

Draft

First language and cultural interference as a source of writing errors among EFL college students

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1. **Institutional Description:** Beit Berl College is a leading teacher training college in the central part of Israel, where Arabs and Jews pursue their B.Eds in different subjects, including English. It includes three faculties: The Faculty of Education, The Faculty of Culture, and the Faculty of Arts. The Arab Institute of Education is affiliated to the Faculty of Education. Until recently, Arabs and Jews pursued their degrees separately.
2. **Institutional Factors:** Arabs are an ethnic minority in Israel who constitute 20% of the total population in Israel. Their specific educational needs are not well addressed at the national and local levels. However, since Beit Berl College opens its arms to Arab students, the research focuses on them to better understand their struggles, problems and challenges, highlighting on the influence of their first language and culture on their writing in English and aiming to provide the needed help and support.
3. **Key Theorists:** This research focuses on the influence of the religion (Islam) on Arab EFL students and their first culture, explaining the relationship between language and culture, which is based on their religion (Islam), as a factor that affects learning and teaching writing in English as an additional language in general. Arab students tend to transfer their first modes and patterns of thinking from their first language, transferring features of Arabic prose, such as repetition, indirectness, circularity, lack of parallelism, and lack of variation.

The work of **Kaplan (1966)** who was among the first researchers addressing cultural influence on second language learning guided my work. Early studies of Kaplan (1966) showed that speakers of Arabic use negative transfer of rhetorical patterns from Arabic into their English writing like repetition and redundancy. For example, “Repeated words, phrases and rhythms move others to belief, rather than the ‘quasilogical’ style of Western logic, where interlocutors use ideas to persuade” (**Feghali, 1997**, p.361). In addition, Arab students often quote verses from the Qur’an, the holy book, the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Ahadeeth), and declarations by prominent leaders or Islamic scholars to support their arguments. Arab culture adheres to and promotes collectivism rather than individualism. The loyalty to one’s extended family and larger ‘in-group’ takes precedence over individual needs on goals” (Feghali, 1997, p. 352). Therefore, Arabic speakers are more group-oriented and tend to use pronouns that express collectiveness, such as “we” and “us”.

Contrastive analysis, text analysis and error analysis were employed to help understand students' errors and their sources, highlighting features of Arabic stylistics and cultural interference.

Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) is a theory that is primarily concerned with the influence of learners' native language on the acquisition process of a FL or a SL and compares discourse structures across cultures and genres (**Kaplan. 1966**), potentially identifying errors. On the one hand, it studies similarities and differences between writing in first and second languages and aims to understand the influence of writing conventions in one language on the writing of the other. On the other hand, it enhances students' skills of identifying their errors that stem from the first culture and helping them to understand that literal translation may not work in all cases.

Text analysis refers to analyzing the structure of the text in terms of paragraphs and sentences, highlighting the functions of cohesive devices for producing cohesive clear texts and aiming to reduce features of Arabic stylistics mainly repetition and elaboration. In addition, analyzing the structure of research articles aims to acquaint the students with the importance of using an unbiased language and developing arguments.

Error analysis is defined as "the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language" (James 2013, 2). It is used to study learners' errors, indicating sources of errors and making inferences about the complexity of the writing process of the learners, and their conscious awareness of their writing problems.

3. **Glossary:**

Negative Transfer

Cultural Interference

Features of Arabic culture

: (a) unity of belief, (b) bi-polarity(c) group orientation, (d) indirectness, (e) non-linearity, (f) emotional appeal, (g), transmission of materials, (f) ornamental language, (g) repetition, and (h) exaggeration for the sake of persuasion.

Multiculturalism in Literature as a Vehicle for Promoting Social Justice and Empowerment

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Abstract

This quantitative and qualitative research study investigates the contribution of the course Multiculturalism in Literature on Arab Muslim graduates of the B. Ed program, majoring in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a teacher training college in the central part of Israel. The research participants took the course in their second year of studies from 2011 until 2017. Sixty-six participants out of a pool of 123 returned the questionnaire. Fifty-five of the respondents teach in Arab schools, and eleven in Jewish schools. Results show that the course helped them promote their cross-cultural and intercultural understanding and communication, raise their awareness of social and political injustices, and feel empowered as members of a national minority group in Israel.

Keywords: cross-cultural understanding, democracy, empowerment, equality, multiculturalism in literature, intercultural understanding, social injustice, values education

Introduction

Historically, English-speaking countries are composed of Indigenous peoples, refugees, and immigrants. The Indigenous lived in the land before the arrival of European immigrants. Refugees and immigrants arrived on the shores of these countries from different parts of the world due to several reasons. The Indigenous peoples usually live in their own communities, trying hard to keep their traditions and culture. They also suffer socially, economically, educationally, and culturally.

Some immigrants are voluntary, and others are involuntary. While the former seeks a better future for themselves and their children, the

latter flee from poverty, wars, and national, religious, or political persecution (Honigefled, Giouroukakis, & Garfinkel, 2011). They add that immigrants in the 20th century were mostly Europeans who followed the path of assimilation into American society; however, the majority of immigrants in the late 20th century and early 21st century arrived from Asian and Latin American countries who were driven by either economic reasons or political expulsion. Immigrants are “often regarded as people of color and have experienced prejudice and discrimination in the United States” (Sears, Fu, Henry, & Bui, 2003, p. 420).

Traditionally, EFL teacher training programs expose future teachers to the Anglo-Saxon literature. Introducing such a course would help them deepen their understanding of diversity (Barfield & Uzarski, 2009), appreciate the voices and identities of others (Honigefled et al., 2011), develop their empathy to others (Kubota, 2004), and understand the injustices in the world in general, and in their society in specific (Byram & Wagner, 2018). Cross-cultural awareness helps individuals develop personal traits that include developing positive attitudes, openness, tolerance, and empathy to take active action, bringing about change to reality (Stancikas, 2021).

Literature Review

Byram (1997) developed a model of intercultural competence that includes five principles: “(a) positive attitudes (e.g., curiosity and openness), (b) knowledge of own and others’ cultures, (c) skills of interpreting and relating, (d) skills of discovery and interaction, and (e) critical cultural awareness (e.g., ability to evaluate different cultural perspectives)” (Taguchi, Xiao, & Li, 2016, p. 776). He also recommends two categories of cultural knowledge about social groups and interaction at the individual and community levels and two sets of skills that language learners require to interpret, explain and correlate a document from one’s own culture or event from another culture, attitudes and skills “within the real-time communication and interaction constraints” (Byram, 1997, p. 52). Following this model aimed to expose the prospective teachers to the diverse reality in English-speaking countries and to develop their cross-cultural and intercultural understanding and knowledge, and acquire skills for intercultural interactions (Davison, 2017) that would able them interact with others from other cultures (Holguín, 2013). A positive relationship between self-recognition among members of a minority group and self-esteem leads to clarity in self-identity (Usborne & Taylor, 2010), which makes them believe more in their cultural value and adhere more to the minority opinion on issues of value (Morrison & Wheeler, 2010).

In addition, colonialization marginalized consciously and historically Indigenous groups and distorted their identity, which aimed to control them and to let them feel inferior (Abdi, 2015). In many cases, their language has been eliminated from their memories (Binda & Lall, 2013; Napier & Majhanovich, 2013). To make justice, these authors and others call for decolonization. The decolonizing theory and research methodologies “offer a framework of ethical responses to forced removal, dispossession, invisibility, and dual status nature of disenfranchised people within systems of domination, especially useful in the United States as in other governments in which colonization has been the primary relationship to its people” (Tuck, 2006, p. 159).

Some higher educational institutes in English-speaking countries and other countries initiated programs that included narratives of Indigenous peoples as reflected in pieces of literature. For example, Swartz (2020) provides an example of a program offered at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) that acquaints student teachers with the Indigenous ways of life. However, these programs address only the social life and customs and ignore the voices of the oppressed people. In addition, Casto (2020) reviewed several studies regarding using multicultural literature in teacher preparation programs in the US and concluded that it “is a relatively new phenomenon” (p. 26). Previously, Brinson (2012) calls for increasing the awareness of multicultural literature among White American pre-service teachers (PSTs) since they have limited awareness of literature representing characters from African, Asian, Latin, and Native American heritages. Lawrence et al. (2017) add the importance of engaging linguistically and culturally diverse underrepresented pupils with literature that reflects their culture to empower them, seeing themselves in the curriculum.

Exposing EFL student teachers to multicultural pieces of literature is at its cradle stage. Not many studies investigated the effect of multicultural literature in foreign language learning settings. Tennekoon and Lanka (2015) conducted an action research to examine the role of intercultural competence in foreign language teacher training while learning English through a curriculum intervention in Sri Lanka. Findings show that none of the participants considered individuals from other ethnic groups as enemies but classmates, dorm mates, or even friends, showing interest in learning about each other’s culture. Similarly, Nemouchi and Byram’s (2019) study in two Algerian universities investigating the use of literary texts for developing intercultural learning in an EFL Master’s course, using the story of Mr. Linh, a Vietnamese refugee and his granddaughter in France shows that literary texts are a powerful means of developing cross-cultural competence.

Gómez-Rodríguez (2015) examined the usefulness of the multicultural approach as an attempt to help EFL student teachers in Bogota, Colombia to address the deep structure of the target culture, including social class struggles, poverty, cultural loss, and prejudices in the USA. Findings show that EFL pre-service teachers were able to build their intercultural awareness when they read English stories that discussed the deep culture written by authors who represent the voices of their communities, raising awareness of injustices.

The study

Similar to Indigenous peoples in English-speaking countries, Palestinian Arabs in Israel lost their status and land. In the Palestinian case, the major moment was the establishment of Israel in 1948. They were a majority and became a minority. The majority of families lost their status from landowners to workers in the young state, and their education though conducted in Arabic has been controlled by the state (Amara & Mar'i, 2002). Since Israel utilizes a centralized system of education, all policies of education are determined by the Ministry of Education "disseminating what is accepted to be 'truth' and 'knowledge' and perpetuating mainstream discourse" (Bloomer, 2016), "silencing, degrading, or ridiculing contesting cultures or perspectives" (Yiftachel, 2006, p. 37).

Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel are a national minority group, which constitutes 20% of the total population. Their native language is Arabic, which is the main language in the Middle East. It was an official language in Israel, but it was excluded and marginalized (Amara & Mar'i (2002; Shohamy, 2011). In 2018, it lost its role of official language and now only have a special status to maintain Israel as a Jewish state. The Arabic language curriculum, including literature lacked any national content that could express Arab students' identity, national aspirations and culture (Amara & Mar'i, 2002; Amara, 2020).

Until 2012, the curriculum did not include any prose or piece of poetry for local writers like Ameel Habibi or poets as Mahmoud Darwish, Tawfik Zayad, and Samih Al-Qassim who are considered as resistant to the Israeli policies (Amara, 2020). A list of short stories and poems written by these local resistant writers and poets was approved in 2012 as a response to modern thoughts that emphasize the role of literature in enhancing identity and belonging and fostering democratic values, diversity and coexistence. However, the texts are moderate and do not include any national aspirations. Due to this situation, I conducted this research to examine the contribution of the course on the participants' perceptions as members of a marginalized ethnic group regarding the following topics:

- Understanding the reality of the Indigenous peoples and immigrants in English-speaking countries;
- Cross-cultural and intercultural understanding and communication;
- Understanding the reality of Indigenous peoples and immigrants;
- Raising awareness of social and political justices;
- Empowering them as members of a national minority group in Israel.

The College Course

This two-hour weekly course was offered to EFL Palestinian Arab student teachers who were in their second year pursuing a B. Ed. program from 2011 until 2017 in a teacher training college in the central part of Israel.

To expose the students to the concept of colonialism, the first selection was written neither by a writer from an Indigenous origins nor an immigrant. It was George Orwell's story, *Shooting an Elephant*, which talked about British colonialism in Indo-China. To expose the participants to the concept of refugees and their suffering, the poem *Self-Help for Fellow Refugees* by Li-Young Lee was the second. To acquaint the students with knowledge about the harsh physical conditions that Indigenous live in, hierarchal social structure in their communities, and the lack of representation and voice hearing, a summary of the story *Two Old Women* by Velma Wallis, a Native Canadian writer was discussed. *The Joy Club* by Amy Tan, an American writer from Chinese origins, highlights cultural differences, generation gaps, and conflicts.

In some years, *Palestine 1966* by Susan Darraj, an excerpt from the novel 'The Well' and *The German Refugee* by Bernard Malamud were part of the course's content. The former exposed the students to experiences of Palestinian lives between 1948 and 1966, following the Nakba, giving details about the lives of Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank, which was under the control of Jordan. On the one hand, the refugees still hoped to return to their original cities and towns, and on the other hand, many young men left their families behind and headed to the USA, hoping to have a better life. The latter exposed the students to the effects of Holocaust on the lives of Jews during World War II, including suffering, self-sacrifice, redemption and new life.

The documentary *United States History Origins to 2000: Immigration and Cultural Change* was shown first to help learners explore the history of North America. *Inuuwunga - I Am Inuk, I Am Alive* exposed

them to the harsh physical as well as psychological conditions of Native Canadians. *A Visit to a Mosque* was about a visit to a mosque by White Americans who met with Muslims to learn about Islam and the Islamic culture. Appendix “A” includes information about other discussed stories.

Method

Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for data gathering. The first draft of the five Likert scale questionnaire (1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3-neutral, 4-agree; 5-strongly agree) was reviewed by three experts, two in the field of multiculturalism and one in English and American literature. Their comments were considered in developing the final version, which included two parts. The first part asked about personal questions such as gender, age, year of studying the course, and the type of school they teach in, Arab, Jewish or bilingual, where Arabic and Hebrew are treated equally. Following Bryman’s model of attitudes, developing cross-cultural and intercultural knowledge, acquiring skills, and empowerment (Byram, 1997), the questionnaire of 28 items was developed. Other six items were added to those who teach in Jewish and bilingual schools. The questionnaire items asked them specifically about the contribution of this course in adopting to these schools in terms of understanding the other cultures and dealing with pupils, colleagues, principals, and parents besides feeling proud of themselves and their culture. The questionnaire also required the participants to answer three open questions indicating and explaining their favorite and least favorite aspect of the course, the stories and the documentaries. A fourth open question asked those who teach in a Jewish or a bilingual school about the effect of the course on their perspectives towards multicultural realities. For conducting the semi-structured interview, 12 questions of the interview addressed the same issues in the items of the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is available at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeyql7_wPDe4V9ofDO4Qc1D8d9hAzijLuAjhkoMzdxWTEaJuA/viewform?usp=sharing

Data Analysis

Data were described by means and standard deviations for continuous-numeric variables and by counts and percentages for categorical and ordinal variables. Reliability was assessed with Cronbach coefficient. A t-test for independent samples was used to indicate significant differences between groups’ means. Results yielding p-value 0.05 were considered statistically significant. All analyzes were performed using SPSS software V26. For analyzing the qualitative data, the participants’ responses to the open question and the content of the interviews,

Bryam's model was followed, seeking to examine the same four categories of analyzing the quantitative results (Byram, 1997). In addition, the model analysis of Miles and Huberman (1994) was adopted, which includes three elements: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, including only the relevant data to the four categories, the narratives of the participants, and drawing conclusions based on the provided data in the answers to the open questions and the interviews.

Participants

Sixty-six graduates from a pool of 123 who took the course from 2011 until 2017 returned the questionnaire, which was delivered to their smart phones via Google docs. An invitation to an interview was sent to 19 selected names via their mobiles, using random number generator, selecting the 6th name of the original list of all participants, and 12 (two males and ten females) responded positively, who were numbered from P1 to P12, representing all years. Nine teach in Arab schools, and three in Jewish schools. Since only two responders teach in bilingual schools, they are grouped with those who teach in Jewish schools. The interviews were conducted in English. All quotes in this paper have been presented verbatim from the participants' transcripts and oral answers in the interview (See Table 1).

Table 1. Background information of the participants (n=65)

Independent variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	5	7.7
	Female	60	92.3
Year of taking the course	2011-2011	18	27.7
	2012-2013	9	13.8
	2013-2014	13	20
	2014-2015	11	16.9
	2015-2016	6	9.2
	2016-2017	8	12.3
Average age of participants	31	65	
Type of school	Arab	53	82.8
	Jewish	9	14.1
	Bilingual	2	3.1
Total		65	100

Results

Table 2 presents percentages of the questionnaire items related to the category of developing cross-cultural and intercultural understanding and communication.

Table 2. Percentages of the questionnaire items related to developing cross-cultural standing and intercultural communication (n=66)

	Arab schools (n=55)	Jewish schools (n=11)
I feel that this course helped me understand why cultures are varied.	(47) 87%	(9) 82%
I feel that the course made me realize the importance of interaction with others from other cultures.	(46) 85%	(9) 82%
I feel that this course acquainted me with knowledge about cultural clashes in general.	(46) 85%	(10) 91%
I feel that this course helped me think reflectively about cultural issues and cultural differences.	(45) 83%	(11) 100%
I feel that this course helped me compare my culture with other cultures.	(41) 76%	(9) 82%
I feel that the course acquainted me with knowledge about generational clashes between immigrant parents and their children who attend American schools.	(41) 76%	(9) 82%
I feel that this course helped me not to be judgmental of other cultures.	(40) 74%	(9) 82%
After this course I am more judgmental of other cultures.	(21) 39%	(4) 36%
I feel that this course did not help me improve my understanding to other cultures.	(16) 31%	(9) 82%
Intercultural understanding and communication		
I feel that this course helped me communicate effectively with others from other cultures using the right words.	(44) 82%	(9) 82%
I feel that the course helped me communicate with others who come from other cultures.	(42) 78%	(9) 82%
I feel that this course helped me deal with individuals from other cultures in Israel.	(36) 67%	(7) 64%
This course helped me deal well with my Jewish colleagues and the administration in the school.	(16) 31%	(8) 73%
This course helped me understand the culture of my pupils (Jewish pupils).		(8) 73%
This course helped me adopt well in the Jewish school.		(7) 64%
This course helped me deal well with parents.		(7) 64%

Table 2 shows positive results regarding developing the respondents' understanding of diversity and cross-cultural communication, and intercultural communication by those who teach in Arab schools (first group) and Jewish ones (second group) as well. The results of the four items that the second group answered show positive results (64% and 73%) in terms of understanding the culture of their Jewish pupils, adopting well in Jewish schools, and dealing with Jewish colleagues and administration and with parents.

Similar qualitative results were obtained. Twenty-one from the first group and six the second indicated that. Despite the fact that the majority do not remember the exact names of the stories and authors, four from the first group and one from the second mentioned the content of a story that represented generational conflicts between a Chinese mother and her daughter who was raised in America. Four interview-

wees mentioned the same story, claiming that it reminds them of their culture because mothers are dominant in both cultures. All of the interviewees talked about how this course exposed them to cultural diversity in the world and how they related that to Israel. Seven of the interviewees, including the three who teach in Jewish schools, mentioned the word “carefully” when dealing with Jews. A participant’s answer to one of the open questions summarized the contribution of this course in the first response and an interviewee in the second.

Taking this course has broadened my understanding of multicultural realities, fostering a more inclusive perspective. It prompted me to reassess preconceived notions, encouraging a greater appreciation for diverse cultures. Overall, the course has positively shaped my attitudes, promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity.

The course exposed us to cultural diversity; and it promoted my critical thinking (P9).

Table 3. Percentages of the items related to understanding the reality of indigenous peoples and immigrants (n=66)

	Arab schools (n=55)	Jewish schools (n=11)
I feel that the course helped me understand others in general.	(47) 87%	(11) 100%
I feel that I know more about the culture Indigenous people in North America than I did before the course.	(46) 85%	(10) 91%
I feel that I know more about the different cultures of immigrants in North America.	(42) 78%	(10) 91%
As a result of taking this course, I feel sympathy towards immigrants in North America.	(41) 76%	(11) 100%

Table 3 shows that the course helped the participants of both groups understand the reality of Indigenous peoples and their cultures. Seventeen participants mentioned that this course increased their knowledge about the lives and narratives of Indigenous people and immigrants in North America. The first two scripts are taken from participants in the first group, the third from the second.

(1) My favorite aspect was the new information I gained about the indigenous people in America, my least favorite aspect was that we didn’t have any real experience in meeting a person from another culture.

(2) I like the stories about immigrants and I could feel sympathy with them since my father is from the west bank and we had to leave our home looking for a safe place to stay in.

(3) The course helped me understand differences between different cultures. As well as I acquired the ability to be more sympathetic and sensitive towards various minorities, throughout understanding their struggles.

The interviewees talked about their personal growth in terms of understanding reality of Indigenous communities and immigrants and expressed their sympathy and solidarity.

Table 4. Percentages of the items related to raising awareness of social and political injustices (n=66)

	Arab schools (n=55)	Jewish schools (n=11)
I feel that this course raised my awareness of social injustices.	(48) 89%	(11) 100%
I feel that this course raised my awareness of the need to end injustices in the world.	(46) 85%	(10) 91%
I feel that this course acquainted me with knowledge about the struggles of culturally different communities in North America.	(44) 83%	(11) 100%
I feel that this course raised my awareness of political injustices (colonialisation).	(44) 82%	(9) 82%
I feel that this course helped me be reflective in teaching cultural issues in EFL classrooms.	(41) 76%	(7) 64%

Table 4 shows that the course not only contributed to raising the participants' awareness of social and political injustices, including colonialization, but also to the need for ending these injustices. Qualitative results support these results. For example, nine participants from the first group and five from the second mentioned that this course raised their awareness to social and political injustices. For example, one wrote about the Orwell's story, *Shooting an Elephant*. While two wrote about the contribution of the documentary regarding the lives of Native Canadians, three wrote about the content of the story called *Nada* without mentioning its name.

(1) Shooting the Elephant by George Orwell, because it was a touching reflection of the complex personality of the human being. The story shows how the oppressor becomes the oppressed by having to wear a mask to fit the role of oppressor, then the mask becomes their face at the end of the experience.

(2) Native Canadians documentary. Watching this documentary made me realize how many similarities we as a minority in Israel have in common with Native Canadians.

(3) Documentaries about indigenous people- maybe because we have some commonalities in terms of difficulties we face.

(4) The indigenous people in America. Their story felt close to me as a Palestinian".

(5) The most favorite aspect is talking about political and cultural issues due immigrants from the world. I still remember the story of the American Latin (as I remember) warrior that was killed in a war and all the country could do is to bring his mother a flag.

Except one who teaches in a Jewish school, all of the interviewees mentioned how the course raised their awareness of political injustices in the world and related that to their position as members of a minority group in Israel. They mentioned the word colonialism even before they were asked about it.

It is eye-opening. I started to understand issues of social and political injustices in the world (P 8).

Table 5. Feelings of empowerment (n=66)

	Arab schools (n=55)	Jewish schools (n=11)
I feel that the course made me realize the importance of gaining knowledge about my culture.	(46) 85%	(11) 100%
I feel that this course helped me be aware of my social and cultural identities.	(46) 85%	(9) 82%
As a result of taking this course, I understand better our struggles as an ethnic minority in Israel that has a different culture.	(44) 82%	(11) 100%
I feel that this course raised my awareness of the need of involving/engaging oppressed communities in making decisions related to them.	(43) 80%	(8) 73%
As a result of taking this course, I understand the complexity of the political reality in Israel better.	(40) 74%	(6) 67%

Results of this category show the contribution of the course in terms of gaining knowledge about their culture, being aware of their identity, understanding their struggles as members of a minority group, understand the political complexity in Israel and the need for engaging oppressed communities in making decisions related to them. The participants' answers to the open questions and the interviewees also show the contribution of the course in learning about themselves, enhancing their self and collective identity, and empowering them. The first five answers are from the first group and the sixth from the second group. They show that how these stories and documentaries not only inspired them, but also empowered them. Those who mentioned the documentary about Native Canadians related it to their experience as members of a national minority group in Israel, and *A visit to a Mosque* reflected their identity and culture (See Table 5).

The following scripts that appear in their answers include names of the stories and documentaries that empowered them and their reasoning.

(1) Palestine, 1966 by Susan Darraj that talks about the "disaster" (and the people who were displaced, poor and powerless. The stories about Chinese authors such as *The Woman Warrior*. Chinese people suffered from two kinds of discrimination: against women by the males and their traditions and against Chinese by Americans.

(2) Several stories deeply resonated with me, leaving a positive and lasting impression. For example, I was moved by the story of Arab American author Susan Muaddi Darraj, Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Third and Final Continent", Li Young Lee's, and "The German Refugee...etc." These stories offered profound insights into the human experience, tackling themes of identity, belonging, and displacement with thoughtfulness. Their narratives prompted reflection and enriched my understanding of the world and specifically about cultures.

(3) The German Refugee" This story discusses the struggles people go through with love, anti-Semitism, isolation, renewal, and moral responsibilities. I would like that others know how to overcome the difficulties that they could face in their lives, no matter how difficult it could be.

(4) Native Canadians documentary. Watching this documentary made me realize how many similarities we as a minority in Israel have in common with Native Canadians

(5)I liked most documentaries that offered a glimpse into real life experiences, such as the film "A Visit to a Mosque". They provided valuable learning opportunities and often prompted deeper reflection and even personal justifications. Along with, they fostered greater understanding of other individuals and cultures.

(6) If you are referring to the videos, I really liked the one about the Muslims' minority and how they lived in the American society.

Ten of the interviewees indicated how the course helped them be aware of their identity, and how it enhanced their self and collective identity, feeling empowered. For example, a female teacher emphasized the effect of the course on self and collective identity, talking about her experience when pursuing her master's degree in education at one of the Israeli universities, where the medium of instruction is Hebrew and facing a difficulty expressing herself in Hebrew. She made it clear to the lecturer and her Jewish classmates that she won't speak in Hebrew in class, but in English.

I am a native speaker of Arabic, and it is not embarrassing to be who I am. I made it clear from the beginning that I will speak in English in class because I am not ashamed to speak in English. I expected them to accept me the way I am. I submitted the assignments in English and the final paper (p9).

I can say that this course enhanced my self-confidence.

P8 mentioned a similar incident when she pursued a master's degree at the same university, preferring to speak in English in class since

she did not feel confident enough to speak in Hebrew. While the lecturers were supportive, ¹her classmates avoided her. She asked the lecturer to reflect on her experience at the end of the semester to prepare herself well in Hebrew.

I feel that the multiculturalism in literature course helped me to have the courage and to talk about the unacceptable treatment of my Jewish classmates. When I delivered the presentation, I talked frankly about how I feel in the course because of avoiding me. All of them were shocked at the beginning; some were in tears, and then the old ones not only approached me, but also hugged me (P8).

A male teacher said that this course made him realize that living in denial would not help solving our problems as a minority. We have to be more active in terms of demanding our rights as a minority.

When the war on Gaza erupted and my six-year old daughter started asking questions, I decided not to continue living in denial, and I decided to answer her (P5).

P6 talked about how this course empowered her in terms of talking freely about issues related to historical events.

The textbooks are full of stories and texts about the Holocaust. They do not include any text about us as Palestinian Arabs in Israel. At the beginning of my career as an English teacher, I was teaching in a public school and felt the need to teach a text about the Nakba but my colleagues warned me that I put myself in trouble with the Ministry of Education, but when I moved to teach in a private school, I did that. Now, I am very satisfied that I did that (P6).

Two internal refugees (uprooted) whose grandparents were deported from their original villages and towns in 1948 and moved to live in other villages talked about the contribution of this course regarding the Nakba. The male talked about how this course aroused his interest to know more about the events of 1948 since his grandfather used the policies of denial and silencing.

On the one hand I understand him, and I can't forgive him, on the other hand. He and my grandmother never told us about what happened. They only talked about how they lived and which kinds of vegetables they used to grow. After taking this course, I started to think differently and deeply about things. Now, when I hear about any issue, I prefer to read about it a lot before I take any stand (P7).

The female described the effect of this course in this regard by the following:

The voices of minorities should be heard and respected. My family is a minority within a minority. My family arrived this village in 1948 from a big city, and they started their life from zero. Until now, they feel that they are a minority (P12).

She also mentioned how this course helped her to have the courage and speak about an incident of racism at one of the Israeli universities, where she studied nursing for one year and left, preferring to pursue her education in an Arab institute of higher education. She said that she has never talked about this incident before taking this course. She finished the interview saying the following sentence:

The voice of oppressed minorities should be heard (P12).

P10 teaches in a Jewish school and her mother's family is an internal refugee. She talked about how this course empowered her, introducing herself to the Jewish students and her Jewish colleagues as an Arab, but not a Palestinian Arab to avoid troubles with the school's administration and parents. When she faces any kind of racism, she does not hesitate to raise the issue with the school's administration and parents if it is necessary.

Once a pupil said to me, I can't believe that you are an Arab. You are blonde, and they are black and ugly. Immediately, I notified the principal and contacted the parents, who came to school to hear me (P10).

P11 and P12 teach in a Jewish school. P11 avoided the question about political injustices. P12 said that she prefers to focus on the professional side.

Table 6. Descriptive analysis of means and St. Deviation of the four categories. Arab schools (n=53) Jewish schools (n=11)

Categories	Mean	St. Deviation	Median	St. Deviation	Cronbach α
Cross-cultural and intercultural understanding and communication	3.84	0.1	3.9	0.87	0.87
Understanding the reality of Indigenous people and immigrants	4.21	0.12	4.5	0.97	0.94
Raising awareness of social and political injustices	4.17	0.12	4.4	0.99	0.95
Empowerment	4.18	0.12	4.6	1.01	0.95

The means for all four categories are relatively high, suggesting a positive perception or experience in each aspect. Low standard deviations across categories indicate a consistent response pattern among respondents. The Cronbach α coefficients are high, indicating high reliability and internal consistency of the questions in each category (See Table 6).

In summary, the respondents seem to have a positive outlook in the four categories, with a high level of consistency in their responses. The reliability tests (Cronbach α) also support the internal consistency of the questions in each category.

Table 7. Statistical analysis of the t-tests between the two groups

	Mean	St. Deviation	Mean	St. Deviation	df	t	p-value
Cross-cultural and intercultural understanding and communication	3.8	0.92	4.02	0.67	62	0.749	0.457
Understanding the reality of Indigenous people and immigrants	4.13	1.05	4.59	0.34	62	1.415	0.162
Raising awareness of social and political injustices	4.11	1.07	4.45	0.52	62	1.017	0.313
Empowerment	4.12	1.08	4.47	0.6	62	1.053	0.296

Table 7 shows that the means of the categories among the participants of the second group are higher than the first one; however, t-tests do not show any statistically significant differences between the results of four categories among the participants of the two groups ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion

Quantitative as well as qualitative results show the contribution of this course on the participants in the four categories. These results are in line with the discussions of Byram and Wagner (2018) and Stancikas (2021) regarding developing knowledge and self-understanding as a result of understanding others’ cultures and societies. They are also in line with the results of Nemouchi and Byram’s (2019) research, which indicate that literary texts have a strong impact on developing cross-cultural competence. The results of promoting intercultural understanding and communication among participants, mainly those who teach in Jewish schools demonstrate the participants’ acquired skills for dealing with others from another culture, which correlate with the discussions of Davison (2017) and Holguín (2013). The outcome related to dealing with members of the dominating cultural group in Israel in terms of developing skills for intercultural interaction was expressed by mentioning the word “carefully” repeatedly.

Participants’ understanding to the lives of Indigenous people and immigrants as marginalised groups in English-speaking countries support the claims of Barfield and Uzarski (2009) regarding challenging their perceptions of cultures and deepening their understanding of diversity, and appreciating the voices of others as mentioned by Honi-

geffled et al. (2011).

Mentioning the name of the story *Nada* and the documentary about the harsh conditions of Indigenous people in Canada by three participants indicates raising the participants' awareness of social and political injustices in the world. *Shooting the Elephant* by George Orwell opened the participants' eyes to colonialism. These outcomes correlate with the calls for raising the voices of the marginalised minorities and decolonization mentioned by Abdi (2015) and Tuck (2006). Qualitative results also show developing self-recognition and self-identity as members of a minority groups in Israel, which correlates with the perspective of Osborne and Taylor (2010) regarding clarity in self-identity and self-cultural value as Morrison and Wheeler (2010) argue.

Empowerment resonates with reading about Arab American writers, mainly the story *Palestine 1966* by Susan Darraj because it talks about the Nakba (The Palestinian catastrophe in 1948) and its consequences on Palestinians. Similarly, some felt empowered by watching the documentary about Muslims in the US, feeling that their religion is respected. Mentioning the effect of *The German Refugee* is an example of how learning about others' agony, suffering and resilience could be a powerful tool for empowerment. They not only had the chance to learn about themselves and their struggles but also to be aware of their collective identity.

Conclusions

Quantitative as well as qualitative results show positive results, indicating the significance of acquainting future EFL teachers to the cultures of minorities in English speaking countries, which reflect their lives, experiences, conflicts and processes of adjustment. The higher percentages of answers by teachers who teach in Jewish schools illustrate the need for such a course in bi-cultural and multicultural educational environments to help teachers acquire knowledge and skills to interact with individuals from another culture. These outcomes emphasize the need for including such a course in the curriculum of EFL teacher training programs in the world.

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Note

1. Cross-cultural refers to comparisons between cultures and of identifying differences and similarities, and intercultural addresses the actual relations and interactions between individuals and groups with various cultural backgrounds.

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Appendix A

Recommended Stories

Title and Affiliation	Author	Theme	
Heaven Arab American	D.H. Melham	Survival Discrimination	This short story deals with survival issues of Lebanese Arab Americans and cases of discrimination they face in the new country.
A Conversation Arab American	Pauline Kaldas	Working hard Living in between	It represents the conflict of living in between, addressing issues related to the differences between dependent cultures versus independent cultures.
Turtle Meat Native American	Joseph Bruchac	Struggles, slavery, and wilderness	This collection of traditional tales of the Adirondacks and the Native peoples of the Northeastern Woodlands draws on that land of Abenaki ancestry.
My Soul Has Grown Deep African American	John Edgar Wideman	Strength and survival	This selection of 12 works represents the literature of African American writers in the early centuries of North American history and regional borders.
The Woman Warrior Chinese American	Maxine Kingston	Cultural mismatches, women's position and racism	It illustrates the contradictions of Chinese women's perspectives of gender issues, male dominance, intergenerational differences, racism, and struggling by living in between two clashing cultures.
The Tenant Indian American	Bharati Mukherjee	Stereotypes, self-awareness, and identity	This story shows how an attractive, middle-class, young Bengali woman becomes vulnerable when she breaks with her traditional ways and tries to become part of mainstream America.
Never Marry a Mexican Mexican American	Sandra Cisneros	Gender ideology, alienation, and identity	In this story and others, Sandra Cisneros tries to challenge a male-dominated culture by presenting a story of a young woman who was desperate to forge an authentic identity in a culture that is resilient to change.
The Tale of One Refugee Hungarian Canadian	Eva Kende	Displacement and survival	It talks about the journey of a Hungarian mother and her daughter fleeing Hungary in 1956.
A Conversation with my Father Russian American	Grace Paley	Generational gap, familial relationships, and tragic endings	This is a story about storytelling, which highlights generation gaps between the writer--and her aged, ill father who wants her to write a story following the Russian style of writing, but she doesn't like telling stories that way, but at the end, she did her best to please him.