

**Exploring Secondary Teachers' Perception towards Teaching
Intercultural Competence in English
Language Classrooms in Bahrain**

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Abstract

The aims of English language teaching (ELT) have observed a fundamental reconsideration during the past two decades, resulting in a shift in emphasis from linguistic competence over communicative competence to intercultural competence. The growing emphasis on cultural issues, which is called for by research and international curricular documents, places new demands on language teachers.

The general aim of this study is to deepen the knowledge about teachers' perception at the Bahraini government secondary schools towards the treatment of culture in English language teaching. The research questions are: 1. How do English language teachers understand and define the concept "Culture" and Intercultural Competence in ELT? 2. To what extent do the teachers see Intercultural Competence as an objective in language classroom? 3. How do they approach the teaching of Intercultural Competence in their classrooms? 4. What preparation/training have they had (pre-service), or wish to have (in-service), for including Intercultural Competence in their teaching?

This interpretive and exploratory study is placed within a socio-cultural framework and can also be a contribution to teacher cognition research. The empirical data consists of semi-structured interviews with 17 English language senior teachers and a questionnaire with 197 English language teachers. The findings are presented according to three pedagogies: within the pedagogy of information; within the pedagogy of preparation; and within the pedagogy of Encounter. The minority of the participants represent the third perspective, which is the one that can be characterized as truly *intercultural*. My study indicates that many teachers feel unsure about how to teach culture in an appropriate and up-to-date manner. This is attributed to, among other things, lack of teacher insight, lack of time, and inadequate pre- or in-service training courses concerning teaching culture. The thesis ends with a set of recommendations as to how ELT could be developed in a more intercultural direction.

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