

Intercultural Competence in a Translator Training Program: Exploring Students' Self-Assessment and Perceptions

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Abstract: *Intercultural competence is significant for translators and it needs to be emphasized in translator training programs through comprehensive inclusion. However, students' perceptions and levels in this competence are not always taken into consideration in the development of translator training program. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' self-assessment of their intercultural competence (IC) and their perceptions along with how the case-study program develop IC among students. First, it introduces the definition and components of IC based on the literature. Second, it investigates an undergraduate translation program as a case study and it uses two questionnaires, designed on Promoting Intercultural Competence in Translators project's (PICT) identification of IC, to identify students' IC and their perceptions of its significance. The results indicate a good level of students' IC as well as high-level perception of the significance of IC and that the case-study program have a substantial inclusion of IC. In addition, the results are consistent with the results of PICT, which implies that the courses in the case study program in this study were sufficient to develop IC among students and emphasized the significance of IC to students. Also, the study offers tools which can be used by other researchers to self-assess the IC of students in different programs.*

Keywords: *Intercultural competence, translator training, students' perceptions, students' self-assessment, translation competence.*

الملخص: تعد كفاءة الاتصال بين الثقافات غاية في الأهمية للمترجم ومن الضروري أن يتم تعزيزها وبشكل شامل من خلال البرامج التدريبية للترجمة الدراسي إلا أنه مستويات الطلبة ومدى ادراكهم لهذه الكفاءة لا تؤخذ دائماً بعين الاعتبار عند القيام بتطوير البرامج التدريبية للترجمة، لذا تهدف هذه الدراسة لاستكشاف تقييم الطلبة الذاتي لكفاءتهم في التواصل بين الثقافات ومدى ادراكهم لذلك بالإضافة إلى كيفية قيام البرنامج التدريبي للترجمة والذي هو حالة الدراسة بتطوير كفاءة الاتصال بين الثقافات لدى الطلبة. تقوم الدراسة في البداية بتعريف مفهوم الثقافة ومكونات كفاءة الاتصال بين الثقافات بالاستناد على الدراسات السابقة ثم تقوم بتطبيق الدراسة على برنامج بكالوريوس كحالة دراسية باستخدام نوعين من الاستبانات، الأولى

مصممة بواسطة مجموعة من الباحثين في مشروع يهدف إلى رفع كفاءة الاتصال بين الثقافات وكذلك لمعرفة مدى إدراك الطلبة لمفهوم كفاءة الاتصال بين الثقافات. وخلصت الدراسة بأن النتائج تشير إلى أن مستوى الطلبة في كفاءة الاتصال بين الثقافات جيد جداً ولديهم مستوى عالي من الإدراك لأهمية هذه الكفاءة وكذلك أن برنامج البكالوريوس يقوم على تدريس هذه الكفاءة بشكل أساسي، كما أن هذه النتائج تتوافق مع النتائج التي خرج بها المشروع الذي تمت الإشارة إليه سابقاً مما يؤكد بأن برنامج البكالوريوس قد قدم عدد كافي من المقررات لتطوير هذه الكفاءة كما أن الدراسة تقدم أدوات يمكن استخدامها من خلال الباحثين الآخرين لقياس التقييم الذاتي للطلبة في برامج دراسية أخرى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كفاءة الاتصال بين الثقافات، تدريب المترجمون، إدراك الطلبة، تقييم الطلبة الذاتي، كفاءة الترجمة.

1. Introduction

At the outset, it is important to give an overview of translation competence, which is the umbrella term for what this study is investigating, i.e. intercultural competence (IC). All learners in every translator training program aim for translation competence and it is the expected outcome of such programs. The definition of this term has been somewhat controversial as each scholar has their own categorization of the constituents that comprise translation competence. The term was first defined by Wills (1982) as a super-competence encompassing three competencies: receptive competence in the source language (SL), productive competence in the target language (TL), and a super competence, i.e. the ability to convey messages between the linguistic and textual systems of the source culture and target culture. Bell (1991) proposed a translation model which listed four components of translation competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Another model of translation competence was proposed by Neubert (2000 :7-10) in which he saw translation competence as a combination of 1) language competence, 2) textual competence, 3) subject competence (general knowledge and specialist knowledge), 4) cultural competence (knowledge of the two respective cultures), and 5) transfer competence (translation procedures and strategies). A variety of other translation competence models have also been proposed (see Nord, 1988; Hewson and Martin, 1991; Kiraly, 1995; Hurtado Albir, 1996 and 1999; Makhlouf, 2017; Presas, 1996; and PACTE, 2003).

The divergence among said authors in defining the essential constituents of translation competence is evident. However, it is also apparent that IC is a component of all these definitions. This highlights the significant role that IC plays in translation. Before embarking on the definition of IC, it is important to define what is meant by culture from a sociolinguistic point of view. Olalla-Soler, who conducted his PhD on the acquisition of IC and its relation to other sub-competences to translation competences, defined culture as:

[A] system of norms, values, standards and behavioural models which is socially acquired and shared by a group of individuals and is developed in a cognitive context. Through this system, a group of individuals perceives and modifies the natural and artificial world in certain ways; it develops sub-systems for the organisation of behaviour, of the natural world, of patrimony, of societal structures and of linguistic and communicative needs. A culture

constantly evolves through contact with other cultural systems and because of changes in the perceived natural world (Olalla-Soler, 2015, p. 90).

The significance of culture in translation was highlighted by most of the early scholars in translation studies (Charchar, 2002; Nida, 1964; Vermeer, 1978; Nord, 1988; Lambert, 1991 and Toury, 1995). According to Witte (2000), it is necessary to conduct empirical research in this area to clarify the relationship between culture and translation and how it can be acquired. The PACTE (2011) model of translation competence categorised IC under extra-linguistic competence while Neubert (2000:7), Schäffner and Adab (2000), European Master's in Translation Expert Group (2009), and NAATI (2015) put it down as one main competence in their models of translation competence. In addition, Witte (2008) listed IC among the suggested components of translation competence in her model.

This study takes a very essential component of the translation competence, i.e. IC, under consideration to investigate students' self-assessment of it and what their program of study presented to them to develop this competence. It also seeks to find answers to the following research questions: First, 'how do students in the case-study program see their level of IC?' Second, 'to what extent are the students in the case-study aware of the significance of IC in translation?' Therefore, it is important to establish a good understanding of IC before finding the answers to these two questions.

2. Intercultural Competence

Defining IC has been one of the challenges that played a role in its assessment. Klemp (1979, p. 41) argued that 'competence can be measured. But its measurement depends on its definition'. According to Deardorff (2006), scholars have defined the concept IC in different ways, but there has been no agreement on how to define it. Kuada (2004, p. 10) also affirmed that there is 'a need for a clearer definition of the concept of intercultural competence'. Deardorff (2006) conducted a large survey among US academic institutional administrators to propose a unified definition of IC and found that Byram's definition of IC was the most applicable for pedagogical purposes. Byram defines IC as 'knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviours; and relativizing one's self' (1997, p. 34). Unlike cultural competence which refers to the knowledge of either source or target culture only, IC emphasises on possessing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the two respective cultures.

Byram (1997), a key figure in intercultural education, proposed a model to develop and assess intercultural communicative competence that consists of two areas, communicative competence and intercultural communicative competence. The first includes linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence. The second area comprises five main components, attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting, skills of discovery, and cultural awareness.

The first component, attitudes, refers to openness and curiosity to other cultures and ability to not disbelieve but believe in other cultures (ibid, p. 50). There are a number of objectives that must be achieved in order to fulfil the attitudes component in the process of acquiring IC: 1) readiness to interact with otherness in a relationship without an attitude

to seek profits from others, 2) interest in exploring familiar and unfamiliar traditions and practices in one's own and in other cultures, 3) willingness to question values and assumptions in cultural practices in one's own environment, and 4) willingness to engage with the traditions and rites of oral and non-oral communication. In translation, attitudes play an influential role in deciding whether translators will be able to appreciate and understand the source and target cultures. The translator must be neutral towards any cultural setting they encounter while translating. In fact, if the translator does not suspend their opinions, beliefs, or thoughts it may influence the translation and diverge the text being translated. Although all the components of IC play a significant role in Byram's model (see Figure 1), 'the basis of intercultural competence is in the attitudes of the person interacting with people of another culture' (Byram et al. 2002, p. 11-13).

The second component of the model is knowledge 'of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction' (Byram 1997, p. 51). In other words, the translator needs to have a complete understanding of the cultural views and symbols, and how members in the respective culture interact. It is also important to understand cultural differences and being aware of 'the relevance [that] any difference between the source and the target culture might have for communication success or failure' (Yarosh & Muies 2011, p. 41). With orienting some of the words to translation field, the translator must have knowledge of the following:

- Past and present relationships between the translator's country and TL countries.
- Tools required to contact an interlocutor from a different country and the institutions which can facilitate communication or help resolve issues.
- Reasons behind misunderstandings between interlocutors from different cultural origins.
- National memory of the translator's country and the perspectives of the TL country towards the events in the translator's country.
- National memory of the translator's country and their own perspectives towards it.
- Geographical space of the translator's country and how this space is seen by other countries
- Geographical space of the translator's country and their own perspective towards it.
- Socialisation processes in the translator's country and the TL country.
- Principal markers and the distinctions between the social interaction in the translator's country and the TL country.
- Institutions which impact the daily life and relationships within the translator own country and the TL country.
- Processes involved in the social interaction in the translator's country.

The third component of IC is skills, which refer to the ability to interpret and explain a document from a particular culture and connect it to a document from one's own culture. It includes the ability to: 1) identify ethnographic elements in a document and illustrate their origins, 2) identify points of divergence in an interaction and illustrate them in light of the concerned cultural system, and 3) conciliate between contradicting illustrations of

phenomena. In translation, this could involve the ability to use strategies such as borrowing, modulation, and adaptation.

The fourth component, discovery and interaction skills, refers to the ability to have a full understanding of a culture and cultural practices and to use attitudes, knowledge, and skills in real-time interaction and communication. This component aims to:

- Obtain the principles and meanings of documents or events from an interlocutor and develop an illustrative system that can function in other situations.
- Recognise important references between and among cultures and elicit their significance and implications.
- Recognise similar and different procedures of interaction, both explicit and implicit, and work out a suitable use for them in particular situations.
- Appropriately use knowledge, skills, and attitudes in real situations to communicate with interlocutors from different cultures and countries, taking into account their level of familiarity with their culture and country and how it differs from the translator’s own country and others.
- Recognise past and the present relationships between the translator’s own country and culture and other countries.
- Recognise and utilise both private and public institutions which play a role in the communication with the (TC) and its country.
- Mediate between the translator’s culture and the TC using knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The fifth component is critical cultural awareness/political education, which refers to the ability to critically analyse perspectives, practices, and products of the two concerned cultures (TC and SC). Its objectives here are: 1) to identify hidden and visible values in documents from the two respective cultures, 2) to analyse documents that refer to perspectives and criteria, and 3) to engage in intercultural exchanges according to explicit criteria and to mediate whenever there is a level of acceptance of them by reflecting on one’s own attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

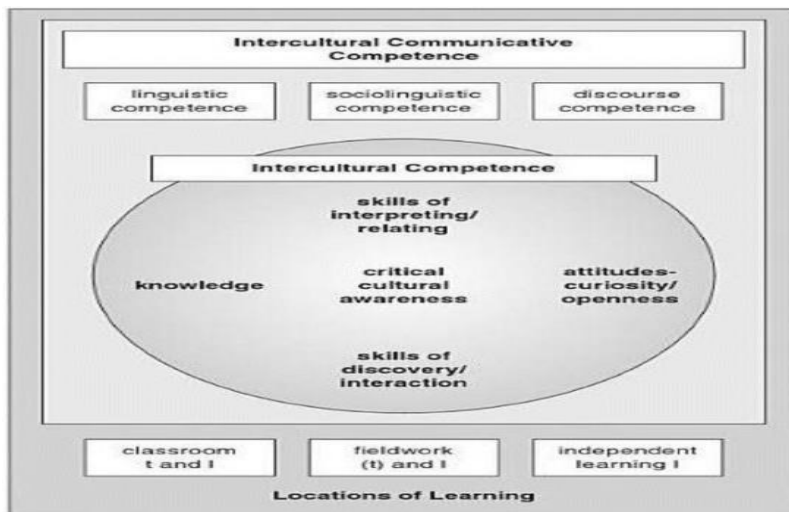


Figure 1. Byram’s Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence

The above model was put into practice in a translation program at a university, with 99 students participating as a part of Byram, Porto, and Yulita's (2019) project that aimed to promote intercultural awareness. The results empirically proved how students can overcome intercultural difficulties faced while translating. Angelone (2016) adopted Byram's model in his research to investigate how IC can be documented and assessed using a process-oriented approach with an MA translation program as a case study. Waliński (2012) adopted Byram's model to provide an assessment tool to measure IC. However, as far as translation is concerned, a rational critique raised by Hurtado Albir and Olalla-Soler (2016) is that:

[T]he goal of translator training is not for students to absolutely know everything about their working cultures or how to behave like members of those cultures. It is rather for them to be able to use appropriate documentation sources effectively, and to have sufficient knowledge to identify cultural differences corresponding to the source culture and the necessary abilities to transfer them to the target culture in line with a translation brief (2016, p. 326).

A few studies have come up with proposals for the acquisition of IC (see Witte 2000, Katan 2009); but the Promoting Intercultural Competence in Translators (PICT) project (2012a) developed a framework with pedagogical and assessment materials to integrate IC with postgraduate translation programs in the EU (see Granmer, 2015). The framework included a situational survey of students and teachers from a number of postgraduate translation programs in Europe based on the IC literature by Byram (1997) and Kramersch (1998). According to PICT (2012a), the acquisition of IC entails that the student should have following skills, knowledge, and attitudes:

Knowledge

- The translator must have sufficient knowledge about the source and target culture.
- The translator must know the theory of cultural differences and its impact on translation and communication.
- The translator must know the discourse features in SL and TL.

Skills

- The translator must be able to identify the elements of the foreign language.
- The translator must be able to adapt or localise elements of a foreign culture for the target audience.

Attitudes

- The translator must accept the cultural differences between the SL and TL

The results of the situational survey showed that awareness regarding the importance of IC exists among both students and teachers in most of the programs in European countries. It also pointed out the need to systematically integrate IC training in the curricula of these translation programs, either as a stand-alone module or within other modules. The PICT project also developed a toolkit that is available online which includes lesson plans and assessment materials and can be used by any program to integrate IC into their curricula.

However, does this mean that translation programs outside Europe may not be able to use this toolkit and materials? Of course not, but there are necessary procedures that need to be taken in order to adapt this model for translation programs in the rest of the world. The PICT project surveyed the programs in six European countries, each with a

different language, and developed its curriculum framework and materials to suit all EU postgraduate translation programs with respect to their language variations and the differences between all the programs. Therefore, it is important to take into account some elements of the program including its curriculum and students' knowledge of IC.

Another important decision is whether to integrate the aforementioned framework and the toolkit into the current courses, which can be modified, or to create a new course to bridge the lack of IC. Creating a new course in a program takes time and sometimes requires long approval procedures to be undertaken. Moreover, it is not certain whether all program stakeholders will agree on creating such a course. Therefore, a feasible practical way to utilise this framework and the toolkit in the program, is to use them as supplementary resources in the most relevant course or courses.

Another issue to be considered is the adaptability of this framework and the toolkit to the courses in the BA translation programs since it was devised for postgraduate courses. Since BA programs are considered to be the most important stage in the life of a translator where they learn all about translation, the toolkit should be applicable to them after necessary modifications. It is usually during this stage that the student learns a new language.

Katan (1999) and Witte (2000) theoretically applied the insights from the field of intercultural studies and social cognition concerning the factors that affect the interpretation of cultural systems when individuals from different cultures communicate. According to Olalla-Soler (2015), there is a lack of both empirical and experimental studies that investigate the acquisition of IC during translator training and this is supported by Tomozeiu, Koskinen, and D'Arcangelo (2016) who argue there is a shortage of empirical research in this area. So, in his PhD thesis, Olalla-Soler investigated IC and its acquisition during translator training with a focus on Spanish and German cultures. Unfortunately, his PhD is written in Spanish and it is difficult to access his work.

3. Research Methodology

According to Hurtado Albir and Olalla-Soler (2016), a comprehensive assessment of cultural competence during translator training should promote student self-assessment. Similarly, Deardorff (2006) used a questionnaire to measure students' IC in US higher academic institutions. Our aim was to undertake a descriptive study with students' self-assessment of their IC as one of the objectives. Therefore, an online-questionnaire with 13 questions about IC was developed. Previous studies have found that self-assessment is a reliable tool of measuring students' levels of IC because it corresponds with other tools of assessment (Benton, Duchon & Pallett, 2013 and Brown, Dewey & Cox, 2014).

The study was conducted at an undergraduate translation program of a Saudi university. At the time of the study, most if not all academic institutions were working remotely, and students attended their classes virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure the validity of the students' input, they were assured that their participation was confidential and their identities would be kept anonymous. A total of 56 students (30 females and 26 males) in their final year of the program took part in the study. The reason for selecting final year students was to gain inputs from a sample that could be a real representation for the intercultural outcomes of the program. The input of first- or second-

year students would not have been based on all that the program could provide to its students, and would thus lead to premature input.

Based on the six components of the IC proposed by PICT (2012a), the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section contained a number of closed-ended questions to gauge students’ self-assessment of their current levels in IC. The answers were marked on a Likert scale with a five-point scale where (5) was strongly agree and (1) strongly disagree. To determine the students’ perception of their IC levels, the second section of the questionnaire required them to rate the six components of IC proposed by PICT (2012a), on Likert scale with responses ranging from highly important to not important. The responses of the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS software to obtain descriptive statistics.

3.1 Contextualization

The components of IC proposed by PICT (2012a) were taken as a measurement of a particular context, namely, an undergraduate program that prepares students to become professional translators. The undergraduate translation program, taken as a case study for a Saudi university, includes a number of courses designated for improving the IC of students which are listed in Table 1.

Table 1.
Courses for IC Development in the Program

Course Name	Description
Readings in Language and Culture	This course aims to introduce students to the relationship between language and culture and its impact on society and language itself.
Advanced Readings in Language and Culture	This course aims to deepen students’ understanding of the relationship between language and culture and its impact on society and language itself. Also, it aims to develop students’ knowledge in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Relationship between language and culture and the importance of developing social efficiency among translators b. How language and culture can affect each other c. Cultural meaning d. Language and identity e. Language and cultural imperialism

The significant role of IC in translation competence has been clarified, and translation programs are expected to take it into account while preparing the courses taught to students. The program studied assigned two courses for the development of IC and Table 1 shows that the objectives of the Readings in Language and Culture course are to give students an introduction to how language and culture are interrelated and the influence that culture has on society and language. The second course (Advanced Readings in Language and Culture) goes beyond the introduction to create a sound understanding of the relationship between language and culture with respect to translation.

The objectives of these two courses align with most parts of the PICT (2012a) model of IC acquisition. The two courses aim to develop students' knowledge of SL and TL cultures and the cultural differences between them and its impact. Possessing good knowledge of the two respective cultures would enable students to identify the differences in the TL culture and adapt or localise the foreign unfamiliar elements for the target audience. One of the objectives of the second course (Advanced Readings in Language and Culture) is to develop social efficiency among students to foster openness, acceptance, and respect towards TC. Nonetheless, the development of students' IC is not limited to one or two courses. It can be enhanced by the instructors while teaching practical translation to their students where they have the opportunity to pause at each cultural issue and discuss it.

4. Results and Discussion

The following are the responses of the participants to the first section of the questionnaire which was a self-assessment of students' IC levels. The results are displayed according to the mean and SD of all selections made by the participants.

Table 2.

Students' Self-Assessment of Their IC

	Question	N	Min imu m	Max imu m	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I know the essential norms and taboos of the target language's culture.	56	2	5	4.70	.658
2	I understand the definition of culture.	56	3	5	4.88	.384
3	I realise the importance of intercultural competence in translation.	56	1	5	3.91	1.443
4	There are cultural elements in the target language which I do not know.	56	1	5	2.11	.908
5	I can deal with my emotions and frustrations when translating texts from the target culture.	56	2	5	4.50	.714
6	I am interested to learn new cultural aspects.	56	4	5	4.84	.371
7	I understand differences in the behaviours, values, attitudes, and styles between SL and TL cultures.	56	1	5	4.48	1.027
8	I respect the privacy of the target culture.	56	3	5	4.57	.657
9	I can adapt the text appropriately when translating from one culture to another and maintain respect for the individuals of the respective culture.	56	2	5	4.59	.890
10	I am aware that I need to control my cultural orientation, preferences, and habits when translating into the target culture.	56	2	5	4.43	.850
11	I am aware of my personal values that could affect my solutions when dealing with ethical issues.	56	1	5	4.09	1.210
12	I use culture-specific information to improve my translation.	56	2	5	4.18	.765

13	My program offers a number of courses that develop my intercultural competence.	56	1	5	4.12	1.129
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As shown in Table 2, the results generally show that a large number of students are aware of IC and its components, although some issues require further action. Fortunately, their responses on the questions that measure their IC predominantly vary between two scales ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’. Most students were confident about their knowledge of the essential norms and taboos of the target culture, with a mean of 4.70 (strongly agree), and the SD was not high. This varies from the results of Xiangdong’s (2016) in which the students expressed a moderate confidence level in their knowledge of the SC and TC. Also, majority of the students believed that they had a good understanding of the concept of culture, which is the basis of IC, with a mean of 4.88 (strongly agree), and the SD was lowest among all other questions. This result was motivating in comparison to Xiangdong’s (2016) study where students assessed their knowledge of the theory of culture moderately.

The first two questions related to the language-culture relationship, so the students were given a translation-oriented question when asked about their knowledge regarding the importance of IC in translation. The results show a mean of 3.91 (agree) which indicated that the students realize the importance of IC when translating, but the SD was the highest among all questions (1.443) which indicates there is a necessity to further clarify and emphasize the role of IC in translation and being one of the components of translation competence. To explore if there were cultural elements which did not sound familiar to students, they were asked if they did not know any cultural elements in the TL. Students’ responses varied on this issue. The mean was 2.11 (neutral) and the SD was high (.908). This indicates that students’ knowledge of the cultural elements in the TL need to be developed.

A vital aspect of translation is controlling emotions and frustration in order not to have any effect on the translation especially while dealing with cross-cultural texts. Therefore, students’ control of their emotions and frustration when translating from the TC was investigated. The students’ responses indicated that the majority of them were very confident about their translation ability not being affected by their emotions and frustrations, with a mean of 4.50 (strongly agree). Although the students’ confidence is promising, their teachers can go through the translations made by them to determine how much they managed to control their emotions and frustrations when translating. Students’ interest in learning new cultural aspects was also investigated and, notably, the mean of their responses was 4.84 (strongly agree) indicating a high interest among all students to learn more about TC. The possible explanation for this could be that the students were taught the role of IC in translation and that learning about other cultures and comparing them with their own is an entertaining task for them.

Recognising the differences between SL and TL cultures at different levels is important for learners who seek to become translators. Therefore, the students were asked if they understood the differences in behaviour, values, attitudes, and styles between the two respective languages. The majority of students believed that they understood the differences with the mean value being 4.48 (strongly agree). However, the SD was high (1.027) indicating that there are students who may not understand these differences.

Moreover, the privacy of the TC is one of the issues that translators need to know about and respect, so it was asked in the questionnaire. The results in Table 2 show that most of the surveyed students expressed their respect for the privacy of the TC (mean 4.57), and even the minimum response was 3 (neutral), indicating that no students disapproved of it. This highlights the awareness that students have about IC and it could be attributed to the knowledge of IC they receive from their teachers or the courses designated for IC. Another important skill about which students were asked was their ability to adapt the texts from the SC to the TC and maintain respect for the speakers in the TC. The results reflect a high confidence among students about their ability to adapt the texts when translating to fit into the TC with the mean of 4.59 (strongly agree). However, the SD was somewhat high (.890). This ability can also be further investigated by teachers by evaluating students' translations to ensure that they are capable of translating while maintaining an appreciation of the TC.

One of the five components of IC is attitudes which involves the ability to interact with other cultures. It entails that the translators need to control their cultural orientation, habits, and their preferences. Therefore, students were asked if they were aware of control and the results in Table 2 show a high level of awareness among the students (mean 4.43), although few students may not be aware of this (SD .850). Generally, although these results show a high level of awareness among many students, there is still a need to focus on those students who do not know that they need to control their cultural orientation, habits, and preferences. Another area that could impact the translation is the personal values of the translator especially when dealing with ethical issues. The students were asked if they were aware that their personal values may affect their solutions when translating. Majority of the students expressed their awareness while a few were not aware of the effect of personal values on translation, the mean was 4.09 (strongly agree) while the SD was high (1.2). This can be further validated by their teachers to ensure that their personal values do not distort their translations.

Using culture-specific information is a strategy that translators use to develop their IC, therefore, students were asked if they used this strategy. The results show a consensus among students on the usage of the aforementioned strategy (mean 4.18). In fact, this strategy ensures the ongoing development of IC, and it is important that teachers focus on teaching it to all of their students. Finally, a very important question was given to students at the end of the questionnaire about their evaluation of their program of study in terms of whether it helped them develop their IC. Students were asked to decide on the level of their agreement or disagreement with this statement 'My program offers a number of courses that develop my intercultural competence'. The last item in Table 2 shows that the average response among students was strongly agree (mean 4.12) with a noticeable SD (1.129) which indicates that there are a few students who may not be fully convinced that their program enhances the development of IC. The responses to the last question can be also a good indicator of the significance of including two courses in the program dedicated only to enhancing IC (see Table 2). Overall, the results showed a high level of confidence among the majority of students with regard to their IC and their satisfaction with their program concerning the focus and development of IC. However, some students, who do not represent a large proportion, believe that they still need further development of their

IC. This indicates an extra focus on the development of IC could be necessary for those students.

Overall, the results of this study showed a significant difference in the attitudes of the students towards their IC in comparison with Xiangdong's (2016) study in which students believed their IC was moderate. This indicates the progress made in the development of IC in the translation program which was observed in the present case-study. It also highlights the need to focus more on the development of IC in translation programs which was also one of the recommendations by Xiangdong (2016), who argued for a need to create a separate course in the program for IC development.

Another aim of this research was to identify students' perceptions of the IC six components of PICT (2012a) in order to gain a better understanding of the students' realisation of the importance of these components of IC when they translate. As mentioned above, the second section of the questionnaire required students to rate the six components. Their ratings are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3.

Students Perception of the Six Components of IC

	Component of IC	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Identifying elements of the foreign language	56	3	5	4.91	.345
2	To have a good knowledge of source culture and target culture	56	3	5	4.70	.502
3	Ability to accept cultural differences between the source culture and target culture	56	3	5	4.61	.562
4	To have knowledge of the theory of cultural differences and its impact on translation and communication	56	3	5	4.52	.809
5	To have knowledge of discourse features in SL and TL	56	3	5	4.02	.981
6	Ability to adapt or localise elements of a foreign culture to the target audience	56	3	5	4.80	.483

Generally, the results showed that all six components of IC were considered to be highly important by the student. The mean was higher than 4 (highly important), and the mean in the fifth component was 4.02, indicating they listed it as the last highly important component. Although the students may have positive attitudes towards their level of IC, it is not always the case in all translation programs. In PICT's (2012b) study on EU postgraduate translation programs, nearly half of the students said that IC was crucial for students and the rest rated it as either very important or important; in other words, the students see IC as a necessary requirement. This aligns with the perception of the students in the present case-study where they also realised the significance of IC and its components.

The SD for the fourth and fifth components was high (above .809) and this could indicate that some students did not perceive them as highly important. Fortunately, no student underestimated any of the six components as the minimum was 3 (neutral) for all six components of IC. This reflects a good level of awareness among students regarding the significance of these components and how they play an important role in understanding and solving the intercultural issues in translation. In addition, this consensus of students

on the high importance of IC and its components aligns with the results of the EU-based survey by PICT (2012b) where most students considered it important with very few (2.38%) rating them as unimportant. This can be considered as an indicator of the significance of PICT's work on IC at even an international level.

The overall result of the students' perception of the importance of IC was high and it exceeded how the students see the significance of IC in Europe (See PICT 2012b). In fact, these results align with the results of Xiangdong's (2016) study to a large extent which surveyed students in an undergraduate translation program in a Chinese university to report all six components of IC were rated as highly important by students. This could indicate that there is a regional agreement among the students regarding the significance of IC. The situation in Europe is also similar, as nearly half of the students (47%) at postgraduate level saw translation as crucial and the remaining students also appreciated its significance (24% saw it very important and 17% rated it as important) (See PICT 2012b).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the vital role of IC in translation competence is evident. The present study investigated IC and its acquisition in a case study and it attempted to shed light on how knowledgeable the students are about this important competence and reasons behind that, and how the academic programs can enhance the development of IC. The study provided a self-assessment tool to measure the students' IC from their own perspective which can be replicated to by researchers to survey the IC from students' perspective in other programs. The results in this study show that that the students in the given academic program were generally satisfied with their IC and what their program provided for IC development. It was remarkable that the case-study program dedicated a number of courses solely for developing students' IC and this was reflected in the results that showed a high level of awareness regarding the role of IC in translation and its necessity. It was also clearly observed that most of the students enrolled in the program viewed the components of IC as highly important which highlights the necessity that the students in the translation academic programs should realize the significance of the components of IC so that they can develop this competence which leads to the development of their translation competence in general.

This study attempts to contribute to the field of translator training and to researchers in this field through highlighting the need to understanding students' perception of IC and how they can be a reflection of what the program provides for IC development. It also highlighted what the case-study program offers to develop this important competence among students. The focus on development of IC in the academic programs is a continuous process and should be taken into account during the regular development of the translation program as a whole. IC development is a necessity it can be integrated into the program either through courses particularly designed for IC development or to integrate IC supplementary resources within other translation courses.

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