

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

8 MAY 1945 UNIVERSITY / GUELMA

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE

جامعة 8 ماي 1945/قائمة

كلية الآداب و اللغات

قسم الآداب و اللغة الإنجليزية



**Promoting EFL Students' Intercultural Competence through Teaching
Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

Submitted by:

Wissal BOUSNOUBRA
Khawla CHABIL

Supervised by:

Dr. Amina EL AGGOUNE

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Chairwoman: Dr. Imane DOUAFAER	MCB	University of 8 May 1945-Guelma
Supervisor: Dr. Amina EL AGGOUNE	MCA	University of 8 May 1945-Guelma
Examiner: Mrs. Imene TABOUCHE	MAA	University of 8 May 1945-Guelma

June 2025

Dedication

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

I dedicate this research work

To my beloved parents, whose endless love, prayers, and sacrifices have guided me through
my study journey.

To my siblings Asma and Omar who have always been there whenever I need support and
encouragement.

To my Aunt Sana for her warmth and that have always made me feel safe. Thank you for
being like a second mother.

To my besties;Khawla, Samar, Joujou, Bella, Meriem, Achwak, Balkis, and Bechou. I am
endlessly grateful for every laugh and every tear we have shared together.

To my favorite cousins;Sondes, Meriem, and Balkis. To my childhood friends Soula, Nina,
and Roufaida. Thank you for the bond and the memories that will never fade.

To my dear Amel; your support and kindness meant more than words can say.

To the one who has held a special place in my life even though you are no longer here.

Your words of support, encouragement, and belief in me had never left my mind.

Wissal

Dedication

To my beloved parents for their endless support, love, and sacrifices I dedicate this research work.

To my second mother, my aunt Hanifa for her unconditional love, for believing in me and supporting me in every step I take.

To my beloved sisters: Chaima, Wafa, Soudjoud, Chahd and Jinan, for their encouragement, and love.

To my precious niece Abrar, for being the bright light in my life and a reminder for joy and hope. I love you endlessly.

To my uncle's wife Fatiha for her kindness and support.

To the memory of my uncle Karim whose spirit still inspires me even after his absence.

To my best friends: Wissal, Samar, Joujou, Achwak, Balkis, Meryem, Bella, and Bouchra, for their patience and motivation.

This work is dedicated to all of you with much gratitude and love.

Khawla

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, this endeavor would not end without the help and the facilitation of Allah.

Words cannot express our gratitude to our supervisor Dr. Amina EL AGGOUNE for her continuous guidance, support, encouragement, and valuable feedback throughout every step of this research. Her expertise and dedication have been true inspiration.

We are also extremely grateful to the members of the jury Dr. Imane DOUAFER and Mrs. Imene TABOUCHE who have devoted much of time and efforts to evaluate this work. Their insightful comments and valuable suggestions are highly appreciated.

Special thanks are extended to our classmates and friends: Chokri, Mouhamed, Wadoud, and Moussa for their support, cooperation, and for stimulating discussions that have contributed to our academic research to a great extent.

Also we would like to express our sincere thanks to the teachers at the university of Guelma who generously took time to complete the questionnaire and contributed by their worthwhile participation and supportive cooperation.

Finally, we would like to thank anyone who contributed in a way or another in this research

Abstract

This research aims to investigate oral expression teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards promoting students' intercultural competence through teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions at the department of English, Guelma University. Students in the department still face difficulties when it comes to understanding and using proverbs and idiomatic expressions of the target culture. Their unawareness or the misuse of idioms and proverbs can result in cultural comprehension deficiencies when trying to communicate in target language. To achieve the central aim of this study, to answer the research questions, and test the hypothesis, a quantitative method has been used. Accordingly, a questionnaire has been distributed to a sample of 15 oral expression teachers at the same department. The obtained results revealed teachers positive perceptions towards proverbs and idioms and their significant role in understanding the target culture in general and improving the intercultural competence in particular.

Keywords: attitudes, intercultural competence, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, target culture

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

N: Number

Q: Question

IC: intercultural competence

DMIS: Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Teaching Experience.....	38
Table 3.2 Students' Level in English	39
Table 3.3 Teachers' Familiarity with Teaching English Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions	40
Table 3.4 Teachers' Frequency of Including Proverbs and Idioms in Lessons.....	41
Table 3.5 Main Sources Used for Teaching Proverbs and Idiomatic Expression.....	42
Table 3.6 Strategies for Teaching Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions	43
Table 3.7 Teaching the Cultural Background and Meaning of Proverbs and Idioms.....	44
Table 3.8 Supporting the Idea of Teaching Students about English Culture	46
Table 3.9 Strategies that Help Students Understand Cultural Differences.....	47
Table 3.10 Faced challenges with the target culture	48
Table 3.11 Difficulties faced With the Target Culture.....	48
Table 3.12 Teaching Proverbs and Idioms as a Means to Enhance Intercultural Competence.....	49
Table 3.13 the Contribution of Proverbs and Idioms to Enhance Intercultural competence.....	50
Table 3.14 Effective Types of Proverbs and Idioms in Enhancing Intercultural Competence.....	51
Table 3.15 Teachers' Assessment of Student's Intercultural Competence.....	53

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006)	29
Figure 2.1 Visualization of Deardorff Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006)	30
Figure 3.1 the Stages of Development – Bennett’s DMIS Model (Bennett, 2004)	32

CONTENTS

Dedication	I
Acknowledgement	III
Abstract	IV
List of Abbreviations.....	V
Contents.....	VIII
General Introduction	1
Chapter One: Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions	
1.1 Definition of Figurative Language.....	6
1.2 Origins of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions.....	7
1.3 Definition of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions	9
1.4 Characteristics of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions.....	12
1.5 Categorization of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions	14
1.6 Functions of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions.....	17
1.7 Strategies for Teaching Proverbs and Idiomatic expressions	18
Conclusion	19
Chapter Two: Intercultural Competence	
2.1 Definition of Culture	21
2.2 Characteristics of Culture.....	22
2.3 The Importance of Teaching Culture in EFL Classrooms	23
2.4 The Definition of IC.....	25
2.5 Components of IC	26
2.6 Models of IC.....	27
2.7 Strategies for Teaching Intercultural Competence (IC).....	32
2.8 Faced Challenges in Teaching IC	33
2.9 Promoting IC through Teaching Proverbs and Idioms	34
Conclusion	34

Chapter Three: Field Investigation

3.1. Teachers' Questionnaire.....	36
3.1.1. Sample	36
3.1.2. Description of the Questionnaire	36
3.1.3. Administration of the teachers' Questionnaire	38
3.1.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	38
Conclusion	58
Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations	59
Limitations of the Study	60
Suggestions for Future Research	61
References	64
Appendix : Teachers' Questionnaire	71
Résumé	
ملخص	

General Introduction

In our interconnected world, learning a new language is no longer just about mastering grammar or memorizing vocabulary. It is about understanding people, their values, ways of thinking, and how they express themselves. English, being the most widely spoken language across cultures, brings with it not only words but a whole world of ideas, beliefs, and experiences. Among the many ways culture shows up in language is through proverbs and idiomatic expressions. For learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), understanding and using these expressions appropriately can be a challenge. Thus, this dissertation explores how teaching proverbs and idioms can help students go beyond the surface of language and truly connect with the culture behind it.

1. Statement of the Problem

Today's EFL classrooms have shifted their focus from merely developing students' linguistic and grammatical skills to enhancing their intercultural competence. This shift aims to ensure that learners can communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, many English language learners still lack awareness about cultural differences and they face troubles in understanding and communicating with people from different cultures. Idioms and proverbs are considered as significant components that combine between language and culture, they are short phrases and expressions but they still carry out deep meanings shaped by the traditions, histories, and everyday lives of particular group of people belonging to a specific culture. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of proverbs and idiomatic expressions in enhancing students' intercultural competence.

2. Aims of the Study

This research work seeks to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions in enhancing English language learners intercultural competence. Also, it attempts to offer practical considerations and recommendations for integrating proverbs and idioms into EFL instruction.

3. Research Questions

What are EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of proverbs and idioms to promote their students' intercultural competence?

What are the pedagogical implications that can be given?

4. Research Hypothesis

In the light of the previous research questions, it is hypothesized that teachers will positively perceive that teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions will promote EFL students' intercultural competence.

5. Research Methodology and Design

a) Research Method

This study has adopted quantitative descriptive method. The research hypothesis was tested through administrating a questionnaire as a main data collection tool to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions towards the effectiveness of teaching proverbs and idioms in enhancing English learners' intercultural competence.

b) Population and Sample of the Study

In order to carry out this research, the population of this study consists of teachers at the university of 8 mai 1945 Guelma, faculty of letters and languages, department of letters and English language in order to carry out this research. Among them, a sample of 15 oral expression teachers has been chosen. The main reason for choosing this sample was that teachers are more likely to possess the language proficiency and pedagogical awareness needed to understand, interpret, and reflect on the use of idiomatic expressions and proverbs in language instruction. The other justification is that teaching proverbs and idioms is most occasionally associated with oral expression module rather than the other courses or modules.

6. Structure of the Study

This study is structured into three main chapters, each addressing a key aspect of the research. The organization is designed to provide a logical flow from the theoretical foundations to the empirical investigation and analysis.

The first chapter offers a comprehensive overview of proverbs and idiomatic expressions. It begins with definitions, followed by a discussion of their historical and cultural origins. The chapter then explores their main characteristics and presents various methods of categorization. It also examines their communicative and pedagogical functions. The chapter ends up with suggesting effective strategies for teaching proverbs and idioms in EFL classrooms.

Then, the second chapter examines various authors' definitions of intercultural competence, as well as its characteristics. It also provides the various IC models and delves into their history. The research also focuses on the methods used and the difficulties

encountered in teaching IC. Finally, this study explores how teaching proverbs and idioms can promote intercultural competence among language learners.

The last chapter presents the methodology and analysis of the questionnaire responses. It examines EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the value and challenges of teaching proverbs and idioms and discusses how these perceptions contribute to the teaching of IC in EFL classrooms.

Chapter One:

Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

Introduction

Language is more than just a means of communication. It is a reflection of culture, history, and shared human experiences. Idioms and proverbs as main elements that shape the language play a crucial role in conveying cultural values and perspectives. Definitions will be given after the introduction. They are deeply embedded in everyday language and provide insight into the ways people think and interact within a society. Accordingly, this chapter provides the definitions, origins, characteristics, categorization and functions of idioms and proverbs strategies for integrating these expressions into EFL instruction, to develop deep appreciation for the cultural aspects of communication.

1.1 Definition of Figurative Language

Dancygier and Sweetser (2014) have defined figurative language as “any language in which a speaker means anything other than what is expressed literally” (p. 1). Figurative language is an important part of communication not just in literary or artistic works but also in everyday speech. For them it can include idioms, metaphors, similes, analogies, and other expressions that help convey meaning in a more creative and cultural way. In the same vein, Dancygier and Sweetser (2014) have stated that figurative language is a natural part of how people communicate. It allows speakers to express ideas in a way that goes beyond the literal meaning of the exact words. For EFL learners, understanding these expressions is essential for interpreting implied meanings and communicating more naturally. That is to say, their definition serves to provide a strong framework for understanding the various ways in which language can be used to convey nuanced, creative, and sometimes unexpected meanings.

Furthermore, in his book “Figurative Language Teaching: Theory and Practice”, Galantomos (2021) has also provided a comprehensive overview for understanding the term figurative language. He has explained it as a symbolic expression of inner thought and

meaning creation. This perspective highlights the deep role that figurative language can play even beyond the literary touches. It also reveals how proverbs and idioms can be used to express complex emotions, abstract concepts, and personal interpretations to ultimately shape our understanding of the world and foster deeper connections between different ideas.

Moreover, Kosimov (2022) has referred to figurative language as the one that serves as a powerful linguistic tool enabling the concise and effective communication of complex ideas or emotions. By employing figures of speech, authors can convey meaning with greater impact and efficiency than through using literal language alone. To say it differently, the latter may require more words and explanations to achieve the same level of understanding. According to him, figurative language acts as a valuable tool for communication. It allows for the concise and effective transmission of complex thoughts and feelings enhancing the strong impact and the high efficiency of the message.

Another definition that has been given by Murshed (2023) has considered Figurative language acts as a powerful literary tools that can aid in enriching the reading experience by transcending the literal meanings of words. By employing metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech like proverbs and idiomatic expressions, writers infuse their work with vivid imagery, making it more engaging and memorable for readers. Moreover, figurative language stimulates the imagination allowing readers to visualize scenes and characters more vividly. Thereby, they will enhance their understanding and appreciation of literary texts. Ultimately, figurative language plays a crucial role in making literature more meaningful and impactful for both writers and readers (p. 4).

1.2 Origins of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

Every language has a set of commonly used phrases and expressions that play a key role in everyday communication. English, like other languages, includes expressions whose meanings cannot always be understood literally. Even with a strong grasp of vocabulary and grammar, learners may struggle to interpret these phrases correctly. These expressions are known as idiomatic expressions and proverbs. When used they can reflect the cultural values, shared experiences, and deeper contextual meanings of each culture.

a. Proverbs

In her work, Sadikova (2021) has investigated the various origins of proverbs. According to the scholar, there are three primary sources of proverbs: (1) the initial socio-historical perspective emphasizes that proverbs are generated from real life observations, historical events, and the shared values and beliefs of a specific culture. (2) The second psychological view suggests that the proverbs are based on general human experiences, emotions, and cognitive processes. (3) The ultimate linguistic point of view, proverbs are created through metaphor, the repetition of familiar phrases, and the formation of idiomatic expressions (pp. 106-110).

b. Idiomatic Expressions

Idioms, as vibrant figures of speech, have developed from various aspects of human life and culture. According to Sridhar and Karunakaran (2013), many idioms originate from rural life, drawing on agricultural practices, animal husbandry, and transportation. Expressions like “*black sheep*” referring to an outcast or a miserable member of a group, and “*take the bull by the horns*” meaning to confront a challenge directly, stem from farming traditions. Similarly, “*do not count your chickens*” warns against making assumptions too early, while “*strike while the iron is hot*” advises seizing opportunities at the right moment, and “*put the cart*

before the horse” highlights the mistake of doing things in the wrong order. Contemporary life facts such as scientific and technological advancements have also influenced idioms, as seen in *“short fuse”* describing someone with a quick temper, *“on the same wavelength”* meaning to share a similar perspective, and *“recharge my batteries”* to refer to regaining energy or motivation. Additionally, the world of sports and entertainment has also contributed to idioms such as *“have a good inning”* which signifies a long and successful life or career, *“dice with death”* describing reckless risk-taking, and *“play second fiddle”* which refers to taking a subordinate role. Literature and history have further enriched the language with expressions like *“sour grapes”* describing a dismissive attitude toward something unattainable, *“the goose that laid the golden eggs”* warning against recklessly exploiting a valuable resource, and *“the streets are paved with gold”* suggesting a place full of opportunity. Religious texts, particularly the Bible, along with the works of influential writers like Shakespeare, have also been significant sources of idioms. Phrases such as *“the salt of the earth”* describing someone of great integrity, *“fall by the wayside”* meaning to fail or be left behind, and *“your pound of flesh”* referring to an uncompromising demand for repayment. By the end, one can synthesize that this wide range of origins demonstrates how idioms are deeply woven into human history and culture. These expressions not only enrich communication but also reflect the values, traditions, and societal developments that shape the way people use language.

1.3 Definition of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

a. Proverbs

According to Galperin (1977), “Proverbs are brief statements showing in condensed form the accumulated life experience of the community and serving as conventional practical symbols for abstract ideas” (p. 181). This definition highlights the role of proverbs in

preserving and conveying the collective wisdom of societies through concise expressions. A Proverb is traditionally understood as a short, commonly known saying that conveys a general truth, piece of advice, or cultural value. Proverbs often represent the collective wisdom and life experiences of a particular community.

Similarly, Mieder (2004) has offered a widely accepted perspective on proverbs, defining them as “short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation” (p. 3). According to Lyons (1968), while proverbs function similarly to sentences, they differ significantly in their internal structure. Proverbs may sometimes lack a verb or follow a more simplified syntactic form. Despite these structural differences, but they still convey complete ideas. This unique feature positions proverbs as a distinct type of linguistic unit, characterized by their own structural and functional attributes.

To sum up, the above stated definitions have successfully summarizes the key characteristics of proverbs. They have highlighted their concise nature, their widespread recognition, and their specific functions suggesting that they are not merely personal opinions but rather expressions of collective wisdom.

b. Idiomatic Expressions

Wallace (1979, p.63) has contributed significantly to the understanding of idioms by analyzing their definition into two crucial dimensions. He has argued that the term “idiom” cannot be sufficiently defined without considering both its semantic and structural properties. The semantic dimension focuses on the figurative or non-literal interpretation of an idiom. The idiom “*to kick the bucket*” for instance, does not literally involve kicking a bucket; instead, it signifies death. This figurative meaning is the core of the semantic dimension. To complement this, the structural dimension or the dimension of grammatical context examines

how an idiom is constructed and how it functions within a sentence. Wallace's emphasis on these two distinct dimensions highlights the complexity of idioms and underscores the need for a comprehensive definition that accounts for both their meaning and their grammatical behavior as he has already suggested.

Likewise, Leaney (2005) has defined idioms as a subtype of fixed expression, emphasizing that their meaning is not a straightforward sum of the meanings of their constituent words (p. 121). This characteristic distinguishes idioms from other multi-word expressions where the meaning can be more easily derived from the individual components. Saeed (2003) has added another layer to this definition by describing idioms as collocated words that have become so frequently associated with each other that they have essentially become fixed, ~~fossilized~~ units (p. 84). This repeated collocation plays a crucial role in the development of idiomatic meaning, as it leads to a redefinition of the individual words within the phrase. The words no longer retain their original, literal meanings, but instead contribute to produce a new unified meaning that is unique to the idiomatic expression as a whole.

Distinguishing between idioms and proverbs can be challenging. Brooks (1981) has viewed the idiom as being a phrase whose meaning is not predictable from the individual words. A proverb, however, usually has a literal meaning that you can understand, and a figurative meaning that goes beyond the ordinary meaning. For example, “*look before you leap*” literally means to look before you jump, and figuratively it means to be careful. The main difference is that idioms are figurative; while, proverbs often have a literal meaning that relates to their figurative one. Another clue is translation; proverbs can often be translated word by word into other languages, while idioms when being translated would lose their meaning or would become nonsensical (p. 14-16).

1.4 Characteristics of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

1.4.1. Characteristics of Proverbs

English proverbs are often easily learned and remembered due to the combination of stylistic and rhetorical devices (Hernadi & Steen, 1999, p. 4). The several phonemic devices that contribute to their memorability include:

- **Alliteration:** The repetition of initial consonant sounds produces a rhythmic and anengaging effect. Example: *"Where there is a will, there is a way"*.
- **Assonance:** The repetition of vowel sounds adds musicality. Example: *"Early bird catches the worm"*.
- **Rhyme:** Creates a pleasing sound pattern that aids recall. Example: *"When the cat is away, the mice will play"*.

In addition to sound patterns, certain syntactic structures can also enhance the effectiveness of proverbs (Hernadi& Steen, 1999, p. 4) such as:

- **Parallelism:** This involves repeating similar grammatical structures in a sentence, creating a sense of balance and clarity. Example: *"Easy come, easy go."*
- **Repetition:** The deliberate reuse of words or structures reinforces the message and makes the proverb easier to remember. Example: *"Live and let live."*
- **Semantic Opposites (Antithesis):** The use of contrasting ideas in a single statement emphasizes the proverb's message through opposition. Example: *"Many are called, but few are chosen."*

Beyond structural features, English proverbs are rich in figurative language, which deepens their meaning and emotional appeal (Hernadi& Steen, 1999, pp. 5–6). Common types include:

- **Metaphor:** Describes one thing in terms of another, drawing implicit comparisons.

Example: "*Time is money*". Time is portrayed as a valuable resource.

- **Hyperbole:** An intentional exaggeration used for emphasis. Example: "*All is fair in love and war*". This exaggeration implies that any action is justifiable in extreme situations.
- **Metonymy:** Substitutes the name of something with something closely associated with it. Example: "*The pen is mightier than the sword*". The word pen refers to communication or writing; while, sword symbolizes physical force.

These stylistic and syntactic techniques collectively make proverbs memorable, expressive, and powerful tools in language and cultural transmission.

1.4.2 Characteristics of Idiomatic Expressions

Swinney and Cutler (1979) have defined idioms as fixed word combinations whose overall meaning cannot be inferred from the meanings of the individual words (p. 523). For instance, the idiom "spill the beans" means "to reveal a secret," even though the literal meanings of "spill" and "beans" have no direct connection to disclosure. This disjunction between literal and figurative meanings leads the authors to argue that idioms "defy traditional concepts of syntactic and semantic analysis" (p. 523). Their perspective aligns with broader definitions which describe idioms as phrases with fixed meanings that cannot be understood by looking at the individual words. Furthermore, Swinney and Cutler (1979) have also explained that idioms have two meanings: a literal one, which follows normal grammar and word meanings, and an idiomatic one, which doesn't follow the rules and can't be understood by analyzing the words alone (p. 524). This mix of meanings is what makes idioms unique.

Idiomatic expressions are special phrases whose meanings are not always clear from the individual words they contain. Nunberg et al (1994) have explained that idioms often have

fixed forms and carry meanings that cannot be understood just by looking at each word separately. Some idioms can change a little in grammar and still keep their meaning for example, "spill the beans" can also be said as "the beans were spilled." However, other idioms like "kick the bucket" do not allow such changes without losing their meaning (Nunberg et al., 1994, p. 496). The authors have also pointed out that some idioms are more transparent, where the words give hints about the meaning, while others are completely unclear unless you already know what they mean. Their study shows that idioms are an important part of language, and they help us understand how people use language to express ideas in creative and culturally rich ways.

1.5 Categorization of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

1.5.1 Categorization of Proverbs

Proverbs, as an essential part of oral and written traditions, have been systematically categorized to better understand their thematic and structural variations. One of the most comprehensive classification systems is the

a. MattiKuusi International Type System which has been further explored by Lauhakangas (2021). This system categorizes proverbs based on thematic and structural aspects, offering insight into their universal and cultural significance.

b. Thematic categorization organizes proverbs according to their subject matter, reflecting different aspects of human experience. Proverbs about *human existence* discuss fundamental aspects of life, fate, and destiny, such as "*Man proposes, God disposes*". *Society and relationship* proverbs emphasize social values and interactions, exemplified by "*Blood is thicker than water*". *Work and economy* proverbs focus on diligence and financial prudence, as seen in "*A penny saved is a penny earned*". Proverbs concerning *morality and ethics* serve as guidelines for virtuous behavior, like "Honesty is the best policy." Lastly, *nature and*

animal proverbs use elements from the natural world to convey wisdom, as in "*The early bird catches the worm*".

c. Structural categorization on the other hand, has grouped proverbs based on their linguistic and rhetorical composition. *Comparative proverbs* establish a relationship between two elements, e.g. "*As strong as an ox*". *Negative proverbs* emphasize wisdom through negation, as in "*No pain, no gain*". *Imperative proverbs* instruct on proper behavior, like "*Look before you leap*". *Interrogative proverbs* pose reflective questions, such as "*Who keeps company with the wolf will learn too how?*" Lastly, *rhymed proverbs* use rhyme for memorability, like "*A friend in need is a friend indeed*".

1.5.2 Categorization of Idiomatic Expressions

Linguists have classified idioms based on different criteria, including transparency in meaning and grammatical function:

a) Transparency in Meaning

Idioms can also be classified into three main types based on their degree of transparency, indicating how easily their meaning can be inferred:

- **Transparent Idioms:** These idioms are easily understood as their meanings can be derived from the meanings of their individual words. For example, "*draw the line*" is considered transparent because its meaning can be inferred from its components (Zarei&Rahimi, 2012).
- **Semi-Transparent Idioms:** These idioms contain a figurative meaning that is not immediately evident through common usage. While some parts contribute to understanding, the entire meaning requires some level of interpretation (Amer&Boutaghane, 2016).

- **Semi-Opaque Idioms:** In this category, the figurative meaning is not directly related to the literal meaning of its components. These idioms have one part that retains its literal sense while the other carries a figurative interpretation (Zarei&Rahimi, 2012).
- **Opaque Idioms:** These are the most challenging idioms to understand because their meaning cannot be inferred from their individual words. Cultural references often play a significant role in their interpretation, making them difficult for non-native speakers to grasp (Claudia, 2014).

B) Categorization Based on Grammatical Function

In the study of idiomatic expressions, one can categorize them based on their grammatical function within a sentence. According to Branescu (2017), idioms can be classified into three primary categories: nominal, verbal, and adjectival idioms, each serving a distinct syntactic role.

Nominal idioms function as nouns in a sentence. For example, the phrase "*grey matter*" refers to intelligence, as in the sentence, "*He has enough grey matter to solve this problem.*" Another example is "*chapter and verse*," which means a detailed reference, such as in "*She gave me chapter and verse on how to apply for the grant.*" These idioms take on the role of a noun, representing concepts or ideas in a more figurative manner.

Verbal idioms, on the other hand, function as verbs, and they can be further classified into various structures. One common type is the **verb + noun** structure, such as "*break the news*," meaning to announce something, as seen in "*She had to break the news to her parents.*" Another type is the **verb + preposition** structure, exemplified by "*show up*," which means to arrive, as in "*He didn't show up to the meeting.*" Verbal idioms can also combine prepositions and nouns, such as "*read between the lines*," which means to understand hidden meanings, as in "*You need to read between the lines to understand what she really means.*" The **verb +**

noun + preposition structure, like *"cast an eye over,"* means to glance at, as in *"Could you cast an eye over this report before the meeting?"* Additionally, idioms in the form of **verb + pronoun + past participle**, like *"let someone know,"* mean to inform someone, as shown in *"I'll let you know when the meeting is scheduled."* These structures highlight the flexibility of idioms as verbs in different syntactic contexts.

Lastly, **adjectival idioms** function as adjectives, often appearing as alliterative pairs. A well-known example is *"spick and span,"* which means very clean, as in *"The house was spick and span before the guests arrived."* These idioms add descriptive value to the subject they modify, providing a more vivid or figurative expression.

1.6 Functions of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

In linguistic and cultural studies, both proverbs and idiomatic expressions serve significant functions within language and communication. Proverbs are not just linguistic tools but also social artifacts that help reinforce community identity and cohesion (Dominguez Baraja, 2010). Proverbs as traditional expressions of wisdom play an essential role in conveying cultural values, moral lessons, and societal norms. They are often used to teach lessons indirectly and provide guidance serving as tools for socialization and conflict resolution. They often serve to strengthen arguments or enhance the authority of a statement, leveraging collective wisdom to influence decisions and opinions. Moreover, proverbs can soften criticism or give advice in a non-confrontational manner, making them an effective tool for diplomacy and maintaining social harmony (JalataJirata, 2009).

On the other hand, idiomatic expressions are phrases whose meanings extend beyond their literal interpretations. They are highly flexible and versatile, playing a crucial role in making language more vivid and expressive. Idioms often provide a shortcut for conveying complex ideas, making communication quicker and more efficient. Their figurative meanings enrich

the language, adding depth to everyday conversations. Idioms are also essential in reflecting a community's cultural identity, as they capture unique social and historical contexts (Gibbs, 2012). The figurative nature of idioms allows speakers to express emotions, ideas, and experiences in creative ways, enhancing the emotional and intellectual impact of their communication. These expressions also facilitate the maintenance of social relationships by providing common ground for speakers to connect over shared cultural knowledge.

1.7 Strategies for Teaching Proverbs and Idiomatic expressions

The successful teaching of proverbs and idiomatic expressions relies on a variety of pedagogical strategies that address both their linguistic complexity and cultural significance. One of the key approaches is *contextualization*, where expressions are introduced within authentic meaningful situations such as conversations, short stories, or real-life dialogues. This helps learners understand not only the meaning but also the proper use of the expressions (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008). Additionally, distinguishing between literal and figurative meanings improves learners' comprehension by guiding them through the metaphorical logic behind these expressions (Cooper, 1999).

Besides, the use of *visual aids*, such as flashcards, comics, and video clips, can further support learning by making abstract meanings more tangible and easier to remember (Liu, 2008). Teaching idioms and proverbs through *cultural exploration* can also foster intercultural competence by allowing students to discover the values, beliefs, and social norms embedded within language (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008). Practical activities like *role-playing and simulations* give learners opportunities to apply expressions in real-life contexts, enhancing both fluency and confidence. To keep learners engaged and reinforce knowledge, *interactive games and group activities* such as idiom matching or proverb storytelling can be also employed (Liu, 2008). Finally, *regular review and recycling* of these expressions across

different contexts ensures long-term retention and encourages spontaneous use (Cooper, 1999).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that proverbs and idiomatic expressions are more than mere linguistic quirks. They are indispensable elements of English that deeply reflect cultural values, historical experiences, and shared human understanding. Through that chapter, we have explored their multifaceted origins, from socio-historical events to everyday life, and examined their unique characteristics, including their often-non-literal meanings and distinct syntactic structures. Through a comprehensive categorization, it has become clear how these expressions function in communication, to enrich language, convey complex ideas efficiently, and strengthen social bonds. Ultimately, this chapter has highlighted various pedagogical strategies to effectively integrate idioms and proverbs into EFL instruction.

Chapter Two:

Intercultural Competence

Introduction

Effective communication is more than language proficiency. However, it requires an understanding of cultural differences and the ability to communicate effectively in different cultural context and situations. It does not include only linguistic skills but, also cultural awareness, empathy, and adaptability. This chapter discusses culture and its characteristics, the importance of teaching culture. In addition to the definition of intercultural competence(IC) and its components, its models, strategies and challenges faced in teaching IC and finally promoting intercultural competence through teaching proverbs and idioms.

2.1 Definition of Culture

Culture is complex term to define. There is no single agreed definition for culture because of its different dimensions. According to Tylor (1871) culture is “That complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p. 1). In a similar vein, Harmmerly (1982) has asserted that culture is concerned with an individual's daily existence, which refers to their complete way of life (p. 513). Matsumoto (1996) has stated that culture is “The set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next”(p. 16). Thus, we may say that culture is the shared set of rules and traditions within a group of people, it is about the way they think, what they believe, and how they act, and it is a heritage that transmitted from one generation to another.

Similarly, Spencer-Oatey (2008) has defined culture as “a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member’s behavior and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behavior”(p. 3).

Moreover, Richard and Schmidt (2002) have divided the term culture into two major categories culture with a capital “C”, which refers to the visible form of culture such as art, music, literature. Whereas, culture with a small “c” involves aspects that are less obvious. It reflects the everyday behaviors of group of people such as attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms (p.132).

2.2 Characteristics of Culture

- **Culture is Learnt**

According to Lustig and Koester (1999) culture is learnt by the interpretations that the individuals receive from the socialization process. The most authentic symbolic transmission of culture among individuals is seen in how adults talk to newborn babies, for example two babies born simultaneously in different regions of the world might learn to respond to physical and social cues in different ways following the society they live in.

- **Culture is Shared and Transmissive**

For Ferraro (1998) culture is something that a group of people share. it does not belong to a single individual. A solitary individual living alone, such as a hermit may has his own way of thinking and doing, but this is not considered culture. Instead, culture refers to the beliefs, practices, and behaviors that are shared by a group of people, whether it is a tiny community or an entire civilization. For anything to be considered cultural, it must be shared and passed on among people, rather than being only in one person's thinking or behaviors (p.16).

- **Culture is Integrated**

Instead of being just a collection of random traditions and customs, Ferraro (1998) has viewed culture as structured, interconnected systems with interconnected elements. A culture is considered integrated when all of its aspects function logically and meaningfully together.

By seeing cultures as structured systems, we can better understand how particular cultural characteristics relate to one another and fit into the broad cultural context (p. 32–5).

- **Culture is Dynamic and Adaptive**

Ferraro (1998) has suggested that culture is in a constant state of flux, shaped by both internal progressions and external influences. Although early anthropologists thought certain societies stayed static, it is now generally recognized that all cultures undergo transformation over time. He has believed that cultural changes happen via the processes of discovery and invention within a community, as well as cultural diffusion, where concepts, items, or actions move from one culture to another (p. 25–9).

2.3 The Importance of Teaching Culture in EFL Classrooms

Understanding the traditions, habits, beliefs, and systems of meaning of another country is undeniably a crucial aspect of learning a foreign language. Many teachers aim to integrate cultural instruction into the language curriculum. They try to focus on the fact that “knowledge of the grammatical system of a language [grammatical competence] has to be complemented by understanding of culture-specific meanings [communicative or rather cultural competence]” (Byram, Morgan et al., 1994. p. 4).

The aim of teaching culture is “to increase students’ awareness and to develop their curiosity towards the target culture and their own, helping them to make comparisons among cultures” (Tavares & Cavalcanti, 1996. p. 19). These comparisons aim to improve students’ experiences and raise their awareness of cultural variety rather than diminishing foreign cultures (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993. P. 7-8).

Seelye's (1988) seven goals of cultural instruction can profoundly highlight the importance and goals of teaching culture. According to him, the teaching of culture has the following goals:

- To help students develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally conditioned behaviors.
- To help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
- To help students become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture.
- To help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.
- To help students develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
- To help students develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture.
- To stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

Furthermore, the importance of culture teaching is 'increasing awareness of one's own 'cultural logic' in relation to others' (Willems, 1992, cited in Byram, Morgan et al., 1994. p. 67). However, recognizing "otherness" and the limitations of one's own cultural identity is essential for achieving this cultural logic.

2.4 The Definition of IC

Intercultural competence, or what is referred to as IC, is the capacity to understand cultural differences, including your own, and to effectively communicate with people from other cultures. For Bolten, (1998) “(Inter-) cultural competence: Knowledge of the other culture, knowledge of the foreign language, tolerance of ambiguity, relativization of the role of each person, empathy, flexibility. Intercultural competence is independent of individual or social competence which requires the ability to cooperate, the ability to communicate, the ability to innovate, motivation and resistance to stress” (p. 167).

So, intercultural competence is about being able to interact successfully and understand people from different cultural backgrounds. According to Deardorff (2006), it is “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p.247). Accordingly, individuals can attempt to interact with each others from various cultural backgrounds, focusing on the development and application of their own intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Similarly, Chen and Starosta (1999) have defined it as “the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other’s cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment” (p. 28). This definition highlights the importance of communicating effectively and suitably when engaging with individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

In the same context, Byram et al (2002) have viewed intercultural competence as “the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (p 10). According to his definition IC is the capacity to establish and maintain understanding amongst individuals from different social backgrounds. This demonstrates the

ability to see and appreciate the various identities and unique qualities of people, going beyond basic stereotypes, and recognizing the complexity of human beings.

2.5 Components of IC

Bennett (2011) has proposed three components of IC which are cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills. Firstly, the most important cognitive skill we can have is cultural self-awareness that has to do with understanding our own cultural perspective in order to truly understand other people point of views. That is to say there is a need to have general knowledge about cultures, be aware of specific cultures, and know how to analyze interactions. Secondly, affective competence includes being genuinely curious about other cultures, showing motivation, and being open-minded. Thirdly, the behavioral competency consists of empathy to recognize and appreciate the emotions and ideas of people from various cultural backgrounds. It also includes listening, problem solving, relationship building skills and information gathering skills (p. 3). Bennett's competencies show that intercultural competence involves more than acquiring skills; it encompasses adopting a mindset that appreciates diversity and promotes respectful engagement. In the same vein and according to Byram (1997) "it is important that the learner be able to see the similarities and differences and establish a relationship between their own and other systems" (p. 14). In other words, intercultural competency allows the students to learn new things and compare and contrast his own culture with the foreign culture in terms of values, beliefs, and various other characteristics to gain understanding, appreciation, and effective communication.

2.6 Models of IC

Researchers have come up with several theories or models on IC. These models are listed below.

a. Byram' s Model of IC

Byram's model has been introduced in (1997). It has been highly regarded in the field. It identifies the qualities of a competent intercultural speaker and helps speakers to effectively exchange information and build interpersonal relationships in different contexts. According to him the components of intercultural competence include: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction (p. 33), he has further explained them as follows:

1. **Attitude (savoir être):** Successful intercultural interaction demands positive feelings such as being curious and open-minded. To interact with others effectively, it is crucial to temporarily let go of one's own misconceptions and behaviors and evaluate them from the viewpoint of others (p.34).
2. **Knowledge (savoir):** he has divided the knowledge that individuals bring from the interaction with someone from another culture into two categories. The first category is knowledge of social groups that includes understanding one's own culture and knowledge about the other culture. The second is the knowledge of the interaction processes which includes having insights into how people form social identities, how these identities affect perceptions, and understanding how to manage multicultural relationships (p. 35-36).
3. **Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre):** refers to the ability to interpret documents from other cultures through the lens of general knowledge, and

relate them to one's own cultural documents, cultural products, behaviors and social practices, and verbal and non-verbal communication (p. 36).

4. **Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre faire):** it involves acquiring and understanding unfamiliar cultural document or event when the existing knowledge is limited. It can be done independently or through social interactions skills. The latter includes navigating challenges by using existing knowledge and maintaining a positive attitude. Additionally, establishing connections with people from various cultural backgrounds (p. 36-37).

To sum up, Byram's model IC highlights the key components needed for successful communication across cultures and the required skills and abilities in language learning. Furthermore, the components he defines are interconnected with each others.

b. **Deardorff's Model of IC**

The Deardorff model of IC has been established in 2006. It is a framework that outlines the key components and processes involved in developing intercultural competence. Deardorff (2006) has described it as the ability to cultivate specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can lead to effective and appropriate behaviors and communication in intercultural interactions. She has built this model on the highest rated components of IC which are attitude, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes, and she has created two visual formats for it, one in the form of a pyramid and the other is more process oriented.

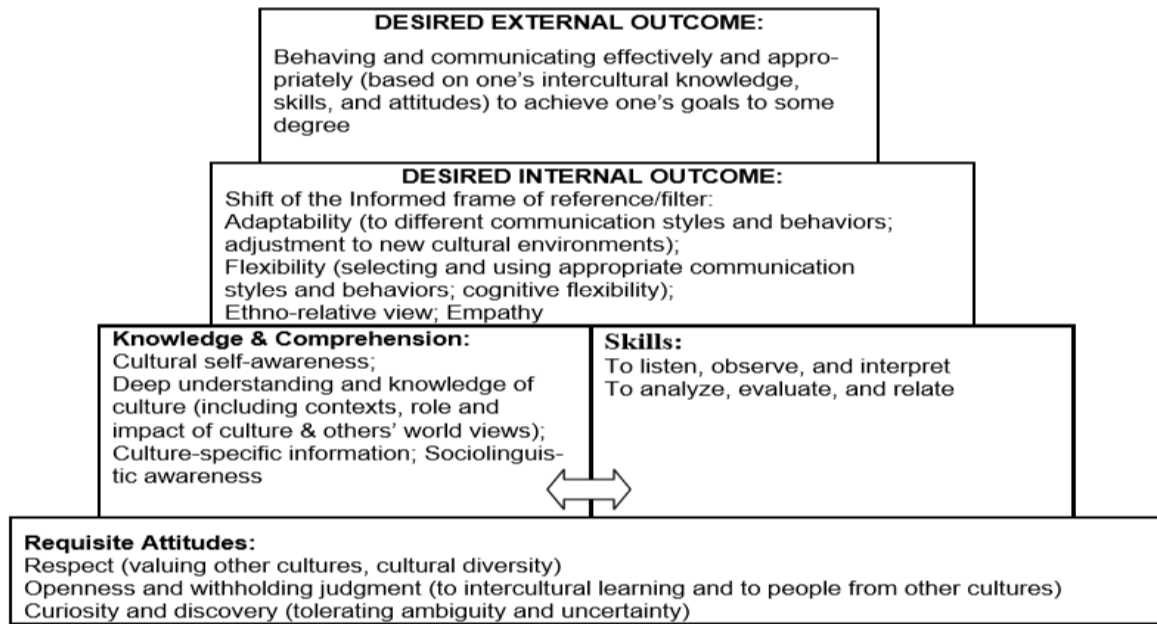


Figure 1.1: Pyramid Model of IC (deardorff 2006, p. 254)

Firstly, the pyramid shows how different parts of intercultural competence depend on each other. This means that the lower levels support the higher levels. It starts with attitude like curiosity, openness, and respect for other cultures which is the foundation on which knowledge and skills are formed. The next level includes skills like analyzing, interpreting, relating, listening, and observing along with knowledge about specific cultures, self-awareness, general cultural knowledge, and being aware of sociolinguistic cues such as body language and gestures. Together, these three elements i.e. attitude, knowledge, and skills work together to create an internal shift in perspective, which then makes individuals able to display suitable behaviors and communication styles in intercultural interactions which represents the observable outcome of intercultural competence (p. 255).

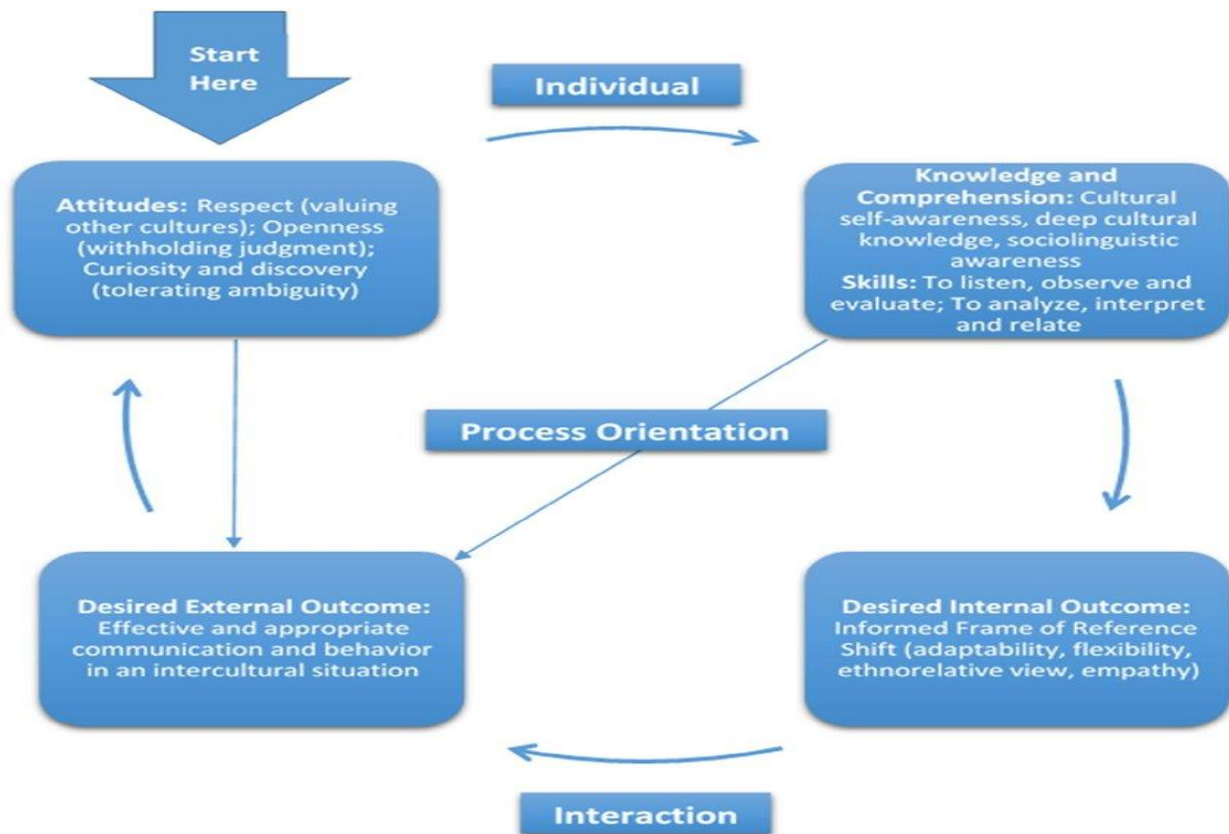


Figure 2.1: Visualization of Deardoff Model of IC (Deardoff 2006, p. 256)

Secondly, the process model of IC contains the same elements as the pyramid one, but it emphasizes the dynamic and cyclical nature of developing IC. It illustrates how individuals might go straight from attitudes, or a combination of attitudes, skills, and knowledge, to the successful external behaviors. However, the success of intercultural interactions is more likely to be less complete if individuals only experience part of the growth process than if individuals complete the whole cycle of developing IC, then it is repeated to continue improving. This model as well acknowledges both internal and external results. In other words, people might be able to act and communicate effectively in intercultural situations without having completely shifted their perspective inside, but the effectiveness and appropriateness would probably be a less limited when compared to if they had gone through that internal shift. Also, it all circles back to the importance of attitudes as the starting point of the process (p. 257).

To sum up, the difference between them is that the pyramid model explains what intercultural competence is made of while the process model explains how intercultural competence is built and improved over time.

c. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

It is often referred to as the "Bennett Scale". This model is highly regarded in the field of IC. It is developed in 1986. Through it, Bennett (2004) has tried to explain why some people communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations while others do not. He has presented the model as a developmental continuum that progresses from ethnocentrism (denial, defensiveness, and minimization) of other culture to ethnorelativism (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). This model includes several steps:

In the first stages "Denial" reflects a failure to recognize cultural differences, leading to a simplistic view of other cultures. In addition to "Defense" that entails the mentality "us vs. them" that is to say considering one's own culture as superior. Then, it shifts into "Minimization" where individuals assume that others share their cultural worldviews, which would mark the transition from stronger to milder ethnocentrism leading to the ethnorelativism "Acceptance" of cultural difference where they perceive others as distinct but equally human. Then, the core of ethnorelativism consists of "Adaptation" where individuals can adapt to different cultural perspectives and sympathize intellectually and emotionally with the experiences of others. Finally, it comes "The Integration" of cultural differences that occurs when individuals' sense of self incorporates aspects of other cultures authentically and appropriately. This is most common among minority groups living within dominant cultures.



Figure 1: The Stages of Development (Bennett, 2004)

2.7 Strategies for Teaching Intercultural Competence (IC)

Mara (2021) has pointed out to a variety of strategies for teaching intercultural competence

- The first key strategy is allowing the students to explore the richness and complexity of different cultures using comparative cultural analysis which helps students to critically examine differences and similarities, moving beyond superficial judgment and stereotypes to deeper understanding of cultural diversity.
- Also, presenting some influential figures from national and international cultures and building positive interrelationship between students from different cultural backgrounds.
- Finally, incorporating diverse media, artistic expressions, and literary works in the curriculum to help in providing authentic and instructive insights into intercultural realities (p. 6-7).

Similarly, Achieng (2023) has mentioned some other strategies such as:

- The design of language programs that prepare students in the skills necessary to deal with cultural differences (p. 22). Besides to the incorporation of intercultural and

cultural learning strategies into the learning process (Alvarez, Beaven and Garndo, 2008, pp. 179-180).

- The other strategy is to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity to improve communication effectiveness. Through this, learners can enrich their comprehension of various cultural contexts and enhance their intercultural competence (p. 23).

2.8 Faced Challenges in Teaching IC

When teaching intercultural competence, teachers may face some challenges and difficulties.

According to several studies some of them might include:

- The first challenge according to Sercu (2006) is choosing appropriate materials for teaching IC in EFL classrooms which poses a difficulty for teachers (p. 63-64).
- Additionally, the second challenge is linked to teachers' lack of the knowledge of the concept of intercultural competence which can impact and pose a challenge in teaching IC in EFL classrooms (Sercu, 2005- 2006, p. 62-68).
- In the same vein, Tian (2013) has stated that teachers' lack of exposure to the target culture is probably the result of teachers' lack of knowledge about IC (p.88).
- Moreover, another challenge is teachers' unwillingness to teach IC. Research conducted by Young & Sachdev (2011) and Larzén-Östermark (2008) have emphasized teachers' fear that critical discussions on culture could lead to uncomfortable or harmful exchanges particularly when students express racist or controversial views. As a result, many teachers prefer to opt for the traditional approach of teaching culture instead of developing reflective and critical discussions among students.

- Sercu(2006) has discussed another barrier which is teachers' beliefs that IC is best developed through real life experiences rather than classroom teaching (p. 66).

2.9 Promoting IC through Teaching Proverbs and Idioms

Incorporating proverbs into English as a foreign language teaching can be an effective way to develop learners' cultural competence, as these proverbs embody the traditions, values, and wisdom of a speech community in a unified expression (Mieder, 2004). In the same vein, Belkhir (2021) has stated that “Proverbs, when strategically introduced into language pedagogy, help learners to navigate not just the language but also the underlying cultural codes embedded within”. Additionally, Yunusova (2025) has claimed that the role of proverbs and idioms extends beyond enhancing English vocabulary; however, using them can help learners understand the rhythm and fluidity of the conversation to improve their capacity to decode the implications of different expressions in context. Furthermore, becoming proficient in idiomatic expressions and proverbs can enhance learners' self-confidence and skills to engage in discussions that native speakers have in daily interactions (p. 251).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the foundational concepts of culture, its defining characteristics, the importance of integrating cultural content in language classrooms. It has also examined the definition and components of IC, as well as several established models that guide its development. In addition, the chapter has outlined the strategies of teaching IC. It has addressed the faced challenges in teaching IC. Finally, it has concluded by highlighting the effectiveness of promoting intercultural competence through teaching proverbs and idioms, which serve as culturally rich tools that can enhance both language proficiency and cultural awareness.

Chapter Three:

Field Investigation

Introduction

The present chapter presents the field investigation by exploring the role of teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions in enhancing EFL students' intercultural competence. Data has been gathered through a questionnaire administered to fifteen (15) teachers at the department of English, 08 Mai 1945 University- Guelma. Then, the collected data has been analyzed and interpreted to examine attitudes towards integrating proverbs and idiomatic expressions in teaching inter-cultural communication.

3.1. Teachers' Questionnaire

3.1.1. Sample of the Study

The population of the present research consists of university EFL teachers within the department of English at 8 Mai 1945 University-Guelma. A sample of fifteen (15) oral expression instructors has been selected depending on their specialized experience in this area. Based on their expertise in developing students' verbal fluency and cultural understanding, these instructors would provide valuable insights into how their techniques can effectively enhance EFL students' communicative competence and intercultural knowledge.

3.1.2. Description of the Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire consists of nineteen (19) questions that have been arranged from general to specific. The questionnaire has been also composed of different types of questions ranging from dichotomous questions (Question 08, 12, and 14), open-ended questions (Question 01, 09, 03, 17, and 19), and multiple-choice questions (Question 02, 04, 05, 06, 07, 11, 13, 15, 16, and 18). Furthermore, the questionnaire has been organized in three main sections as the following:

The first section has to do with the background information of the participants. It starts from Q1 to Q4. This section seeks to gather information about teachers' profiles, the number of teaching experience, the evaluation of English language proficiency of their students, the modules assigned to each of them, and their familiarity with pedagogical integration of idiomatic expressions and proverbs.

The second section deals with proverbs and idiomatic expressions. It includes five questions ranging from Q5 to Q9. This section examines how often teachers include proverbs and idioms when teaching, it also identifies the primary resources they utilize, which pedagogical strategies teachers employ to integrate proverbs and idiomatic expressions into their EFL instruction, the extent to which they incorporate the cultural background of these linguistic elements. And finally, participants are requested to provide specific examples of proverbs and idioms that they have used in their teaching, along with the detailed explanation of their cultural background and meaning.

The third section deals with intercultural competence. It starts from Q10 to Q13. This section investigates teachers' support to the idea of integrating English culture into their EFL instruction. Besides, it explores strategies they used in their teaching of cultural differences, and the challenges they have encountered during this process.

Finally, the last section which arranged from Q10 to Q13 aims to investigate proverbs and idiomatic expression's role in promoting students' intercultural competence. This section explores teachers' beliefs and views on how proverbs and idioms help students develop intercultural competence. It also examines how these expressions introduce cultural values and beliefs, helping students better understand different societies. Teachers are invited to share their thoughts on whether teaching proverbs and idioms enhances intercultural awareness, and which types are most effective. This section also encourages the participants

specify how they assess students' ability to understand and use these expressions in intercultural contexts. And finally, they are requested to provide their suggestions and recommendations in relation to the tackled topic.

3.1.3. Administration of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered in printed form to 15 teachers at the department of English at 8 Mai 1945 University - Guelma. The data collection took place from March 9th, 2025 to March 18th, 2025. All participants were informed that their responses will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes, ensuring that participants could easily provide accurate responses without difficulty.

3.1.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

3.1.4.1. Analysis of Results and Findings from the Teachers' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

Question One: How many years have you been teaching English?

Table 3.1

Teachers' Teaching Experience

Years	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
1-10	4	26%
10-20	10	67%
more than 20	1	7%
Total	15	100%

As it is pointed in the table 3.1, the majority of teachers (67%) have been teaching English for 10 to 20 years. Additionally, 26% of teachers have between 1 and 10 years of experience. While, 7% of them have been teaching for more than 20 years. Overall, the data shows that the sample teachers are very experienced and that their attitudes and teaching practices will really matter for this study.

Question Two: How would you evaluate your students' level in English?

Table 3.2

Students' Level in English

Level	Number(N)	Percentage (%)
Poor	0	0%
Intermediate	15	100%
Advanced	0	0%
Total	15	100%

Based on table 3.2, all teachers (100%) rated that the students' level in English is intermediate. This evaluation suggests that learners had already achieved some basic level of English competence and can be able to understand and use the language in different cultural contexts but lacking development in more complex language skills. The absence of the advanced level suggests that teachers will target instruction to assist students in progressing from an intermediate to advanced level of language proficiency.

Question three: How familiar are you with teaching English proverbs and idiomatic expressions?

Table 3.3

Teachers' Familiarity with Teaching English Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

Familiarity	Number	Percentage (%)
Very familiar	7	47%
Somehow familiar	7	47%
Not familiar at all	1	6%
Total	15	100%

According to table 3.3, 47% of the respondents considered themselves very familiar with teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions; while, another 47% described themselves as somehow familiar. This means that there was an acceptable level of familiarity with proverbs and idiomatic expressions among the sample teachers. However, only 6% of the teachers reported by not being familiar with teaching proverbs and idioms at all. Overall and in relation to the level of familiarity reported, it is reasonable to assume that most teachers may approach and use such expressions within their classes. As a result, it would be expected that learners to some degree would be exposed to figurative language but the extent and depth of instruction will vary from one teacher to another.

Question Four: What modules have you been teaching at university?

When being asked about the modules they have been teaching, participants provided a variety of responses reflecting the diverse nature of English language teaching. The most commonly mentioned modules include “Oral Expression, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Linguistics, Phonetics, Written Expression, and Methodology”. These modules appear to reflect the variety of most teachers' instructional duties. Other teachers indicated teaching more specialized or content-based modules such as “Advanced Reading, Study Skills, Testing, Online Research, Digital Literacy, and ICT”. Other mentioned modules include “Civilization, Literature, Ethics, Grammar, and Cognitive Psychology”, highlighting the interdisciplinary aspect of their teaching responsibilities. Overall, the responses suggest that teachers are engaged in teaching both language-focused and content-based modules, aiming to ultimately develop students' linguistic abilities, academic skills, and cultural awareness.

Question Five: How often do you include proverbs and idioms in your lessons?

Table 3.4

Teachers' Frequency of Including Proverbs and Idioms in Lessons

Frequency	Number	Percentage (%)
Very often	5	33%
Sometimes	9	60%
Never	1	7%
Total	15	100%

As it can be seen in table 3.4, the majority of teachers (60%) indicated that they sometimes used proverbs and idioms in their lessons. 33% stated that they used proverbs and idioms,

very often. The last option “never” was chosen by just one participant (7%). This suggests that many teachers value the use of proverbs and idioms, and still make efforts to incorporate them into their teaching. Additionally, it can reflect a proactive attitude among the respondents who include them very often. Due to this, it can be said that learners are regularly exposed to these expressions and presented with opportunities to include them in their language production. This may extend their awareness and understanding of these expressions in particular and the target culture in general.

Question Six: What are the main sources you use for teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions?

Table 3.5

Main Sources Used for Teaching Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions.

Source	Number	Percentage (%)
English textbooks	9	60%
Online resources	13	87%
Movies and TV shows	3	20%
Personal experience and cultural knowledge	8	53%
Not applicable	1	7%
Total	15	100%

According to table 3.5, the teachers’ most commonly used sources are online resources (87%), followed by English textbooks (60%) and personal experience and cultural knowledge (53%). Additionally, 20% of teachers use movies and TV shows, while only 7% indicated that this question was not applicable to them that is to say they do not use proverbs and idiomatic expressions in teaching. Apparently, there is an overall strong preference for online materials

compared to any other sources. This might be linked to the easy availability and high accessibility of the online materials to teach figurative language. Teachers also comment that they make use of textbooks and their own experiences and cultural knowledge. This indicated the use of both formal and informal, traditional and new teaching materials to enhance students' understanding and ability to use such expressions appropriately.

Question seven: What strategies do you use to teach proverbs and idiomatic expressions effectively?

Table 3.6

Strategies for Teaching Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

strategies	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Direct explanations and translations	6	40%
Teaching through context (stories, real-life examples)	11	73%
Watching videos or listening to native speakers	4	27%
Group discussions and interactive activities	7	47%
total	15	100%

As seen in table 3.6, the most commonly used strategy is teaching through context (stories, real-life examples), which was selected by 73% of participants, followed by group discussions and interactive activities with 47% of teachers who chose this method. Then, direct explanations and translations were used by 40% of the participants. While, watching videos or listening to native speakers was the least chosen by only 27%. Results can signify that the emphasis on contextualized and interactional approaches indicates that the aim of teachers is to make the teaching of proverbs and idiomatic expressions more relevant and engaging for

students. When idioms and proverbs are presented in realistic contexts, it is more likely that learners will understand their meanings and apply them appropriately. Thus, it may be expected that these different teaching strategies will lead to deep understanding and high retention of idiomatic expressions among students.

Question Eight: Do you teach the cultural background and meaning behind proverbs and idioms?

Table 3.7

Teaching the Cultural Background and Meaning of Proverbs and Idioms

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	12	80%
No	3	20%
Total	15	100%

According to table3, the majority of teachers, 80%, indicated that they do teach the cultural background and meaning of proverbs and idioms. In contrast, 20% of them reported that they do not teach this cultural aspect. The findings suggest that most teachers recognize the importance of cultural background to interpret figurative language. By teaching the cultural context, students would be able to understand not only the literal meaning of an expression but also its figurative meaning including the various values, traditions and social norms contained within the expression. Therefore, one could point out that students who are introduced to a cultural dimension are more likely to use proverbs and idioms appropriately and effectively.

Question nine: If yes provide examples

The answers to this question offer examples provided by teachers who assured that they teach the cultural background and meaning of proverbs and idioms. The responses revealed a variety of techniques and strategies adopted to facilitate students' understanding of these expressions beyond their simple literal meanings. A considerable number of teachers reported that they rely on providing *contextualized examples* through *real-life situations* or *storytelling*. Moreover, some teachers highlighted the effectiveness of *discussing cultural equivalents* in the Algerian context or in students' mother tongue such as “*curiosity kills the cat*” where the teacher states that he/she tells the students about the story behind it and tries to speak about its equivalent in our literary heritage and culture. This approach enables students to grasp the meaning of proverbs and idioms within authentic communicative situations. Several teachers stressed the importance of explaining the origin, historical background, and cultural significance of the expressions such as “*when in Rome, do as Romans do*” which discusses the importance of cultural adaptability and historical travel experience, often relating them to the learners' native culture to facilitate comparison and deeper comprehension. Other participants mentioned that understanding certain idioms which cannot be translated literally requires background knowledge about the circumstances in which these expressions emerged such as “*Every cloud has its silver lining*” which was highlighted as a requiring cultural explanation due to its figurative nature. To conclude, the participants' answers demonstrate teachers' awareness of the importance of teaching the cultural dimensions of language. The strategies employed reflect teachers' efforts that they devote to promote cross-cultural understanding and foster learners' ability to interpret idiomatic expressions within their appropriate socio-cultural contexts.

Section Three: Students' Intercultural Competence

Question 10: do you support the idea of teaching your students about English culture?

Table 3.8

Supporting the Idea of Teaching Students about English Culture

Option	Number	Percentage(%)
Yes	14	93%
No	1	7%
Total	15	100%

According to table 3.8, the vast majority (93%) of teachers supported the idea of teaching English culture. While, only (7%) stated that they do not to teach it. The findings implies that most teachers would value cultural context in language teaching probably because they believe that learning a language is not just about grammar and vocabulary but it also includes learning about the culture of the language itself. On the other hand, this positive attitude may reflect the belief that teaching English culture strengthens language competence, raises intercultural awareness, and thus prepares students for real-life communication.

Question 11: what strategies do you use to help students understand cultural differences between their native culture and the target culture?

Table 3.9*Strategies That Help Student Understand Cultural Differences*

Strategies	Number	Percentage(%)
Comparing cultures	11	73%
Teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions	12	80%
Using literature, films, and media from different cultures	7	47%
Total	15	100%

As pointed out in table 3.9, teachers use different strategies that can help students understand cultural differences between their culture and the target culture. The most commonly reported strategy is teaching proverbs and idioms in which (80%) of teachers use, followed by comparing culture (73%). while, using literature, films, and media from different culture is also used by teachers but to a less extent (47%). These results show that teachers consider all strategies as important. However, teachers' preferences are more oriented towards focusing on linguistic and comparative approaches to help students understand the different cultures and their divergences in the language classroom.

Question 12: Do you face any challenges with the target culture when teaching English?

Table 3.10*Faced challenges with the target culture*

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	8	53%
No	7	47%
Total	15	100%

Based on Table 3.10, half of the respondents (53%) reported having challenges while teaching the target culture. However, (47%) stated that they do not encounter such difficulties. This indicates that cultural aspects can present difficulties for some teachers. But it is not necessarily that every teacher faces them. Some teachers might have figured out effective ways to overcome them.

Question 13: if yes, what kind of difficulties do you face?

Table 3.11*Difficulties faced With the Target Culture*

Difficulties	Number	Percentage (%)
Lack of resources on cultural topics	2	13%
Students' resistance to adopting new cultural perspectives	4	27%
Students limited exposure to native English speakers	5	33%
Difficulty in explaining cultural differences effectively	4	27%
Total	15	100%

According to table 3.11 which highlights the specific difficulties teachers face while teaching the target culture. The most commonly reported challenge is the students limited exposure to native English speakers (33%), followed by student resistance to adopt new cultural perspectives and difficulty in explaining cultural differences effectively (both with equal percentage of 27%) , and only (13%) who mentioned that they have a lack of resources on cultural topics. This shows that despite teachers' acceptance, readiness, and support of the idea of cultural integration, there are still some faced difficulties.

Section four: Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions Role in Promoting Students Intercultural Competence

Question 14: Do you believe that teaching proverbs and idioms enhance students' intercultural competence?

Table 3.12

Teaching Proverbs and Idioms as a Means to Enhance Intercultural Competence

Option	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	93%
No	1	7%
Total	15	100%

According to the findings presented in table 3.12, the majority of teachers (93%) believed that teaching proverbs and idioms enhance students' intercultural competence. While only (7%) of them disagreed. These results indicate that many teachers believe that both teaching language and its culture are inseparable. Teaching language requires teaching idioms and

proverbs that they carry cultural values and beliefs which can help in boosting intercultural awareness and grasping the target culture.

Question 15: if yes, how do you think proverbs and idioms can help?

Table 3.13

The Contribution of Proverbs and Idioms to Enhance Intercultural Competence

How it helps	Number	Percentage (%)
By understanding cultural norms and values	11	73%
By improving communication skills with native speakers	8	53%
By avoiding misunderstandings in cross-cultural interactions	10	67%
Total	15	100%

As it is seen in table 3.13, the teachers' most commonly chosen benefit of proverbs and idioms is helping students understand cultural norms and values (73%). followed by avoiding misunderstandings in cross-cultural interactions (67%). Then, (53%) of the informants claimed that proverb and idioms improve communication skills with native speakers. These results show that teachers perceive proverbs and idioms as not just ways to learn the language but also as a way to gain a better understanding of its culture. This level of intercultural competence and cultural awareness can help students deal with different cultures more smoothly and thoughtfully.

Question 16: In your opinion, which type of proverbs and idioms are most effective in teaching intercultural competence?

Table 3.14

Effective Types of Proverbs and Idioms in Enhancing Intercultural Competence

Types	Number	Percentage (%)
Commonly used everyday expressions	12	80%
Proverbs related to values and traditions	6	40%
Idioms used in humor and storytelling	7	47%
A mix of all types	5	33%
Total	15	100%

Table 3.14 illustrates teachers' opinions in relation to which type of proverbs and idioms is most effective in teaching intercultural competence. The majority of teachers (80%) considered using everyday expressions to be the most effective type, followed by idioms used in humor and storytelling (47%). Then, proverbs related to values and traditions (40%). While, (33%) of them believed that mixing all types is the most effective technique. These results show that there is a clear recognition among teachers that each type of proverb and idiom has very specific benefits in developing intercultural competence. Proverbs and idioms that reflect the value systems, traditions, and storytelling of the culture provide students with a deeper understanding of cultural identity, beliefs, and social norms. Everyday idioms are perceived as especially effective in developing intercultural competence due to the reflection of social engagement in real-life communication. Everyday expressions increase students' linguistic fluency as well as assist students in the dynamics of social interaction. Thus, the

clear preference for commonly used idiomatic expressions indicates teachers' desire to develop those cultural elements that have a direct impact on students' intercultural communicative needs.

Question 17: can you share an example of a proverb or idiom that helped your students understand an important cultural concept?

Teachers' answers of this question provide valuable examples of proverbs and idioms that helped students grasp key cultural concepts. Many teachers shared expressions that reflect cultural values such as "*time is money*" in which it helps students understand the importance of time and emphasis its efficiency and productivity. Another example that shows cultural value which is "*it is not my cup of tea*". This idiom does not speak about the tea but to show students the importance of afternoon tea for the British people. Also "*silence is golden*" used to teach the value of thoughtfulness and restraint in which silence is valuable in different cultures. Another given proverbs "*as busy as popcorn on a skillet*" to show how busy and active is life in western countries. In the same vein, another teacher gave the example of Arabic proverb "خبرك أثلج صدري" and its equivalent in English "*it's heartwarming news*" which shows how cultural environmental factors, such as climate, influence language. In Arabic-speaking cultures, "coolness" is metaphorically taken to mean emotional relief. However, in most of the colder European climates, "warmth" conveys the ideas of closeness and comfort. This examples shows how the same emotional experience is expressed with very different linguistic codes according to the cultural and environmental setting. All examples presented in this section show how language helps people connect with different cultures, making it easier for learners to grasp abstract cultural ideas and norms.

Question 18: how do you assess if students have developed intercultural competence through learning proverbs and idioms?

Table 3.15*Teachers' Assessment of Student's Intercultural Competence*

Assessment	Number	Percentage (%)
Classroom discussion	11	73%
Role-playing and simulations	5	33%
Writing reflections on cultural meaning	5	33%
Observing their use of idioms in real communication	8	53%
I do not assess this	2	13%
Total	15	100%

Data presented in table 3.15 show that in assessing the students' intercultural competence, classroom discussion is most used by 73% of the respondents, followed by observing students' use of idioms in real communication (53%), role-playing, simulations, and writing reflections (33%). While, (13%) of teachers reported that they do not assess this competence at all. The results show that in assessing intercultural competence, most of them focus on the interactive, communicative approaches emphasizing students' ability to understand and apply proverbs and idioms in meaningful contexts that are culturally appropriate. This is an indication of the teachers' preference for formative assessment-based methods rather than standardized or written forms of testing within the domain of intercultural competence.

Question 19: what recommendations would you suggest to improve the teaching of proverbs and idioms for more intercultural competence development?

As far as teachers' suggestions are concerned, most of the responses recommend using authentic, culturally rich materials like “audio, visual aids, films, literature, and standup

comedy shows” to offer learners more stimulating and meaningful exposure to idiomatic language as it is genuinely practiced in cultural contexts. As one teacher noted “*I think it's important to expose students more to foreign cultures through the use of a variety of tools: literature, films, and audios*”. Teachers’ opinions were also much in favor of practical experiential learning where idioms and proverbs would be used in ordinary classroom discourse instead of being confined to isolated exercises. As a teacher explained “*By trying to integrate an idiom or a proverb in each session and especially choosing the ones that are related to the content of the lesson presented*”. Another teacher highlights that “*teaching proverbs and idioms is both fun and easy, I advise my fellow colleagues, especially those teaching oral expression to present 4 or 5 idioms at the start of each conversation session (present them in a context), asks students to guess their meaning, then asks them to use it in a dialogue that they create with their peers*”. Another teacher’s suggestion stressed the need to go beyond memorizing words to focusing on meaning in context and cultural relevance, which also includes investigating the history or cultural narrative behind each phrase to aid understanding. Accordingly he/she said, “*To improve the teaching of proverbs for developing intercultural competence, it is important to go beyond memorization and focus on context, meaning and cultural relevance, sharing the historical or cultural story behind each proverb, and use cross-cultural comparisons*”. Another proposed idea supported integrating idioms across the modules instead of exclusively presenting them in oral expression modules. This was explained as the following: “*teaching idioms and proverbs are very effective to improve intercultural competence because they reflect the culture they are coming from and enrich the student's vocabulary and develop their communicative skills. They can be included in several modules not only oral expression in particular ways*”. Such suggestions show the teachers’ belief that in an integrated approach to meaning, the teaching of proverbs and idioms can go a long way in creating stimulating environment for developing students’ intercultural awareness.

3.1.4.2. Summary of Results and Findings from the Teachers' Questionnaire

The first section which focuses on the general information about the teachers shows that most of the participants have been teaching English for 10 to 20 years (see Table 3.1). This result reflects the heavy teaching experience among the participants. Regarding their students' English proficiency, all the teachers report that their students are at an intermediate level, with no students classified as poor or advanced (see Table 3.2). In terms of teachers' familiarity with teaching English proverbs and idiomatic expressions, the results show that many teachers consider themselves very familiar (see Table 3.3). Finally, when we asked about how often they incorporate proverbs and idioms into their lessons, some teachers reported that they use them very often, while others use them sometimes (see Table 3.4).

In terms of sources for teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions, online resources are the most popular choice, followed by English textbooks and personal experience and cultural knowledge (see Table 3.5). The strategies used to teach proverbs and idiomatic expressions as reported by a majority of teachers are using stories and real-life examples, followed by group discussions and interactive activities, direct explanations and translations are also used by most teachers, while watching videos or listening to native speakers are the less frequently utilized (see Table 3.5).

Concerning teaching the cultural background and meaning behind proverbs and idioms, most teachers mentioned that it was essential to give *contextualized examples* (see Table 3.6) to explain the origin of expressions and their historical contexts and to relate the expressions to students' native culture. They also highlighted the use of *cultural equivalents* in the Algerian context to enhance comprehension. They give examples like “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” and “Every cloud has its silver lining” to explain how idioms can convey meanings that require cultural knowledge for full understanding.

Section Three focuses on the importance of teaching English culture and the strategies teachers use to promote intercultural competence among their students. The findings indicate that most teachers support the idea of teaching English culture to their students (see Table 3.7), and that the majority of teachers recognize the value of cultural knowledge in enhancing language learning and developing intercultural understanding. Concerning the methods teachers use to help students understand cultural differences between their native culture and the target culture, the most used is *teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions*, followed by *comparing cultures*, they also use *literature, films, and media from different cultures* (see Table 3.8). These results confirm teachers' emphasis on linguistic and comparative methods to bridge cultural gaps in the classroom. As seen in Table 3.9, when we asked if teachers had difficulties or challenges teaching the target culture, the majority of teachers stated that the most common difficulties that the teachers face were *limited exposure to native English speakers*, *students' unwillingness to adapt new cultural perspectives*, and difficulties in explaining *cultural differences*. However, a smaller number of teachers mentioned a *lack of resources on cultural topics* (see Table 3.10). These challenges indicate that while teachers attempt to integrate culture into language learning, practical obstacles can make it more challenging.

Section Four discusses the use of proverbs and idiomatic expressions to enhance students' intercultural competence. The majority of teachers agreed that teaching proverbs and idioms aid in developing students' intercultural competence (see Table 3.11). These results support the teachers' belief that proverbs and idiomatic expressions are rich in cultural context and can help learners gain insight into the norms and values of the target culture. When we asked teachers how proverbs and idioms can help in developing intercultural competence, most responses centered on *helping students understand the norms and values of the target culture*, in addition to helping them *to avoid misunderstandings in cross-cultural interactions* and to

communicate better with native speakers (see Table 3.12). This demonstrates that teachers perceive proverbs and idioms not only as language learning tools but also as essential elements for navigating cultural differences. For the types of proverbs and idioms that are most effective to teach intercultural competence. Teachers consider the most commonly used everyday expressions as the most effective. Other proverbs and idioms related to values, traditions, humor, and storytelling were also considered important (see Table 3.13). This indicates that teachers favor expressions that are useful and are more likely to occur in everyday communication which enhances the target culture in practical terms.

We also asked teachers to give examples of proverbs and idiomatic expressions that they use to help students grasp cultural concepts. For instance, proverbs like "time is money" express the importance of time in culture. However, "Silence is golden" means that there is a value in certain cultures on being thoughtful and not just speaking to fill the silence. These examples show how idioms are not only linguistic expressions but they are also ways to help students access and understand cultural attitudes and behaviors.

Regarding the assessment of students' development of intercultural competence through using proverbs and idioms, teachers use *classroom discussions*, *observations of students* using idioms in real communicative actions, and a method of *role-playing* and *writing reflections* (see Table 3.14). These assessment considerations show that teachers wanted to assess students' capabilities to be productive with the cultural content they had learned and retained. Finally, the teachers offered various suggestions for improving the teaching of proverbs and idioms to further develop the intercultural competence. They recommended the use of *authentic cultural resources such as films, literature and media*, because the students will be exposed to them in real life. The teachers also emphasized the need to *focus on the context, meaning, and cultural background* of proverbs and idioms.

Conclusion

This chapter raises the issue of the role of proverbs and idiomatic expressions in promoting students' intercultural competence from EFL teachers' perspectives. The chapter reflects the results of a questionnaire targeted to the sample of 15 oral expression teachers. The results suggest that teachers' positive perceptions, awareness and recognition towards the important role that proverbs and idiomatic expressions play in helping students develop cultural awareness. Teachers face several difficulties such as the limited exposure and contact with native speakers, to student resistance to adopt new cultural perspectives. however, teachers believe that using culturally rich expressions can help students better understand cultural norms and values which allows them to communicate more effectively when they are engaging in cross cultural communication.

General Conclusion

The findings of this study signifies teachers positive perspectives in relation to teaching proverbs and idioms as an important component for developing cultural awareness and navigating the complexities involved in intercultural communication. Therefore, it can be concluded that the hypothesis of this research work has been confirmed and validated.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

In light of the obtained findings, it becomes essential to reconsider existing pedagogical practices and promote the intentional integration of culturally rich language elements into language education.

Firstly, teachers should include proverbs and idioms in language teaching programs of other modules rather than only Oral Expression. This can assist students encounter culturally rich language forms from early stages of learning. Also these expressions should not be taught in isolation; instead, putting them in real life situations will help students grasp their cultural meaning.

Secondly, training programs should provide teachers with experiential knowledge on how to effectively teach idiomatic and proverbial expressions. This could include innovative methods and ways on how to teach students the historical and cultural contexts of these expressions, as well as engaging them in cultural comparisons through the use of authentic materials such as films, socio-linguistic and literature materials, and real-life media.

Moreover and in order to address teachers' concerns about the lack of exposure to native contexts, integrating virtual exchanges, guest speakers, and multimedia resources that can enrich learners' insight to genuine cultural situations with native speakers can be implemented as proposed solutions. Giving students opportunities to explore reflection activities that

involve discussion and role-plays of proverbs and idioms in these contexts will strengthen language skills and also promote their intercultural awareness.

Another pedagogical implication is the need for assessment procedures that go beyond traditional testing. Teachers can take advantage of alternative assessment methodologies including classroom observations which allow teachers to assess students' spontaneous use of idiomatic and proverbial expressions in context. Also, integrating practical project tasks that require students to engage with cultural content, cultural reflection journals where learners analyze and document their insights into different cultural values and norms. Not to forget to mention role-plays that can simulate authentic intercultural scenarios, and even relying on those assessments to evaluate students' intercultural competence and whether they can use it in practice.

Furthermore, it is recommended for teachers to consider a comparative method when teaching proverbs and idioms, mapping out similarities between the English phrases and those in the students' native cultures. This will help develop students' knowledge and promotes appreciation for cultural diversity and higher levels of intercultural knowledge.

To sum up, the use of proverbs and idioms in English language teaching is not only about the language, but it is a necessary step to help students become equipped for more purposeful and meaningful intercultural communication.

Limitations of the Study:

This study has encountered several limitations that have to be acknowledged.

- Firstly, the sample size was relatively small, because the study was focused on group of oral expression module teachers at the department of English from university 8 Mai

1945 Guelma. A larger and more diverse sample including various institutions in multiple regions would allow for broader generalizability of the findings.

- This study relied typically on self-reported data which is collected through questionnaires. Self-reporting can sometimes be influenced by personal biases, social desirability, or misunderstandings of the questions. To reduce the impact of these issues, future research should consider using a mixed-methods approach, incorporating additional data collection tools such as interviews, classroom observations, or performance-based assessments.
- The process of data collection took place during the month of the Ramadan and some few teachers had changed schedules at that time. Therefore, not all of the potential participants could be reached. Several teachers would not be able to give time to complete the questionnaire which may have affected the extent of representativeness of the sample.
- Researchers also encountered some difficulties when administering the teachers' questionnaire. As a result, we resoled to email some of them, but we did not get any response.

Suggestions for Future Research

In light of the findings and limitations of the current study, there are a few suggestions for future researchers interested in investigating the role of proverbs and idiomatic expressions in enhancing intercultural competence:

1. Increase the sample size and diversity: future researchers should focus on larger and more diverse group of participants, involving teachers and students from different

universities, regions, and educational contexts to increase the generalizability of the results.

2. Incorporate students' perspectives: future studies can gather data from both teachers and students. Exploring learners' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions about the teaching of proverbs and idiomatic expressions would provide a more equal and well-rounded picture of the process.
3. Use mixed-methods: utilizing mixed-methods approaches - including quantitative approaches (questionnaires) and qualitative approaches (interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations) - may provide more depth into classroom teaching, learning, and culture learning.
4. Use longitudinal studies: future researchers may want to consider longitudinal studies measuring students' intercultural competence as they gain exposure to proverbs and idioms over longer time periods to evaluate longer-term impacts.
5. Explore the use of technology and authentic materials: research studies may investigate how using digital tools (virtual exchanges, online stories, multimedia approaches) and authentic cultural materials (films, series, literature) support the enhanced teaching and learning of idiomatic and proverbial expressions.
6. Investigate comparative cultural approaches: future research may focus on teaching English proverbs and idioms through a cross-cultural analysis with the students' own language expressions and how this impacts their cultural understanding and language acquisition.

7. Address challenges and develop solutions: future studies may provide an opportunity to focus on the specific issues teachers are grappling (e.g., lack of resources, students' resistance to cultural content) and develop specific strategies to resolve them.

By addressing these areas, future research may provide a more sophisticated understanding of the pedagogical potential of proverb and idiomatic expressions and their role in enhancing intercultural awareness for EFL language learners.

.

References

- Achieng, S. A. (2023). Intercultural competence in foreign language teaching and learning. Strategies and challenges. 17th International conference for Language, Individual & Society, International scientific events, Burgas, Bulgaria. pp. 19-26.
- Álvarez, I, Beaven, T & Garrido, C (2008). Chapter 10: Strategies for acquiring intercultural competence. In: Hurd, S. and Lewis, T. ed. Language Learning Strategies in Independent Settings. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, pp. 179-195. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847690999-012>
- Amer, Y., & Boutaghane, Y. (2016). The role of idiomatic knowledge in enhancing learners understanding of the English language (Unpublished master dissertation). Mentouri university, Algeria.
- Belkhir, S. (2021). Cognitive linguistics and proverbs. The Routledge handbook of cognitive linguistics, 599-611.
- Bennet, J. (2011). Developing intercultural competence for international education faculty and staff. Association of International Education Administrators conference, San Francisco.
- Bennett, M. J. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. In J.S. Wurzel (Ed.), Toward Multiculturalism: A Reader in Multicultural Education. Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.
- Boers, F., & Lindstromberg, S. (2008). *Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Teaching Vocabulary and Phraseology*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Bolten, J. (1998). « Integrated intercultural training as a possibility of increasing efficiency and reducing costs in international personnel development », In Barmeyer, C. et
- Bolten, J. (under the direction of), Intercultural Personnel Organization, Berlin, Verlag Wissenschaft und Praxis, p.167.
- Brooks, G. L. (1981). Words in Everyday Life. London: Macmillan Press LTD. Byram, M., Gribcova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching: A practical introduction for teachers. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence. UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Claudia, L. (2014). Idioms, Grammatically and Figurativeness. The round table, 1-12. Retrieved from: http://theroundtable.partium.ro/Current/Language/Claudia_Leah_Idioms_Grammaticalityand_Figurativeness.pdf.
- Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. (1999) «A Review of The Concept of Intercultural Awareness. » Human Communication, vol. 2, 27-54. Cooper, T. C. (1999). Processing of idioms by L2 learners of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(2), 233-262. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587719>
- Dancygier, B., & Sweetser, E. (2014). *Figurative language*. Cambridge University Press,
4. Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241- 266.
- Dominguez Baraja, E. (2010). *The Function of Proverbs in Discourse*.

- Ferraro, G. (1998). *The Cultural Dimension of International Business*. 3rd Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Galperin, I. R. (1977). *Stylistics*. Moscow: Higher School Publishing House. Gibbs, R. W. (2012). *Are Ironic Acts Deliberate?*
- Glucksberg, S. (2001). *Understanding figurative language: From Metaphor to Idioms*. Oxford University Press.
- Harmmerly, H. (1982). *Synthesis in second language teaching: An introduction to linguistics*. Washington: Second Language Publications.
- Hammer, M. R., Bennett, M. J. et Wiseman, R. (2003). «Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory», *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(4), p. 421-443.
- Hernadi, Paul & Francis Steen (1999). "The Tropical Landscapes of Proverbial: A Crossdisciplinary Travelogue". *Style*. Vol. 33, pp. 1-20.
- JalataJirata, T. (2009). *A Contextual Study of the Social Functions of Guji-Oromo Proverbs*.
- Johnson JP, Lenartowicz T, Apud S. 2006. Cross-cultural competence in international business: toward a definition and a model. *J. Int. Bus. Stud.* 37:525–43.
- Khaleeva, I. I. On gender approaches to the theory of teaching languages and cultures. *News of the Russian Academy of Education*. 2000, p. 21-30.
- Kosimov, Abdulkhay. (2022). *Figurative Language Devices and their Classification in English. the Difference Between Metaphor and Other Figurative Language Devices*. *International Journal of Nursing Education*. 1. 3541.

- Larzén-Östermark, E. (2008). The Intercultural Dimension in EFL-Teaching: A Study of Conceptions among Finland-Swedish Comprehensive School Teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52(5), 527–547. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313830802346405>
- Lauhakangas, Outi. (2021). Categorization of Proverbs.
- Leaney, C. (2005). *In the know: Understanding and using idioms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Liu, D. (2008). *Idioms: Description, Comprehension, Acquisition, and Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.
- Lustig, M. W. and J. Koester (1999). *Intercultural Competence. Interpersonal Communication across Cultures*. 3rd ed. New York, Longman.
- Lyons, John (1968). *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mara, D. (2021). “Intercultural Competences of Students-Strategic Approaches.” *MATEC Web of Conferences*, 343, p. 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.1051/matecconf/202134311003>.
- Matsumoto, D. (1996) *Culture and Psychology*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. Meider, W. (2004). *Proverbs: A Handbook*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Makkai, A. (1972). *Idioms structure in English*. Berlin: Mouton & N.V. Newmark.
- Mieder, W. (2004). *Proverbs: A Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Murshed, Ahmed Hassan. (2023). *Rhetorical Influence of Figurative Language on the Meaning of Literary Texts*.

- Nunberg, G., Sag, I. A., & Wasow, T. (1994). Idioms. *Language*, 70(3), 491–538.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/416483>
- Oxford Advanced Learner' Dictionary (n.d.). Idiom. In [Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](http://oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com).
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Language dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed). UK: Pearson Education.
- Sadikovna, M. M. (2021). THE ORIGIN OF PROVERBS AND SAYINGS. *Academicia Globe: Inderscience Research*, 2(6), 106–110. <https://doi.org/10.17605/osf.io/8m6q2>
- Saeed, J. (2003). *Semantics*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Seelye, H. N. (1988). *Teaching Culture*. Lincolnwood, IL.: National Textbook Company.
- Sercu, L. (2006). The Foreign Language and Intercultural Competence Teacher: The Acquisition of a New Professional Identity. *Intercultural Education*, 17(1), 55–72.
- Sercu, L. (2005). Foreign Language Teachers and the Implementation of Intercultural Education: A Comparative Investigation of the Professional Self-Concepts and Teaching Practices of Belgian Teachers of English, French and German. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 28(1), 87–105.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760500040389>
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008) *Culturally Speaking. Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. 2nd edition. London: Continuum.
- Sridhar, M., & Karunakaran, T. (May 2013). Idioms and Importance of Teaching Idioms to ESL Students. *Assian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 1-13.

- Swinney, D. A., & Cutler, A. (1979). The access and processing of idiomatic expressions. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 18, 523-524. doi:10.1016/S0022-5371(79)90284-6.
- Tavares, R. & Cavalcanti, I. (1996). Developing Cultural Awareness in EFL Classrooms. *English Forum*, 34(3), July-September 1996.
- Taylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture*. London: John Murray.
- Tian, J. (2013). Beliefs and Practices Regarding Intercultural Competence Among Chinese Teachers of English at a Chinese University. (Doctoral Thesis). George Mason University, 11(2).
- Tomalin, B. & Stempleski, S. (1993). *Cultural Awareness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Trench, R. C. (1886). *Proverbs, and their lessons: Being the Substance of Lectures Delivered to Young Men's Societies*, 8.
- Wallace, M. J. (1979). What is an Idiom? An Applied Linguistic Approach. *ITL International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 45(1), 63.
- Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London: Fontana.
- Young, T. J., & Sachdev, I. (2011). Intercultural Communicative Competence: Exploring English Language teachers' Beliefs and Practices. *Language Awareness*, 20(2), 81-98 doi:10.1080/09658416.2010.540328
- Yunusova, M. R. (2025). The Role of Proverbs and Idioms in English Language Learning. *Pedagogs*, 75(1), 251-254.

Zarei, A, A., & Rahimi, N. (2012). Idioms, Etymology, Contextual pragmatic clues and lexical knowledge in focus. Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing

Appendix

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

We would greatly appreciate it if you could complete this questionnaire, which aims to provide comprehensive data on promoting EFL students' intercultural competence through the teaching of proverbs and idiomatic expressions. All information provided will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes. Your expertise and time are highly valued

Please put a tick (✓) in the appropriate box, or provide a full answer where it is needed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Section One: Background Information

1. Gender

a) Male ☐

b) Female ☐

2. How many years have you been teaching English?

a) Less than 2 years ☐

b) 2–5 years ☐

c) 6–10 years ☐

d) More than 10 years ☐

3. What level(s) of students do you primarily teach? (Select all that apply)

a) Beginner ☐

b) Intermediate ☐

c) Advanced ☐

4. Have you ever taught in an English-speaking country?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

5. How familiar are you with teaching English proverbs and idiomatic expressions?

a) Very familiar ☐

b) Somewhat familiar ☐

c) Not very familiar ☐

d) Not familiar at all ☐

Section Two: Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

6. How often do you include proverbs and idioms in your lessons?

a) Very often ☐

b) Sometimes ☐

c) Rarely ☐

d) Never ☐

7. What are the main sources you use for teaching proverbs and idioms?

a) English textbooks ☐

b) Online resources ☐

c) Movies and TV shows ☐

d) Personal experience and cultural knowledge ☐

Other (please specify):..... .

8. What strategies do you use to teach proverbs and idiomatic expressions effectively?

a) Direct explanations and translations ☐

b) Teaching through context (stories, real-life examples) ☐

c) Watching videos or listening to native speakers ☐

d) Group discussions and interactive activities ☐

Other (please specify):

9. Do you explicitly teach the cultural background and meaning behind proverbs and idioms?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

10. What are the biggest challenges students face when learning English proverbs and idioms?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Section Three: Intercultural Competence

11. Do appreciate teaching your students about English culture?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

12. What strategies do you use to help students understand cultural differences?(You may select more than one.)

a) Comparing cultures ☐

b) Teaching proverbs and idiomatic expressions ☐

c) Using literature, films, and media from different cultures ☐

13. Do you face any challenges with the target culture when teaching English?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

14. If yes, what kind of difficulties do you face?

a) Lack of resources on cultural topics ☐

b) Students' resistance to adopting new cultural perspectives ☐

c) Students' limited exposure to native English speakers ☐

d) Difficulty in explaining cultural differences effectively ☐

15. Do you think that to master foreign languages students have to know about their customs, tradition, norms and values?

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

16. To what extent do you think that incorporating culture into English language classrooms enhances learners' ability to acquire the language effectively?

- a) Not helpful ☐
- b) Neutral ☐
- c) Helpful ☐
- d) Very helpful ☐

Section Four: The Role of Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions in Enhancing Students Intercultural Competence

17. Do you believe that teaching proverbs and idioms enhances students' intercultural competence?

- a) Yes ☐
- b) No ☐

18. If yes, how do you think proverbs and idioms can help?

- a) By understanding cultural norms and values ☐
- b) By improving communication skills with native speakers ☐
- c) By avoiding misunderstandings in cross-cultural interactions ☐

19. In your opinion, which type of proverbs and idioms are most effective in teaching intercultural competence?

- a) Commonly used everyday expressions ☐
- b) Proverbs related to values and traditions ☐
- c) Idioms used in humor and storytelling ☐
- d) A mix of all types ☐

20. Can you share an example of a proverb or idiom that helped your students understand an important cultural concept?

.....

.....

.....

.....

21. How do you assess whether students have developed intercultural competence through learning proverbs and idioms?

- a) Classroom discussions ☐
- b) Role-playing and simulations ☐
- c) Writing reflections on cultural meanings ☐
- d) Observing their use of idioms in real communication ☐
- e) I do not assess this ☐

22. What recommendations would you give to improve the teaching of proverbs and idioms for intercultural competence development?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you.

Résumé

Cette recherche vise à connaître les opinions et les attitudes des enseignants de l'expression orale concernant le développement de la compétence interculturelle chez les étudiants, à travers l'enseignement des proverbes et des expressions idiomatiques, au sein du département d'anglais de l'Université de Guelma. Les étudiants de ce département rencontrent encore des difficultés à comprendre et à utiliser les proverbes et les expressions issus de la culture cible. Le manque de connaissance ou la mauvaise utilisation de ces expressions peut entraîner des problèmes de compréhension culturelle lors de la communication en langue cible. Pour atteindre les objectifs de cette étude, répondre aux questions de recherche et vérifier son hypothèse, une méthode quantitative a été utilisée. Ainsi, un questionnaire a été distribué à un échantillon de 15 enseignants d'expression orale du même département. Les résultats obtenus ont montré que les enseignants ont une perception positive de l'utilité des proverbes et des expressions idiomatiques, et reconnaissent leur rôle important dans la compréhension de la culture cible en général, et dans le développement de la compétence interculturelle en particulier.

Mots-clés : attitudes, compétence interculturelle, proverbes, expressions idiomatiques, culture cible.

ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى معرفة آراء ومواقف أساتذة مادة التعبير الشفهي حول فكرة تعزيز الكفاءة الثقافية لدى الطلاب من خلال تعليم الأمثال و التعبيرات الاصطلاحية، وذلك في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة قلمة. لا يزال الطلاب في هذا القسم يواجهون صعوبات في فهم واستخدام الأمثال و التعبيرات الخاصة بالثقافة المستهدفة. وقد يؤدي الجهل بهذه التعبيرات أو استخدامها بطريقة خاطئة إلى ضعف في الفهم الثقافي عند التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية. لتحقيق هدف البحث والإجابة على أسئلته واختبار فرضيته، تم الاعتماد على المنهج الكمي. و لهذا، تم توزيع استبيان على عينة مكونة من 15 أستاذًا من أساتذة التعبير الشفهي في نفس القسم. وأظهرت النتائج أن الأساتذة لديهم آراء إيجابية تجاه أهمية الأمثال و التعبيرات الاصطلاحية، ودورها في فهم الثقافة المستهدفة بشكل عام، وفي تطوير الكفاءة الثقافية لدى الطلاب بشكل خاص.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المواقف، الكفاءة الثقافية، الأمثال، التعبيرات الاصطلاحية، الثقافة المستهدفة.