Experienced and Novice EFL Teachers' Cognition and Practices on Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Mixed-Methods Study in Iranian Context

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Article info	**Abstract**
	Teachers as the backbone of education need to commit themselves to expanding their perception, sensitivity, and awareness toward intercultural communicative competence (ICC). By taking full advantages of mixed methods, this research examines if novice and experienced EFL teachers' cognitions differ in ICC teaching. Using purposive sampling, a group of 153 EFL teachers of both genders were chosen to take part in the quantitative phase containing a Likert scale questionnaire developed by Gong (2018). Among them, 15 teachers consented to be part of the qualitative stage of the study comprising an in-depth interview. The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using statistical and thematic methods, respectively. The results indicated that the cognition of ICC among Iranian EFL teachers, whether experienced or novice, did not differ significantly. It was also revealed that both experienced and novice teachers had relatively high perception of ICC which impacted their practices. Possible implications are discussed in the final section.

1. Introduction

There has been a shift from the language-related components toward broader angles of language education in which learners and teachers are at the heart, with the advent of post method era (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). Similarly, the developing context of globalization in which people with variable cultural, racial, ethical and religious backgrounds and with a range of identities come into contact has given rise to some issues like meta-cultural competence (Sharifian, 2013), digital citizen, critical thinking and ICC reinforcing the belief that language teaching should not solely focus on language itself but should be rather a multidisciplinary approach taking into account global citizenship (Byram & Wagner, 2018). According to Sohrabi et al., (2022), language learning has a significant role in global citizenship awareness. Hence, the general focus of the latest trends in education has been on the developing of such skills and cultivating cross cultural communicators, intercultural speakers, or global citizens who respect differences, tolerate other cultural practices, and communicate effectively (Byram & Wagner, 2018, Idris & Widyantoro, 2019, Sudhoff, 2010; UNESCO, 2006).

With this in mind, the concept of ICC which is the result of a non-static interaction among linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) comes to the fore in the realm of language studies. Although there has been no consensus in the definition of ICC, the main components of all definitions viewing culture as an indispensable part of any language is the awareness of cultures. However, this awareness is not developed only if the learning contexts, teaching materials, and especially the teachers bring this to the attention of the learners. Teachers and their cognition toward the incorporation of culture incorporation in pedagogical instructions can play a pivotal role in learners' education (Borg, 1999; Hoy et al., 2009).

Teacher cognition, which refers to the mental processes and representations such as beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and assumptions that they have about various aspects of teaching and learning (Borg, 2003), is closely related to teachers' educational practices (Borg, 1999; Hoy et al., 2009). Feryok (2010) describes teacher cognition as an adaptational, dynamic, open, and heterogeneous system that is likely to undergo changes under the influence of time and other factors. These changes in teachers' cognition might influence their instructional practices as well (Borg, 1999; Hoy et al., 2009). Obviously, teachers' lack of awareness of such key concepts will deal a serious blow to their own practices and relationships with students and will in turn affect students' perceptions and well-being, thus presenting a bleak and simplistic picture of education detached from humanistic understanding and holistic education.

As mentioned above, literature is replete with studies on the effect of language teachers' cognition on instructional practices; however, dearth of

research can be found on the investigation of teachers' cognition and teaching ICC as well as the consequences of teaching experience variable on the practices of Iranian English instructors in real context. Thus, this research aims to fill this void and to investigate if novice and experienced teachers' ICC cognitions differ and whether their cognition affect their ICC instruction. Although no concord has been reported over the definition of novice yet, the existing studies refers novice teacher to ones who come into contact with a new cultural or educational context or gain a qualification in a different subject area even though they have prior experience in other fields. Teachers within their first years of teaching (not as much as three years) in educational context following their completion of teacher education courses were considered as novice (Farrel, 2012). Hence, instructors who have practiced teaching English for three years (or below that) and above that are described as novice and experienced respectively. Thus the present research attempts to throw light on these questions:

1. Do Iranian novice and experienced EFL instructors' cognition vary regarding ICC?
2. Does teaching experience influence the cognition of novice and experienced teachers toward ICC in a significant way?
3. To what extent, if at all, do novice and experienced teachers' cognition about ICC align with their classroom practices?

2. Literature Review
2.1. How and Why of Intercultural Communicative Competence
In language education field, culture is a recently integrated and justified notion as shown by various studies (Gu, 2016; Hall, 2017; Young et al., 2009). Over the years, several teaching methods and approaches emerged, gained popularity or declined to the point that new concepts such as culture appeared.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) with its focus on language use (Hymes, 1972), and learning beyond the linguistic features may not necessarily lead to successful or unsuccessful intercultural communication when it lacks something as culture (Baker, 2012; Mckay, 2002; Nault, 2006). According to Byram (2009), identity and culture are two necessary components of interaction for people who speak different languages. The attainment of linguistic factors does not necessarily guarantee intercultural communication success or failure (Baker, 2012; Mckay, 2002; Nault, 2006). The instruction of culture and intercultural communication is regarded as crucial as linguistic part. Byram (1997) tried to incorporate ICC into language education by conceptualizing his own theoretical framework of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). So it undergoes some changes and embraces a new notion

of cultivating intercultural communicators, cross cultural communicators or global citizens.

Byram's model of ICC (1997) comprising five types of related knowledge or *saviours* focused on understanding how people interact and create culture, being open- minded and respectful of diversity, examining one's own and others' cultural assumptions critically. Byram (2000) described ICC a type of skill that enables culturally diverse people to have successful communication by knowing their background, values, traditions, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and boundaries. Although several definitions and models have been proposed over the decades, there is still no consensus on it (e.g., Byram & Zarate, 1994, Byram, 1997, 2000; Byram & Feng, 2004). Fantini (2000) assigned the ICC definition to three key components as (1) the capacity for creating and sustaining connections, (2) the capacity for communicating clearly and suitably with least possible misunderstanding, (3) the ability to follow and collaborate with others in different cultures. Deardorff (2006) formulated a pyramidal model of ICC, consisting of attitudes (motivational dimension), knowledge and comprehension (cognitive dimension), and skill aspects. Similarly, Byram's (1997) widely-cited influential model of foreign and second language (FL/SL) education indicates that ICC consists of five elements: attitudes, knowledge, critical and cultural knowledge, the abilities to communicate and connect, and the abilities to explore and interact. Byram and Deardorff's models (1997, 2006) are similar in that both highlight attitudes, knowledge, and skills as three major categories, with attitudinal aspects being a basis for developing the two others. However, their models differ in that while Deardorff (2006) elaborated on ICC's internal and the external outcomes, Byram (1997) specified the specific skills needed for ICC.

The present study combines the specific components detailed in Byram's (1997) model and the desired outcomes outlined in Deardorff's (2006) model to construct an operational framework of ICC constituents and objectives that could be used to assess one's cognition and practices in teaching ICC. The framework highlights the multi-dimensional nature of ICC, with attitudes, knowledge and skills being essential components, and various internal and external desired outcomes being the ultimate objectives.

2.2. Teachers' Cognition

Teachers play pivotal roles in the process of education. Beside their technical knowledge, they take a set of ideas, thoughts, concepts, and values to teaching context which may directly or indirectly influence the next generation students (Olivero, 2017). Beliefs are considered as dominant focus of any educational system (Borg, 2006). Defining, investigating, measuring, and observing beliefs is a cumbersome task (Muijs & Reynolds, 2001; Pajares, 1992), but someone's thoughts, conducts, and behavior are highly controlled

and governed by them (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). "Unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think" (Borg, 2003, p.81) as well as their functionality in relationship with these mental constructs in classroom is teachers' cognition. This is, in part, the significant effect of instructors' way of thinking on conduct and classroom activities of them (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Borg, 2003, 2006; Feryok, 2010; Zhu & Shu, 2017) which necessitates understanding the connection between cognition and practices (Pajares, 1992) as well as "the key role teachers and their cognitions play in the implementation of educational innovations" (Borg, 2015, p. 1).

The field of education has been exploring teacher cognition for the past 50 years. Teacher cognition refers to the complex and context-sensitive web of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs that language teachers rely on in their work (Borg, 2006). Several researchers, such as Borg (2003, 2006, and 2009), Gatbonton (1999), Woods (1996) and others, have developed general principles for studying language teachers' cognition, drawing on various studies that investigated teacher cognition in general (Burns, 2019; Calderhead, 1996; Carter, 1990; Fenstermacher, 1994; Liu & Shen, 2004; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015).Since then it has become more popular in language teaching (Borg, 2003; Barnard & Burns, 2012). Studies on teacher cognition mainly involves the investigation of cognition and teachers' past experience, education background, teacher training programs, professional development initiatives, knowledge, perception and environmental or contextual factors. Ahmadianzadeh et al., (2020) explored EFL instructors' cognitions and their instructional activities about learner autonomy and found learners' expectations and policy-makers as the factors hindering practices promoting autonomy. Ashkani et al. (2021) explored how EFL teachers' beliefs influenced their actual teaching behavior and the extent to which teacher grit affected the connection between them. The findings of their study emphasized the effect of having high grit levels on teacher' beliefs and instructional activities. Taherkhani (2019) looked into university teachers' cognition and their actual activities of collaborative English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teaching and found some disagreement between EAP teachers' cognitions and pedagogy. Several attempts have also been made to look into teachers' cognitions and classroom activities about corrective feedback (e.g., Gholami, 2022; Goldouz & Baleghizadeh, 2021; Sepehrinia et al., 2020).

Teachers' prior learning experience that corresponds to Lortie's (1975) description as "apprenticeship of observation" may inform instructors' conducts in the classroom based on their experiences as learners. Although Moodie (2016), in his analysis with 18 South Korean teachers, reveals that the prior experiences turned out to be "anti-apprenticeship of observation", he means that negative prior experiences can be a turning point for teachers in

their own classroom behaviors. Professional development initiatives or educational courses (Barnard & Burns 2012) shape instructors' beliefs and thoughts too. For instance, Busch, (2010) and Yuan and Lee (2014) reported development in teacher beliefs following the courses while Borg (2011) and Polat (2010) found the courses to have minimal impact, if any at all, on teachers' prior beliefs. Another study by Karimi and Norouzi (2017) indicated that the four novice teachers' pedagogical knowledge bases grew due to mentoring initiative and the scaffolding facilitated by the four expert-teachers. It should be noted that the prevailing approach adopted by the researchers was a traditional-cognitive one (Barcelos & Kalaja 2011) which might have lost sight of the connection between setting, practices and cognition (Zheng, 2015). Borg (2003) suggests that the most common ways of collecting data are self-report, oral feedback, observation, and reflective writing. However, the social and narrative perspective in language education contributed to the appreciation of approaches that are sensitive to the context, recognizing the concept's situated, social, dynamic, complex, and conflicting characteristics (Barcelos &Kalaja, 2011).

2.3. Teachers' Cognition and ICC Teaching

While research endeavor related to area of education with the focus on the cognition of language instructor commenced in 1970s, studies on language teacher cognition in ICC traces back to the beginning of the 21st century. EFL teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and also their knowledge of ICC which are constituent parts of their professional identity (Sercu et al., 2005) which later creates a passion for interculturalizing learners in them (Sercu et al., 2005) are of great importance in language education. Dearth of research has been conducted to investigate ICC cognition of teachers and its effect on foreign language education (Oranje & Smith, 2018). Scholars concern relevant to teaching intercultural communicative competence were mostly surrounded studying issues such as knowledge, attitude, perceptions, and objectives of language teachers. It should be noted that most of these studies are mainly situated in the context of English teaching. For example, Sercu (2002) investigated 150 Flemish FL teachers' knowledge and purposes of ICC and found that teachers prioritized teaching linguistic rather than intercultural content. Also, they focused more on particular features of the desired language cultures like 'daily life and routines, living conditions, food and drink' (p.155). ICC teaching was more specifically knowledge-oriented rather than skill-oriented which aims to improve learners' attitude and skills. According to Larzén-Östermark (2008) culture is seen as a set of facts about English-speaking nations by 13 Finland-Swedish teachers, and thus their intercultural teaching only involves conveying those facts to the learners. This corresponds

to earlier investigations that indicate no link between how teachers understand ICC and how they actually implement it (Risager, 1998; Sercu et al., 2005).

In their study, Xiaohui and Li (2011) explored how language teachers view ICC in the Chinese English teaching context. They discovered that the university instructors teaching English in Chinese Universities did not have a clear grasp of what intercultural competence means. The authors also said that ICC teaching focused mainly on giving factual information related to target language culture. They found that teaching awareness was a key factor that affected teachers' ICC teaching (Castro et al., 2004; Young & Sachdev, 2011). The beliefs of foreign language teachers on intercultural or culture teaching have been studied in different settings. Aleksandrowicz-Pedich, et al., (2003) did a research project to examine the perspectives of foreign languages (i.e., English and French) instructors on intercultural education in Europe. The results manifested the realization of intercultural learning importance and poverty of knowledge of incorporating intercultural perspective into teaching culture in foreign language classes. Similar results in Australia (Liddicoat et al., 2003) support the vagueness of teachers' perception and also lack of any appropriate educational framework for intercultural teaching. Sercu (2005) found that some teachers who valued and approved the usefulness and appropriateness of intercultural teaching were reluctant to apply it and did not practice it in the real context. They blamed the students' indifference, appropriate materials, and curriculum support for their inaction. Young and Sachdev (2011) also observed a mismatch between the awareness, ideas and pedagogies of experienced English language teachers in three countries, especially regarding the use of an ICC model in their programs.

Richards et al. (2010) studied how in-service teachers in New Zealand integrated intercultural learning in their classes and found that they lacked the knowledge and ability to do so. Xiaohui and Li (2011) examined how Chinese ELT teachers understood and implemented ICC in their context and found that they had unclear ideas about ICC, its relation to language teaching, and its pedagogical implications, despite their willingness to foster ICC in their students. Luk (2012) compared the views and actions of native and non-native English teachers on culture teaching in EFL settings and found that most teachers had positive attitudes, but also mixed feelings, about incorporating culture into EFL teaching, curricula, and assessment. Chiu (2014) interviewed Taiwanese EFL teachers and confirmed the significance of having suitable beliefs and emotional support for culture teaching, and proposed the potential of applying culturally relevant pedagogy in English courses across the curriculum. The study by Savadkouhi and Alaie (2022) explored the ways language instructors and learners in Iran viewed and handled the difficulties of intercultural communication. They found that according to the perception of teachers, EFL classrooms' cross-cultural failure and illiteracy, social

interaction deficiency, semantic inappropriacy, grammatical inadequacy are mostly due to insufficient pragmatic instruction.

2.4. Novice and experienced teachers

Teacher cognition is an adaptational, dynamic, open, and heterogeneous system that undergoes changes under the influence of time and other factors (Feryok, 2010). One of these factors is the experience that teachers have gained over the years (Borg, 2003; Mok, 1994). The existing literature implies that a teacher who comes into contact with a new cultural or educational context or gains a qualification in a different subject area even though they had prior experience in other fields might be known as a novice teacher (Farrel, 2012). This can be within the first two or three years of their teaching in an educational context after completing a teacher education program (Farrel, 2012).According to Freeman (2001), teachers can be classified as either experienced or novice based on a criterion that considers the participants who had taught for less than three years as novices, and those who had taught for five years or longer as experienced. Therefore, in this study, instructors with three years of experience (or fewer) are labeled as novice and those with more than five years of experience are regarded as experienced.

Many scholars applied this dichotomy to investigate its relationship with different factors. Crookes and Arakaki (1999), in their study on how teachers' thinking and awareness is influenced by their experience, emphasized the importance of experience by reporting a teachers' saying "As you have more practice, then you know in the classroom what will work and what will not work" (p. 16). Teachers' ongoing contact with an educational context brings changes in teachers' understanding of the purpose of teaching (Woods, 1996).These changes in teachers' cognition might influence their instructional practices as well (Borg, 1999; Hoy et al., 2009). Norouzian (2015) found that teaching experience influences feedback giving methods and experienced instructors tend to apply more direct feedback than their counterparts.

These results show that many studies highlighted the positive impact of incorporating ICC in language education and how teachers' beliefs affect this process. However, research on how teachers recognize and perceive ICC is still scarce. Moreover, the link between instructors' level of experience and their beliefs and actions is not well explored. These gaps motivated the authors of this paper to investigate the EFL novice and experienced instructors' beliefs and actions considering the incorporation of ICC.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The study comprises two phases, each with its own participants and their distinct characteristics.

3.1.1 Participants and Sampling for the Initial Quantitative Phase

The initial quantitative phase involved 153 Iranian teachers (82 male and 71 female) who taught English at language institutes either part-time or full-time and were chosen through purposive sampling with various age groups, genders, language proficiency levels, cities, and provinces holding different academic degrees. English Language Institutes in Iran are privately run following the direction and supervision of Educational Ministry. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, instructors varied considering their teaching experience, education, and level of instruction.

Table 1

Gender and Academic Degree of the Participants

		Academic Degree				
		Diploma	B.A.	M.A.	Ph.D.	Total
Gender	Male	22	36	18	6	82
	Female	5	13	40	13	71
Total		27	49	58	19	153

Table 2

Academic Degree and Teachers' Years of Teaching Experience

		Teaching experience		
		Experienced	Novice	Total
Academic Degree	Diploma	4	23	27
	B.A.	18	31	49
	M.A.	45	13	58
	Ph.D.	19	0	19
Total		86	67	153

3.1.2. Participants and Sampling for the Qualitative phase of the study

The qualitative phase involved 15 teachers out of 153 who took part in the quantitative phase of the study and volunteered for the interview and observation processes. Four teachers out of 15 interviewees also volunteered for observation.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

Many different research methods such as questionnaires (e.g., Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019; Gong et al., 2018), focus groups (e.g., Hawkey, 2006), interviews (e.g., Feryok & Oranje, 2015; Jenkins, 2007), the combination of interviews and questionnaires (e.g., Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Gao et al., 2011), classroom observations plus interviews (e.g., Shi et al., 2019), interviews along with journals (e.g., Liu & Xu, 2011), observations and stimulated recall interviews (e.g., Karimi & Norouzi, 2017), interviews,

observations and stimulated recalls (e.g., Baker, 2014; Kim, 2011; Nassaji et al., 2023; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2017) have been used in the past forty years studies on teacher cognition. Each of these methods might have their own merits and demerits when they are used alone. Therefore, the combination of some of these methods rather than focusing exclusively on one single method assists with data triangulation in that each method sheds further light on the data collected, leading to the comprehension of the relationship between teachers' pedagogical practices and cognition at a deep level. Hence, a combination of questionnaire, interview, and observation was preferred to be used for the present study.

3.2.1. Questionnaire

An ICC questionnaire based on Likert scale developed by Gong (2018) was used. Respondents completed the questionnaire in 30 minutes. Two sections made up the ICC questionnaire, which was written in plain English.

1. Teachers' Cognition in ICC Teaching: in this section the respondents answered 9 Likert questions on the objectives of their ICC teaching.
2. Teachers' Instructional Practices in ICC Teaching: This last section consisted of 16 Likert questions on practices teachers apply while teaching ICC.

The questionnaire items concentrated on knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness as different aspects of ICC. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to verify the consistency and reliability of the questionnaire. Indexes of 0.88 and 0.93 showed ideal values for reliability of the two questionnaire parts, respectively. These indexes indicated the consistency of questionnaire items.

3.2.2. Semi-Structured Interview

Following the completion and collection of the questionnaire, 15 participants consented to have in-depth interviews separately. Each of these 15 teachers separately discussed their own ideas, cognition, objectives, and practices concerning ICC teaching. Each interview lasted for approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Teachers answered questions delving into their cognition about ICC. Moreover, they voiced their concerns and barriers standing in the way of ICC education. For the ease of administration and ensuring teacher participation and retention, interview questions were sent through voice records for some participants.

3.2.3. Observation

Following interview, observation was carried out in order to help capture practical and significant variation in the real context. Out of those 15 participants of the interview part, 4 participant teachers (2 novice and 2 experienced teachers) were observed and video recorded for 9 hours (6

sessions for each teachers). The participants included three females and one male who held B.A. and M.A. in TEFL and translation. They were aged from 23 to 37, and had teaching experience from 2 to 17 years. Table 3 indicates the information about the participants (The participants have been assigned pseudonyms).

Table 3

Demographic information about the participants

No	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Teaching Experience	Level of Education	Field of Study
1	Komail	37	Male	17	MA	TEFL
2	Nafise	36	Female	13	BA	Translation
3	Bahar	22	Female	4	BA	Translation
4	Narges	22	Female	2	BA	Translation

3.3. Procedure

The data collection procedure consisted of two phases: quantitative and qualitative. The questionnaire provided the quantitative data, which was gathered by visiting the institutes and delivering the hard copies to 70 instructors and also emailing the Office-Word file to 100 instructors. One hundred and fifty-three completed questionnaires were sent back (88 soft copies and 65 hard copies). In the next qualitative phase, 15 novice and experienced (9 experience and 6 novice) teachers were interviewed each of which lasted for 20 to 30 minutes accompanied. For gaining deep understanding of their practices in real context, two novice and experienced teachers' classes were observed. Observation was conducted for six sessions. The fact that made us not having more teachers in observation phase was that no new concepts were forthcoming from additional participants (Ary et al., 2018).

3.4. Data Analysis

To see whether and to what extent the cognition of EFL teachers differ regarding ICC teaching, and how their cognition affect their instructional practices, statistical and thematic analyses were used for the quantitative and qualitative data, respectively.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results
4.1.1 Results of Quantitative Phase

The first research question sought to examine the difference in cognitions of novice and experienced in-service EFL teachers regarding their intercultural communicative competence.

Table 4 presents the answers of Iranian EFL teachers to the intercultural communicative competence questionnaire developed by Gong (2018) descriptively. The results revealed that the experienced and novice teachers (n= 86, 67) had almost close mean scores (98.22, 93.98) to each other.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for Iranian EFL Teachers' intercultural communicative competence

	Teaching experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ICC	Experienced	86	98.22	18.05	1.94
	Novice	67	93.98	14.66	1.79

The novice teachers were more consistent (sd= 14.66) than the experienced teachers (18.05) in this case. To test if this difference in the mean scores is statistically meaningful, we had to do an independent samples t-test.

Before conducting any test, questionnaire's reliability was checked through Cronbach alpha to ensure the psychometric properties of instruments used in this study. Also, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to assess the normality of data. The following Tables show these indices (see table 5).

Table 5
Normality of the gathered Data from Both Questionnaires

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
TC	.091	153	.003	.948	153	.000
TIP	.048	153	.200*	.975	153	.007
ICC	.059	153	.200*	.974	153	.005

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Teacher cognition along with teacher instructional practices are two components of ICC questionnaire; their reliability was mentioned in the previous section. The data distribution for teacher instructional practices and intercultural communicative competence questionnaire was normal (Sig. =0.200). Hence, the independent samples t-test was run, and the results are shown in the table below.

Table 6
Independent Samples t-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
ICC	Equal variances assumed	3.67	.05	1.56	151	.12	4.24
	Equal variances not assumed			1.60	150.7	.11	4.24

Checking the equality of variances with Levene's test was the first step for reporting the significance of the difference between the mean scores (5.24). The significance level was almost 0.05 in this case and the two rows of assumptions were very similar. Based on the first row, no statistical difference was seen between experienced and novice Iranian EFL teachers meaningfully (t (151) =1.56, sig. =0.12).

4.1.2 Results of Qualitative Phase

Divulging information on the way teachers recognize and perceive ICC was the aim of the qualitative part of the research. For this purpose, following the transcription and summarization of responses derived from interviews, common themes were extracted from the responses (Fraenkel & Wallen 2003). Dominant patterns were identified using the categorization process. Two EFL experts teaching English at universities and institutes accompanied the process of coding and rating; Kappa statistics was applied to measure inter-rater reliability. Inter- rater reliability was .81 which shows a perfect index of reliability and internal consistency. To analyze individual responses, frequency count of Spreadsheet Software Package –Microsoft Excel was applied. Thematic analysis was used for the analysis of interview results (see table 7).

Table 7

Interview Responses

Interview Questions	Themes	f	%
1. How do you perceive intercultural	* Necessary for effective cross-cultural communication	15	100
Communicative Competence?	* Necessary for avoiding cultural conflicts	8	53
	* Increases the ability to understand differences and to respect them 66		10
	*Awareness of cultural norms and facts of the language being learned 93		14
2. What objectives do you seek	* To facilitate students acquire knowledge and information about English speaking countries	13	86
By ICC Teaching?	*To cultivate students' positive attitudes towards different cultures	9	6
	*To promote students' understanding of their own culture 80 12		
	* To facilitate students' to value different culture communities	14	93
3. What methods, procedures	*Provide opportunities for students immerse into target culture by watching movie and reading text	9	60
and approaches do you apply	* Provide opportunities for comparing and contrasting intracultural and intercultural facts and norms by free discussions and lectures	11	73
for teaching ICC?	* Just cover cultural points of the book	3	20
	*No specific method available for ICC teaching	13	86
4. How do you define yourself and	* Cultural transmitter	12	80
your role in terms of teaching ICC?	* Cultural bridge	7	46
	* Intercultural and intracultural facilitator	13	86
5. Do you consider yourself interculturally	**Yes**	**12**	**80**
Competent? Why?	Watch English movie a lot	12	80
	Communicate with foreigners on social media	8	53
	Read a lot of books	3	20
	No	**3**	**20**
	Haven't received instruction on it	3	20
	Haven't travelled a lot to encounter and socialize with NSs	3	20
6. How do you identify interculturally	* teach cultural facts and points	11	73
competent teachers?	* have extensive knowledge of her own and target culture	14	93
	*know what, when and how to say something	8	53
7. How can knowledge of other people's	*Help have effective communication	15	100
Cultures develop the learners' intercultural	*Raises intracultural and intercultural awareness	9	60
Communicative competence as well as	* Denaturalize their own culture	7	46
Awareness of their own culture?			

Total: 15 teachers

Table 7 indicates that over 80 percent of the instructors interviewed had perceived ICC highly. Generally, instructors aim to be cognizant of ICC because they find it as an essential component for successful cross-cultural communication (100%) and for preventing conflicts in cross-cultural situations (53%). They view ICC as social and cultural norms of the target language as well as their own language. Also, 80% (out of 15 teachers) regarded themselves as interculturally competent which is acquired through "watching English movies" (80%), "communicating foreigners through social media" (53%) and "reading books" (24%). The other 20% who deemed themselves incompetent in intercultural communication, attributed their incompetency to "lack of training" (20%) and "lack of socialization" with native speakers (20%).They also mentioned that they received insufficient instruction and had

no specific methods for teaching ICC (85%). Those teachers who found ICC as the necessary constituent of language teaching and learning provided opportunities to immerse students into the target culture (60%) by watching movies and reading text. They also motivated students to compare and contrast intercultural and intracultural facts and norms through free discussions and lectures (73%). Some teachers who did not find ICC necessary, limited themselves to cover cultural points mentioned in the book (20%).

Likewise, those who "teach cultural facts and points", "have extensive knowledge of their own and target culture" and, "know what, when, and how to say something" were enumerated as the determining qualities of interculturally competent teachers. They also defined the roles as "cultural transmitter" (80%), "cultural facilitator" (66%) and, "cultural bridge" (46%) in terms of ICC. Finally, having a high level of ICC helps teachers to "communicate effectively" (100%), "increase intracultural and intercultural awareness" (60%) and "deconstruct their own culture" (46%).

In general, most of the teacher respondents regarded ICC teaching and learning as important for cross-cultural communication. These teachers believed that effective communication, avoiding cultural conflicts and stereotypes, knowing similarities and differences, acting appropriately in different situations, and valuing other cultures and differences are the beneficial outcomes of ICC. Most of these teacher participants concurred on the impact of books, periodicals, films, videos, and social media on ICC enhancement. Nearly all of them agreed that cross-cultural understanding results in better perception, comprehension, and exposure to other languages and cultures.

4.1.2 Novice and Experienced Teachers' Display of ICC in Their Classrooms

The third research question attempted to delve more into EFL teachers' awareness of ICC by observing two novice and two experienced teachers' actual instructional practices. It aimed to understand if experienced and novice teachers' cognition about ICC align with their classroom practices. The results obtained from observation revealed that although both groups showed high tendency toward ICC teaching and practiced ICC teaching in their classes, novice groups just covered cultural points in the book.

For example, Narges (a novice teacher) dedicated some time to compare the color codes people have for funerals in different countries. She compared Iran (black) and India's (white) colours for funerals and she ended the discussion soon and failed to teach how different colors might be perceived in different cultures. She also complained about the lack of time for dealing more with such detail.

It is worth mentioning that novice teachers failed to employ variable methods and strategies of ICC teaching and they solely dealt with facts and

norms of different cultures by describing and lecturing strategy while their counter parts applied various methods such as videos, comparison and contrast, lectures.

In another class, Nafise (an experienced teacher) introduced a task skillfully in which students required to tick what is respectable and valuable in their city and their country. Then they talked about their respectable traditions which might not contain any value for other countries. It was interesting that she used the recent Corona epidemic and explained how eating bat soup might be disgusting for us but usual for others. At the end, she skillfully taught how respectful different cultures are despite their differences.

Another experienced teacher, Komail, seemed to pay too much attention to cultural conflicts in a way that he introduced a specific Instagram page on cultural conflicts. He also talked about his traveling experiences and how he learned to integrate easily with Turks' society.

4.2. Discussion

The main finding of the research revealed that the cognition of ICC among Iranian EFL teachers, whether they are experienced or novice, does not differ in a statistically meaningful way. The interview results scrutinized interviewees' cognitions, methods, objectives, procedures, and roles they have regarding intercultural competence teaching. The themes derived from interview responses indicates that both experienced and novice teachers perceived ICC teaching necessary for cross cultural communication.

According to main outcome derived from analyzing interview, EFL instructors of both groups (novice and experienced) strongly advocated the necessity of teaching ICC in language teaching program which is in accordance with some prior findings (Byram 2009; Byram & Feng 2004; Cheng, 2012; Hismanoglu, 2011; Li, 2006; Lundgren, 2009; Sercu et al., 2005; Xiaohui & Li, 2011; Zhang, 2007). To some scholars, grasping the target language and its associated elements could be explained more by teachers' teaching experience variable (Xiaohui & Li, 2011).

Classroom observations revealed no salient differences in the cognition of both groups toward ICC, regardless of the teaching experience of the experienced and novice teachers. Observations for each of the four participants were carried out in order to capture practical and significant variation in the real context. Although novice teachers were less competent in their instructional practices, they were as cognizant as experienced ones dealing with ICC points. This finding is in line with the findings of Errington (2001, 2004), Johnson (1992), Pajares (1992), and Zhou (2011), who emphasized the significant relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. Some researchers found no link between how teachers view ICC and how they actually design their teaching methods, which contradicts the findings of other

studies (Risager, 1998; Sercu et al., 2005).Young and Sachdev (2011) also reported a clear discrepancy between experienced teachers' beliefs and their ICC related activities in classrooms.

The third question about the relationship between novice and experienced teachers' cognition and practices was answered by the results of classroom observation, which showed that even though some alignment between cognition and practice regarding ICC was seen, inconsistencies were evident. For instance, both novice and experienced teachers shared the same beliefs about the importance of ICC teaching for cross cultural communication, awareness of cultural norms and facts of the target language and role of language teacher as cultural mediator and facilitator, but they differed significantly in their teaching practices. Novice teachers seemed less skilled than experienced ones in applying different methods and strategies. These discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and practices were not only suggested in ICC teaching, but many scholars have often reported these inconsistencies in various areas, like the instruction of language skills (Atai & Taherkhani, 2018), intercultural communicative competence (Young & Sachdev, 2011), and EFL writing instruction (Yu et al., 2020).

The results of classroom observation for answering the third question with the focus on the teachers' cognition and practices relationship, indicated that although a degree of cognition- practice coverage regarding ICC was observed, discrepancies were salient. For example, although novice and experienced teachers both have similar beliefs regarding ICC teaching necessity for cross cultural communication, awareness of cultural norms and facts and language teacher's role as cultural transmitter and facilitator, they were clearly different with each other with respect to instructional practices. It turned out that experienced teachers appeared more competent than their counterparts in the application of different methods and strategies. Second language teaching literature have witnessed many of these discrepancies in different areas like teaching language skills (Atai & Taherkhani, 2018), classroom writing assessment (Wang et al., 2020), EFL writing instruction (Yu et al., 2020), and intercultural communicative competence (Young & Sachdev, 2011).

5. Conclusion and Implications

The current study provides some considerable findings on the importance of teachers' perception of ICC as the key element in their teaching as well as the effect of teaching experience level on the pedagogical activities of EFL instructors in Iranian setting. A combinational methodology was adopted for studying cognition in the present study which is not possible to be studied solely by questionnaire or interview. The combination of questionnaire, interview, and observation technique was applied to examine

the cognition of Iranian novice and experienced EFL teachers regarding ICC and to uncover possible cognition- practice misalignments. The results indicated that generally, novice and experience teachers didn't hold different cognitions regarding ICC and experienced teachers were more competent in the application of different ICC teaching strategies and methods. So incorporating ICC concept in teacher training programs is necessary (Byram, 1997, 2000, 2009; Davis et al., 2005). So it can be inferred that the effect of globalization on almost all teachers regardless of their teaching experience might be a driving force behind teachers' cognition.

This study, along with other studies (Errington, 2001, 2004; Johnson, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Zhou, 2011), could be useful for anyone who wants to understand foreign language teachers' and especially experienced and novice teachers' opinions on ICC and how their opinions influence their teaching activities. It also has implications for language teachers' pedagogy. Therefore, they are advised to include more sociocultural tasks and texts that deal with different countries' cultures to enhance learners' ICC. As Sercu et al. (2004) stated, curriculum designers should also be aware that teachers with high ICC have greater impact on their learners' ICC level. Hence, teacher training courses should incorporate the concept of ICC in their courses to first raise teachers' cognition on ICC and then provide them with suitable guidelines for teaching   ICC.

Future studies can extend this study to a larger scale one to obtain more valid findings. Researchers can also examine another unexplored area of ICC related to teachers' identity, personality type, and level of instruction (primary, intermediate, advanced), age and other relevant variables. Other triangulation methods can be used for comparing and contrasting teachers' reported cognition and classroom behaviors in the future. Moreover, future studies can examine how teacher training program influences teachers' beliefs and practices.

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