogenous – that is, their responses were nearly the same. By contrast, novice teachers' answers were the ones responsible for the difference that influenced the p-value result. Likewise, as the Tukey test shows (table 4), statistical differences were observed between the (1-3) group, novice teachers, in relation to the other three groups. Yet, no differences were observed among the (4-9), (10-20) and (21-30) groups, i.e., old-hand teachers.

Table 4. Tukey test for the 'knowledge' component

(I) How long have you been teaching English?	(J) How long have you been teaching English?	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 to 3 year(s)	4 to 9 years	,25032*	,06351	,001	,0852	,4154
	10 to 20 years	,21532*	,06510	,006	,0461	,3846
	21 to 30 years	,23226*	,06911	,005	,0526	,4119
4 to 9 years	1 to 3 year(s)	-,25032*	,06351	,001	-,4154	-,0852
	10 to 20 years	-,03500	,05912	,934	-,1887	,1187
	21 to 30 years	-,01806	,06351	,992	-,1831	,1470
10 to 20 years	1 to 3 year(s)	-,21532*	,06510	,006	-,3846	-,0461
	4 to 9 years	,03500	,05912	,934	-,1187	,1887
	21 to 30 years	,01694	,06510	,994	-,1523	,1862
21 to 30 years	1 to 3 year(s)	-,23226*	,06911	,005	-,4119	-,0526
	4 to 9 years	,01806	,06351	,992	-,1470	,1831
	10 to 20 years	-,01694	,06510	,994	-,1862	,1523

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Concerning research questions 2 and 3, the purpose of this section was to measure the extent to which the textbook activities help learners develop positive attitudes. The participants were invited to choose from 1 to 5 points on a Likert scale which ranges from 1 (not at all), 2 (to a small extent), 3 (to some extent), 4 (to a great extent) to 5 (completely).

Table 5. Distribution of mean scores for the component of attitudes

	N	Sum	Mean
To what extent do the textbook activities raise universal values such as understanding, peace, tolerance, honesty, forgiveness, caring, etc.?	147	329	2,24
To what extent do the textbook activities raise cultural issues (e.g. distancing, slurping, burping, etc.) in the target community?	147	286	1,95
Valid N (listwise)	147		

The table findings above demonstrate that the participants in this study were dissatisfied with the textbook activities. The participants' responses concerning the representation of cultural issues in the target community were negative. Item 2, as shown in the table, received 1.95 as a mean score, falling within the range of 'not at all'. The mean score (2.24) of item 1, measuring the extent to which the textbook raises universal values necessary for instilling positive attitudes about the other in general, is a bit higher than the one scored in item 2, but, still, fell within the range of 'to a small extent'. The overall results of attitudes were statistically unfavourable.

Interestingly enough are the responses of the 1-3 years-of-experience group. As the detailed contingency table 6 below shows, only contractual teachers who ticked the 'not at all' option in both items, raising universal values and cultural issues the textbook activities should include. However, the responses of the participants, belonging to the other three groups, ranged between 'to a small extent' and 'to some extent'. In other words, the responses of such participants were entirely consistent.

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Table 6. Distribution of the frequencies and percentages of the four groups' participants for the component of attitudes

		How long have you been teaching English?									
		1 to 3 years		4 to 9 years		10 to 20 years		21 to 30 years		Total	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
To what extent do the textbook activities raise universal values such as understanding, peace, tolerance, honesty, forgiveness, caring, etc.?	not at all	11	35,5%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	11	7,5%
	to a small extent	20	64,5%	25	55,6%	15	37,5%	30	96,8%	90	61,2%
	to some extent	0	,0%	20	44,4%	25	62,5%	1	3,2%	46	31,3%
	to a great extent	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
	Completely	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
To what extent do the textbook activities raise cultural issues (e.g. distancing, slurping, burping, etc.) in the target community?	not at all	31	100,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	31	21,1%
	to a small extent	0	,0%	43	95,6%	27	67,5%	23	74,2%	93	63,3%
	to some extent	0	,0%	2	4,4%	13	32,5%	8	25,8%	23	15,6%
	to a great extent	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%
	Completely	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%	0	,0%

Nevertheless, an f-test was applied to back up the finding. The f-test results, in Table 7 below, revealed significant differences among the four groups, indicating that the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05). Tukey test (table 8 below) showed that no statistical differences were observed between the (4-9) and (21-30) groups. Apart from these two groups' homogenous responses, the rest underwent significant differences.

Table 7. ANOVA table for the 'attitudes' component

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25,353	3	8,451	168,854	,000
Within Groups	7,157	143	,050		
Total	32,510	146			

Table 8. Tukey test for the 'attitudes' component

(I) How long have you been teaching English?	(J) How long have you been teaching English?	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 to 3 year(s)	4 to 9 years	-,92186*	,05222	,000	-1,0576	-,7861
	10 to 20 years	-1,15242*	,05353	,000	-1,2916	-1,0133
	21 to 30 years	-,82258*	,05682	,000	-,9703	-,6749
4 to 9 years	1 to 3 year(s)	,92186*	,05222	,000	,7861	1,0576
	10 to 20 years	-,23056*	,04862	,000	-,3569	-,1042
	21 to 30 years	,09928	,05222	,232	-,0365	,2350
10 to 20 years	1 to 3 year(s)	1,15242*	,05353	,000	1,0133	1,2916
	4 to 9 years	,23056*	,04862	,000	,1042	,3569
	21 to 30 years	,32984*	,05353	,000	,1907	,4690
21 to 30 years	1 to 3 year(s)	,82258*	,05682	,000	,6749	,9703
	4 to 9 years	-,09928	,05222	,232	-,2350	,0365
	10 to 20 years	-,32984*	,05353	,000	-,4690	-,1907

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Overall, the results related to the three research questions showed statistically unfavourable scores. According to the findings raised above, learners are kept in the dark as the textbook they use has proved to be almost void of knowledge about target speakers. Put differently, the included teaching activities do not target the intercultural component as a primary goal, meaning that communicative breakdowns with target speakers are highly expected.

## 5. Discussion

Language attitudes are considered to be one of the key concepts that the learning-teaching process revolves around. According to Savignon (1976), "Attitude is the single most important factor in second language learning" (p. 295). Likewise, Byram et al (2002, p. 11) state that "the foundation of intercultural competence is in the attitudes of the intercultural speaker or mediator." Therefore, it goes without saying that learners' positive attitudes towards speakers of the target language correlate with success in EFL classrooms. Because of the effect of positive attitudes on language learning, this study examined the textbook teaching activities so as to spot and evaluate their contribution to the development of the learner's intercultural awareness. Teacher participants were therefore asked to rate the extent to which the textbook activities raise universal values (e.g. understanding, peace, tolerance, honesty, forgiveness, caring) and cultural issues (e.g. distancing, slurping, burping, etc.) in the target community in order to foster positive attitudes towards the target speaker.

Attitudes findings show statistically unfavourable scores. As far as global values necessary for the development of the cultural component are concerned, their mean score is 2.24, thereby falling within the range of 'to a small extent'. It appears that values, the backbone of successful education, are not represented in the syllabus as they should be. It is common knowledge that values such as understanding, peace, tolerance, honesty, forgiveness and caring are very important in shaping the learner's attitudes and perceptions of the target culture and its people. That is why values education forms the bedrock of the human life of not only

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Morocco as a nation but all the other nations worldwide as well. Because Moroccan school is experiencing different dysfunctions, the 'values education' report (2017) targets seven areas, one of which is related to programmes, curricula and training, insisting on taking advantage of the first occasion in which these curricula and programmes will be reviewed, and then integrating the following recommendations:

- Clarify the options and approaches for integrating values education in the general school curricula.
- Elaborate reference guides and adopt a matrix of priority values based on the Moroccan Constitution.
- Adopt an approach based on values and human rights in school curricula programs and teaching tools.
- Promote a culture of equality in education and fight against all forms of discrimination. (Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research, 2017, p. 9)

However, the Moroccan English syllabus fails to present values in an authentic context. To exemplify, 'Ticket 2 English', one of the three officially-approved textbooks, includes two activities in which the learner has to match some values with their meanings and then opposites. They are as follows:

**3. Relate these values with their meanings.**

Value	Meaning
a. altruism	1. the ability to accept and respect the opinions and beliefs of others
b. citizenship	2. the ability to live together in harmony
c. initiative	3. the act of participating with others and working together towards the same end
d. tolerance	4. selflessness, generosity, kindness
e. coexistence	5. equal treatment to anyone
f. cooperation	6. the ability or opportunity to act before others do
g. equity	7. the set of rights and duties a person has towards his own community

**4. Match the words with their antonyms.**

Word	Antonym
a. altruism	1. hatred
b. tolerance	2. irresponsibility
c. cooperation	3. selfishness
d. equity	4. conflict
e. responsibility	5. individuality
f. love	6. injustice
g. harmony	7. intolerance

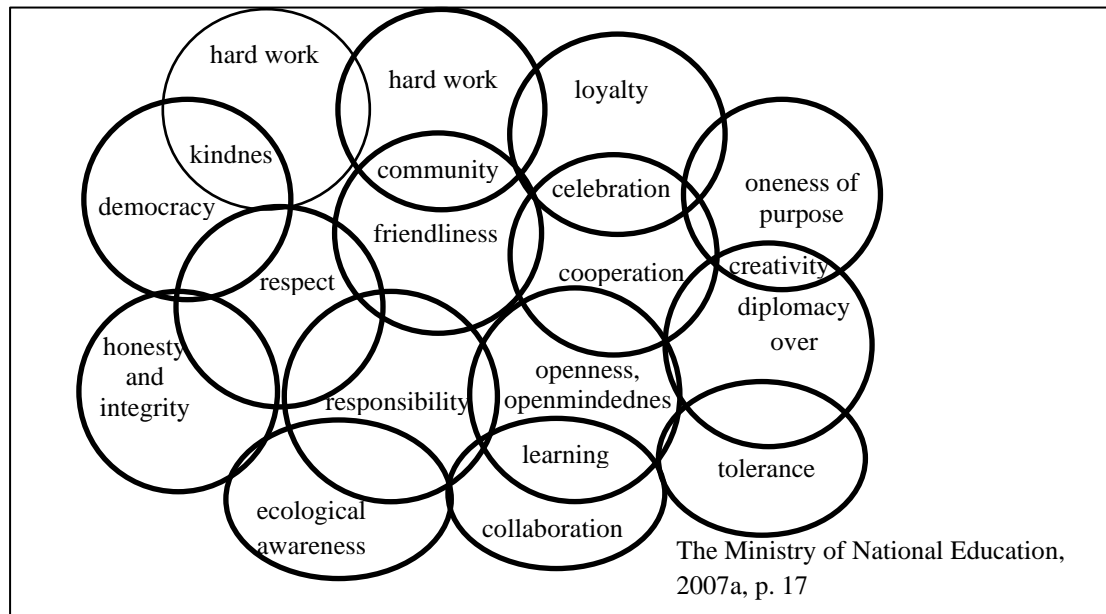
The Ministry of National Education, 2007c, pp. 82-83

Such activities are merely dictionary oriented. In other words, the goal behind these two activities is to memorize vocabulary items. By so doing, the learner is heading towards being a 'fluent fool' (Bennett, 1993). The activities incorporated in the textbook have nothing to do with targeting the cultural, let alone the intercultural, dimension. Moreover, such activities are decontextualized. The learner should be introduced to values education in relation to other cultures so as to give them the opportunity "to relativise one's own values" (Byram et al., 2002,



p. 12). In other words, learning about the other's values helps the Moroccan learner know that their values are not the only possible and correct ones; that is to say, there are other people, belonging to other cultures, who hold different values. Getting introduced to authentic writings that are loaded with the other's values, the learner would easily find an in-between position through the skill of decentring and therefore no cultural misunderstandings would take place (Byram, 1997).

'Insights into English', another textbook used in teaching English as a foreign language in Morocco, also presents two activities raising certain values in isolation as 'Ticket 2 English' above does:



Learners are given these directions:

**Your school should be guided by these values.**  
 This activity is designed to help you reach a better understanding of the most important values that should guide your school.

**Step 1:** From the circle chart, select the ten most important values that should guide your school. Feel free to add more values.

**Step 2:** Arrange them in order of importance.

**Step 3:** In groups of five, write down five sentences you would tell an English-speaking visitor to your school.

**Step 4:** Present them to the rest of the class. (ibid.)

At first sight, one can decide that this activity is a waste of time. It targets vocabulary memorization, i.e., learning the code. For values education to be effective, it should be linked to specific cultures learners are supposed to, at least, know about them, if not go further to relativise their own values for successful interaction (Byram et al., 2002, p. 12). The second activity this same textbook includes takes the form of 'values questionnaire' (op. cit.):

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Indicate how important each value is to you.

.....	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Very unimportant</b>
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					

The Ministry of National Education, 2007a, p. 18

1. Which values are very important to you?
2. Which five are most important?
3. Rank them in order of importance from 1 to 5.
4. Which values are very unimportant?
5. Which five are least unimportant to you?

It is evident now that the way values are presented in the textbook is surely ineffective. The aim behind stating them in a decontextualized way is simply to know their meaning. They are presented with no reference to any specific culture, whether it is the learner's own culture or the target speaker's one.

To sum up, universal values are unanimously agreed upon to be part and parcel of the teaching-learning process. Such language ingredients are necessary for building up the learner's positive attitudes which correlate with foreign language learning success. The present study shows that the three officially-approved textbooks either ignore or present values in isolation, hoping that the future programme will not miss them out as proposed by the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research report (2017).

On the other hand, the current textbooks fail to raise cultural issues, such as distancing, burping and bargaining, in both the learner and the target speaker's communities. Rating the extent to which teaching activities raise cultural issues, teacher participants show their dissatisfaction which manifests itself in the statistically insignificant mean score (1.95). In light of this, the Moroccan English syllabus ignores one of the basic elements of culture. Because of this, no learning, apart from the code, is guaranteed and communication breakdowns seem to be inevitable. Understanding on the part of both interlocutors can, therefore, be hard. In other words, cultural misunderstandings, leading to animosity, fighting, and negative feelings, cannot be avoided. In the three textbooks assigned to second-year Bac, cultural issues are absent in nine units apart from the unit on 'cultural issues and values.' To complicate matters further, even the activities included in this unit are ineffective.

'Gateway 2 to English', the third textbook of English, for example, includes very interesting cultural activities in the unit of 'cultural issues and values' (The Ministry of National Education, 2007b, pp. 23-24). It is worth mentioning that such activities are presented in the 'introduction to the theme of the unit' as warm-up activities. This introductory part presents four good cultural activities. In activity 'A' (p. 23), the learner gets introduced to a

general definition of the word ‘culture’ together with certain cultural aspects, such as the way people greet each other, celebrate feasts and occasions and cook and eat food. These aspects are related to different nationalities with different cultures and so learners can easily observe and compare them to theirs. Of course, classroom discussions, led by an intercultural teacher, can help learners know that there are other ways of leading life that are not necessarily the same as theirs. Learners would, therefore, learn not only to accept differences but also to get ready for successful interaction with the other based on this acquired knowledge. More interestingly, activity ‘B’ (the one below) presents argumentative subjects that are often referred to as ‘cultural issues.’

Read each of the following situations and decide how you feel about the behaviour it shows. Tick the rating from the list below which appropriately reflects your feeling, then compare your answers to those of your partner.

1. very common    2. common    3. not strange but not common    4. strange    5. very strange

	1	2	3	4	5
1. A man wearing earrings.					
2. Eating food with your fingers.					
3. Using the same bath water as others in your family.					
4. Bargaining with the salesperson in a shop.					
5. Slurping soup in a restaurant.					
6. A woman breast-feeding her baby in public.					
7. Adults living with their parents even after they get married.					
8. Blowing your nose in public.					
9. Your brother or sister marries someone from another country.					
10. A mobile phone ringing during a meeting.					

The Ministry of National Education, 2007b, p. 24

This cultural activity helps learners see that what they may consider ‘very strange’ other people may see as ‘common’ or ‘very common’ and vice versa. They would, therefore, tolerate and accept others no matter how different they are. They would also learn that the behaviour of a man wearing earrings (example 1) has nothing to do with homosexuality as unfoundedly rumoured in some films. Moreover, the act of eating food with fingers (example 2), as in the case of Moroccans eating couscous, is deeply-rooted in the Moroccan culture. Learners, in this case, should be aware that the other may classify such behaviour as ‘very strange’. So, the meal that the bulk of Moroccans consider delicious, the other may see the behaviour of eating it with one’s fingers as disgusting. The learner is required to be aware of this cultural difference so as to appropriately act in such a situation. Furthermore, example 6, ‘a woman breast-feeding her baby in public,’ which is a very common behaviour in the Moroccan countryside, may be considered ‘very strange’ or impolite in the eye of an outsider. In the beginning, this activity would seem excellent as it creates a healthy atmosphere for classroom discussion. However, the pitfall of such an activity is that it does not refer to who does what. Put differently, Moroccan learners should know which community does which behaviour, and then compare it with their own. By so doing, the learner firstly becomes knowledgeable concerning the behaviours of different people belonging to different countries, and most importantly develops a kind of repertoire towards different communities so that they could interact with them without any cultural misunderstandings or communication breakdowns. Listing these cultural issues the way they are in the table above is useless as they are seen from a monocultural point of view. The table does not include an exhaustive list of cultural issues; there are other behaviours

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that might be raised by the teacher according to their importance to the learner. To explain, learners should know about the cultural similarities and differences of foreigners, especially regular visitors to Morocco. It is also fascinating to have two other activities – ‘C’ and ‘D’ (ibid.)– which invite the learner to think of the behaviours that are considered culturally appropriate or inappropriate in Morocco. These activities push the learner towards revisiting certain cultural aspects that are taken for granted. It is also a chance for the learner to think of the other whether they would consider these behaviours as normal or abnormal. Yet, this other should be known to the learner in order that the latter can deal with them on prior knowledge. Interestingly enough, intercultural teachers could adapt these activities to raise their learners’ intercultural awareness.

On the whole, the textbook designed for second-year Bac learners proves to be ineffective in presenting cultural activities responsible for encouraging learners to adopt positive attitudes towards the other. This is well understood from the received mean of means score (2.09) of the representation of both universal values (2.24) and cultural issues (1.95) in the textbook. It is weird not to include cultural activities in 9 units of the textbook except in the unit on ‘cultural issues and values.’ To make matters worse, even this tenth unit, as seen with ‘Gateway 2 English’ textbook, which is supposed to be rich in cultural issues and values, contains some irrelevant and decontextualized cultural aspects with no reference to any culture. By and large, for the sake of developing intercultural learners, very much work must be exerted in order to foster positive attitudes, the most necessary dimension in the intercultural approach. In so doing, activities that are characterised by knowledge about the learner’s culture and the target one should be a staple ingredient in the syllabus design.

## **6. Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to investigate the issue of raising learners’ intercultural awareness. It sought to provide answers to the research questions revolving around the ‘attitude’ savoir.

The study’s findings show that the intercultural component is almost absent in the English syllabus. Instead, almost all the teaching activities included in the textbook are language oriented. Investigation into the English syllabus demonstrates that the intercultural component is not stressed among the goals to achieve in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Morocco. Evaluating the second-year Bac program shows that its content does not present authentic cultural content. Teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the teaching activities that are devoid of the cultural load learners should get to be ready for intercultural encounters. It has been proved evidence that high school learners are unaware of target cultures as they have no source of authentic cultural information which can help in developing their intercultural awareness. They are, therefore, expected to have very limited cultural knowledge about the other.

In their evaluation of the program, the participating teachers made it clear that the included activities could not raise the learners’ intercultural awareness as they do not reflect the learner’s own culture together with the target cultures.

The overall results of attitudes are statistically unfavourable. Except for their decontextualized representation in the form of dictionary work, universal values, including understanding, tolerance, caring and peace, are insufficiently represented in the English

syllabus. Learners cannot, therefore, relate any value to any specific culture. Likewise, the participating teachers expressed their disappointment with the program's almost total lack of representation of such cultural issues as distancing, slurping and burping.

In light of the above, the study's contribution to the literature on intercultural education stresses that selecting the cultural activities to be included in the learner's textbook should be limited to specific cultures. For instance, raising 'private space' as a cultural issue between Dominicans and British people in 'Ticket 2 English' textbook (The Ministry of National Education, 2007c, p. 86) is irrelevant to the Moroccan context as there seems little chance of Moroccan learners to interact with Dominicans. Instead, the choice of the activities to be included in the textbook should take into consideration not only the cultures of the UK and the USA but the cultures whose bearers are regular visitors to Morocco as well. These visitors, according to the Ministry of Tourism (2019) statistics report, are the French, the Spanish, the Germans, the Italians, the Belgians and the Dutch.

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