

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Investigation of Intercultural Competence: CDA of EFL Students' Baseline Portfolios

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ABSTRACT

In monocultural classes, Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have to acquire not only linguistic competence but also to develop Intercultural Competence (IC) when they read and write in English. This article investigates IC scattered in EFL students' baseline portfolios collected in an enrichment critical reading class at the Preparatory Year of Najran University. IC is operationalised as intercultural attitude, intercultural knowledge and intercultural skills evident as discourses in intercultural texts. The data comprises semi-structured interview and intercultural assignment, which is an encounter discourse to intercultural text. A qualitative empirical research design was used to analyze the data through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) techniques. The findings indicate that IC is underdeveloped. Most of the participants represent negative attitude towards intercultural communication. They also lack appropriate intercultural knowledge and effective intercultural skills. The findings suggest that EFL teaching and learning practices need to shift towards a more intercultural perspective.

KEYWORDS: intercultural competence; CDA; intercultural text; EFL students; student portfolio.

Investigação da Competência Intercultural: ACD em portfólios de linha de base de alunos de Língua Estrangeira

RESUMO

Nas aulas monoculturais, os alunos de Inglês da Arábia Saudita como Língua Estrangeira (EFL) têm de adquirir não só a competência linguística, mas também para desenvolver Competência Intercultural (CI) para ler e escrever em Inglês. Este artigo investiga a CI dispersa em portfólios de linha de base de alunos de EFL coletados em uma aula de leitura crítica de enriquecimento no Ano Preparatório da Universidade Najran. O CI é operacionalizado como atitude intercultural, conhecimento intercultural e habilidades interculturais evidenciadas em discursos em textos interculturais. Os dados compreendem um entrevista semiestruturada e a atribuição intercultural, que vai ao encontro do texto intercultural. Um desenho empírico qualitativo foi utilizado para analisar os dados através de técnicas de Análise Crítica do Discurso (ACD). Os resultados indicam que o CI dos alunos é subdesenvolvido, pois a maioria dos participantes representa uma atitude negativa em relação à comunicação intercultural. Eles também não possuem conhecimento intercultural apropriado e habilidades interculturais eficazes. As descobertas sugerem que as práticas de ensino e aprendizado do EFL precisam mudar para uma perspectiva mais intercultural.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: competência intercultural; ACD; texto intercultural; estudantes de língua inglesa; portfólio de estudantes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the Arab world, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is an environment that lends itself to the practice of intercultural education. Fageeh (2011) showed that the cultural differences between Arabic and English “spring from the differences in Oriental versus Western philosophy” (p. 65); something that leads to intercultural misunderstanding. Accordingly, there is a need for intercultural competence in English language teaching from grammar-translation to acculturation. The study concluded that it is necessary for both teachers and students to become aware of the discursive character of cultures and to upgrade students’ cultural awareness from ‘Self’ to ‘Others’. Hua (2014) added that “differences in the norms will lead to clashes in intercultural communication” (p. 128) where norms refer to rules of interactions regarding appropriateness and effectiveness in communication. Perry and Southwell (2011) recommended further research on the ways in which Intercultural Competence (IC) is developed; the need for more empirical studies that assess the ability of different approaches to develop IC; and how IC can be developed among university students.

EFL Saudi university students need to develop IC necessary for a globalized world. According to the researcher’s experience at Najran University, teaching and learning practices concentrate on linguistic competence. To fulfil university needs, new students need to pass one year preparatory program, in which 32 contact hours are courses in English language skills. Nearly half of these hours are devoted for reading and writing skills. The Reading course helps students build vocabulary and read academic paragraphs effectively. The Writing course aims to enable students to write correct sentences and paragraphs. In sum, while these students concentrate on linguistic competence in their reading and writing classes, they need to critically read as well as creatively write intercultural texts.

More specifically, previous research shows a dire need to investigate intercultural competence in the readings as well as writings of EFL Saudi students. Some studies examined the intercultural content of EFL textbooks (Ahmad, 2015; Alkathery et al., 2010). While Ahmad (2015) reported exclusion of local culture, Alkathery et al. (2010) found balanced representation of local and other cultures. Other studies investigated EFL teaching and learning practices of intercultural communication (Aldosari, 2013; Alfahadi, 2012; Fageeh, 2011; Hazaea & Alzubi, 2017; Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2011; Osman, 2015); these studies reported inappropriate teaching and learning practices that need to highlight intercultural competence. In exploring the identity of EFL Saudi students, Elyas (2014) concluded that in order to promote balanced intercultural identity, educators need to “understand the complex nature of learning and teaching” (p. 36) in the Saudi context. Benahnia (2014) recommended cultural and intercultural competence exchange programs. Other studies found failure in intercultural competence among EFL Saudi students abroad; such failure is related to misconception of identity (Taj, 2017) or negative stereotypes (Al Musaiter, 2015). So far, no study has scrutinized intercultural competence in EFL Saudi students’ intercultural readings as well as writings.

This article reports the findings of the pretreatment stage of a large interventional study on fostering intercultural competence among EFL Saudi students through the strategies of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It aims to scrutinize the intercultural competence (intercultural attitude, intercultural knowledge and intercultural skills) as intercultural discourses evident in the texts. The article analyses the primary data of the students' portfolios collected at the beginning of an enrichment critical reading class at the Preparatory Year of Najran University.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Intercultural Competence as Discourses

Intercultural Competence (IC) has brought the attention of intercultural education in a globalised world. Byram (1997) treated IC in terms of skills and knowledge defined as the ability to understand and deal with cultural differences without ethnocentricity. Similarly, other scholars deal with IC as three elements: attitude, knowledge and skills (Deardorff, 2006; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Sercu, 2004). Chen and Starosta (1998) referred to these elements as three wheels of IC: sensitivity, awareness and adroitness; respectively. These wheels constitute the affective, cognitive and behavioural elements of IC; it constitutes intercultural attitude, intercultural knowledge and intercultural skills.

From discourse perspective, IC can be operationalised as 'Self' and 'Others' discourses in intercultural texts. Culture refers to "competing ways of giving meaning to the world and organizing social institutions and processes" (Weedon, 1987). In line with this conception, discourse is defined as "a type of language associated with a particular representation from a specific point of view, of some [intercultural] social practice" (Fairclough, 1995). Discourse is also viewed as potentially having significant causal effects in the processes of intercultural social construction (Fairclough, 2006). Fairclough's (1992) CDA investigates ideologies that are expressed, constituted, signalled, and legitimized by language use (Wodak, 2002) in intercultural texts. This article employs CDA to examine 'Self' cultural competence along with 'Others' cultural competence as competing discourses associated with a story article about a dinner invitation. Each competence involves intercultural attitude, intercultural knowledge and intercultural skills.

Intercultural attitude includes respect for 'Self' and 'Others' cultures, openness, curiosity and discovering, tolerating ambiguity (Deardorff, 2006). To reveal discourse of intercultural attitude, Cots (2006) questions: Is the author's attitude expressed in the text? Intercultural attitude is expressed in the use of modality; analysis of modality focuses on the writer's degree of affinity with his statement. A chosen modality has consequences for the representation of identities (Fairclough, 2003) in intercultural texts. Intercultural attitude is also related to change and ideological consequences (Fairclough, 1992): do the current teaching and learning practices enhance intercultural attitude among EFL students? Do these practices change students' attitude towards intercultural communication?

Intercultural knowledge involves self-awareness, deep intercultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness (Deardorff, 2006). Intercultural knowledge appears in discourses that represent intercultural identities. 'Self' and 'Others' identities are evident in intercultural texts. CDA seeks to identify the recurring intercultural social actors evident in the students' portfolios. Representation of intercultural social actors is examined in the case of the fear of loss of cultural identity (Van Leeuwen, 1996). Identity is about giving voice, and this requires discursive spaces (Petithomme, 2008) in intercultural texts.

Written intercultural skills are manifested in the form of the students' ability to analyze, interpret and relate (Deardorff, 2006) in intercultural clauses. A clause consists of participants, processes and circumstances. English language differentiates a small number of process types and associated participant types. The process types are material, behavioural, mental, verbal and existential process (Halliday, 1985). Van Leeuwen (1996) operationalised the participant types into 'social actors' where each participant role 'slot' refers to a semantic specification (p. 34). Van Leeuwen (1996) adds that social actors can be represented either in terms of nomination or categorization. Nomination is a feature for representation of competing social actors in intercultural texts. It projects a unique identity. Intercultural social actors can be included and excluded in intercultural discourse through certain linguistic choices. Representation can provide social actors "with either active or passive roles" (Van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 43). Circumstances involve adverbial phrases that represent intercultural time and space.

2.2 Intercultural Competence in EFL Contexts

Previous research shows that EFL Saudi students need to develop intercultural competence along with linguistic competence when they read and write in English. This lack is due to the current teaching and learning practices (Osman, 2015; Fageeh, 2011; Aldosari, 2013), the epistemological differences between Arabic and English (Fageeh, 2011), curriculum (Ahmad, 2015; Alfahadi, 2012), negative stereotypes (Al Musaiteer, 2015) and the conception of identity in different contexts (Taj, 2017).

Methodologically, previous research shows extensive quantitative analysis of culture in intercultural communication (Al Musaiteer, 2015; Aldosari, 2013; Damnet, 2008; Elboubekri, 2017; Liton & Qaid, 2016; Macknish, 2011; Mekheimer & Aldosari, 2011; Osman, 2015); something that objectifies culture (Weninger & Kiss, 2013). On the other hand, other qualitative research was conducted (Al-Jarf, 2004; Houghton, 2008; Méndez García, 2017; Taj, 2017; Xiong, 2012; Yingqin, 2012) but not from a CDA perspective except Marsh (2011) in the Japanese context, and Escudero (2013) with EFL Mexican students in America.

Marsh (2011) employed CDA-based activities to enhance critical language awareness in a Japanese medical university. The findings indicate improvement in levels of critical language awareness in some students, and suggested a path of progression from basic analyses to more sophisticated critical stances. Progress of other students was hindered by linguistic, motivational, and cultural factors. The study recommends teaching of critical

language awareness as a useful addition to English courses in other contexts where there is an established need for sophisticated critical thinking skills. Similarly, Escudero (2013) employed CDA in order to teach intercultural awareness to a group of Mexican college students learning English as a foreign language. The results indicate that drawing students' attention to the cultural situatedness of language use can increase their awareness of the multiple ideological positions existing in a cultural context. These results indicate that the field of intercultural education needs to take a linguistic turn in order to further its goals.

3. METHOD

The research project employs an empirical action qualitative research design. Data was collected through students' portfolios.

3.1 Context and Participants

In Saudi universities, the preparatory year aims to prepare new enrolled students to some competitive undergraduate programs such as Medicine, Pharmacy and Engineering. In two semesters, these students are expected to join intensive courses in English language, Mathematics, Computer Sciences, and other soft skills. Following the Saudi education system and culture, males and females are separated in different campuses and different teaching environments.

In Najran University, around eight hundred male students are enrolled at the preparatory year each year. These 'monocultural' students share similar characteristics: gender (male), age (18-21), linguistic and cultural (Arabic and Saudi) background. Because they are given equal chance to compete, they are randomly categorized section wise rather than level wise. They are required to spend 32 contact hours of six English language courses in two semesters. Centralized assessment is conducted as two midterms and final exam. After the first midterm, two extracurricular activities are added: remedial classes for slow learners and enrichment classes for good performers.

EFL Reading is a four-contact hour course. Kirn and Hartmann's (2012) *Reading Interaction I* is used as the main resource textbook; it depicts various intercultural texts (Alkathery et al., 2010). As transcultural text (Escudero, 2013), the textbook is produced in a cultural context and read in a different one.

To select a homogenized sample for the research project, an announcement was publically made for first midterm high-scored students who are interested to join an enrichment critical reading class. The sample represents intermediate level of students. Twenty-four students attended the first day orientation session. These students obtained high marks (A+ or A) in their first midterm of the reading course. The students were oriented about the nature of the enrichment classes, students' consent to participate in the project, and the development of their portfolios throughout the course.

3.2 Instruments

A student portfolio is an important tool for assessing intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Jacobson et al., 1999; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Sercu, 2004). Perry and Southwell (2011) recommended students' portfolios as "a relatively new method of assessing intercultural competence" (p. 462). For the purpose of this article, the baseline data of students' portfolios consist of intercultural assignments and semi-structured interviews. In other words, a student portfolio consists of each student's intercultural assignment and semi-structured interview. Accordingly, fifteen portfolios are compiled.

Intercultural assignments are used in the students' portfolios. Students were given an intercultural assignment (see Appendix) and asked to critically read the text and then to write an encounter discourse: a similar text about a Middle Eastern businessman who was invited by an American businessman to a restaurant in New York. The text is a food invitation as the Saudi culture mainly revolves around food and generosity; the text would reflect many intercultural encounters. The intercultural assignment aimed to shift readers from being mere passive readers to be active producers of intercultural texts. While the participants would find it helpful to scaffold on the genre of the text, they can express their ideological choices and intercultural competence in written form. They would critically read the texts and write similar texts at home because there would not be any time limitation and they could analyze the text with more care without any pressure. Students were given one week to work on and submit the assignment. As ungraded extracurricular activity, fifteen students did the intercultural assignments, which were compiled in the students' portfolios. Then, the intercultural assignments were coded as (IAN) where (I) stands for Intercultural, (A) for Assignment and (n) for the sequence number of a participant (1-15).

Then semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants. The semi-structured interviews provide data for the intertextual analysis (Bazerman, 2004). It consists of two parts. The first part asks about the participants' personal background. This part includes names (optional), age and home city. The second part is four open questions that examine their conception of culture in a global world, its importance, intercultural experience in English language, and their intercultural challenges in case they have been abroad. Fifteen students were interviewed for about five minutes each. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and coded with IEn (e.g. IE3) where (I) stands for Intercultural, (E) for Experience and (n) for the student sequence number (1-15).

3.3 Procedures for Data Analysis

Intercultural competence can be operationalised as intercultural discourses evident in the world of the text (Said, 1975). To identify a discourse, the analysis moves within three levels of analysis (Janks, 1997): intercultural textual analysis, intercultural discourse analysis and intercultural CDA. Textual analysis focuses on theme identification. In discourse analysis, the identified themes are interpreted with a specific focus on the students' intercultural experience. At the CDA level, the focus of analysis is on the

intercultural competence of 'Self' and 'Others'. The three levels of analysis are then combined before getting a discourse in its final form (see **Figure 1**).

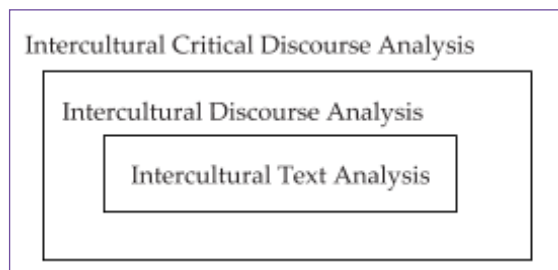


Figure 1. Discourse as [intercultural] social practice (adapted from Fairclough, 1995, p. 59)

The intercultural text analysis helps in describing the evident themes in intercultural texts. In intercultural writings, students' choices of discourses are a matter of 'vocabulary' and 'grammar'. To analyze how intercultural identities are represented, Fairclough (1995) uses what he calls "the structuring of propositions" (p. 104), in which a clause corresponds to a proposition.

At intercultural discourse analysis, the identified intercultural themes are shaped by the discursive practice to reveal the interpretative aspect of a discourse. The intercultural discourse analysis includes analysis of the processes of text production and intertextuality. Students' assignments would be produced in ways that reflect students' level of intercultural competence. Students can be given a written task (Perry & Southwell, 2011) as an assignment. In producing such texts, they can go through certain processes of writing intercultural texts including drafting and editing. In such a case, the interests served by the text may be apparent (Janks, 1997). Fairclough (1989) calls our attention to the unconscious motivation and positions that students have for writing intercultural texts where "some discrepancy may arise between the producer's common-sense (ideological) representations of the world and the world itself" (p. 169). By looking at how specific texts draw on earlier meaning formations and how they mix different discourses, a researcher can investigate how discourses are reproduced, articulated together in intercultural texts and how they are changed (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Intertextual analysis links intercultural texts with other texts (Bazerman, 2004). To this end, students were interviewed about their experience of intercultural communication.

Intercultural critical discourse analysis involves contextualization at the level of sociocultural practice. In intercultural communication, ideology refers to the construction of intercultural social identities that "are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 87). These intercultural ideological practices work through the circulation of ideas, representations and portrayals of social reality (Richardson, 2006). These practices can be explained in the form of evident discourses in the context of intercultural discourse as 'Self' and 'Others' intercultural competence.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Intercultural competence is operationalised as intercultural attitude, intercultural knowledge, and intercultural skills.

4.1 Intercultural Attitude

The data analysis shows that the participants are closed within their culture with no tendency to challenge the intercultural text and discover other cultures.

The analysis shows discourse of negative cultural stereotyping as it is evident in the following excerpt.

EXCERPT 1

The Arab businessman was surprised from their culture. They don't bring dates and coffee before food and they bring food quickly. They eat sandwiches and drink juice. They don't eat meat and rice. (IA-3)

They do not drink coffee and tea as in Arabic culture. (IA-12)

At the dinner table, everything was not delicious because Arab don't eat pork. (IA-14)

The Middle East businessman expected that he will have a long conversation with the American and a lot of food. (IA-6)

The Middle East businessman expected a long conversation, but he did not.. The food was ready earlier and less than he thought. After food finished, the invitation and the conversation over. (IA-4)

The Americans had less conversation. (IA-15)

the dinner was served. It was fastfood and the Arab did not like the food where Americans serve tea only. (IA-9)

In this excerpt, another social actor is associated with generalization; this is manifested in the use of pronoun *they*, *their culture*, and *Americans*. These social actors were associated with negative material processes as 'facts' in the present simple tense such as *don't bring*, and *don't eat*. On the contrary, 'Self' social actor is represented without generalization; this is manifested in the use of singular e.g. *Arab businessman*, *Middle East businessman* and the pronoun *he*. This 'Self' actor is associated with mental processes in the past tense such as *thought*, *expected*, and *surprised*.

One participant has direct negative attitude towards 'Others' cultures as it is evident in the following excerpt.

EXCERPT 2

two cultures affect you. It is not important because you should be proud of yours and you don't have other cultures. (IE-1)

This quotation shows that this participant is not open to other cultures. He reflects no curiosity and discovery toward other cultures. Again, it indicates no space for tolerating ambiguity.

The analysis also shows discourse of intercultural misunderstanding; this is manifested in the form of imposing 'Self' culture on 'Others' and expecting 'Others' to adopt 'Self' culture as it is evident in the following excerpt.

EXCERPT 3

The dinner table was smaller than the usual. (IA-1)
 The Middle-East businessman was surprised about the many questions about the wealth in Arab countries. (IA-9)
 The Middle-East businessman expected to be served with dates and coffee, but the food came, and they started eating. (IA-7)
 When they want to pay the bill, the American businessman paid just his bill. (IA-13)
 but I note something, before dinner, he offered him coffee... then salad.. pizza and big Coca cola. (IA-2)
 he cannot use his phone at the restaurant even he is a foreign businessman. (IA-1)

In this excerpt, 'Self' social actor is associated with mental processes such as *note, wondered, cannot use, thought, and surprised*. Similarly, 'Others' social actor was associated with comparison such as *smaller than usual*; modality such as *just his bill*.

Although the context is in favour of the other culture, the analysis reveals that the participants impose 'Self' culture on other culture and expecting other culture to adopt 'Self' culture as it is evident in the following excerpt.

EXCERPT 4

he [the Middle Eastern Businessman]surprised that the American gave him the menu and made him order what he wants. (IA-5)
 When the Middle-Eastern businessman finished his plate, he wants more, but he can't ask the American. (IA-14)
 They brought the food quickly. After he finished the tea, they did not have interesting conversation (IA-1).
 The Middle-Eastern businessman was surprised when the food was brought early. He said to the American businessman, "I can't eat meat" said the Middle-Eastern businessman surprisingly. (IA-11)

This discourse is manifested in mental processes such as *surprised*; material processes such as *gave, made him order*; modality such as *can't*. 'Self' social actor was also associated with adverbs such as *surprisingly, surprised, got surprised*; mental processes such as *wondered, thought, expected*. These choices represent intercultural misunderstanding among the intercultural social actors.

Yet, there was a sense of positive intercultural attitude in the perception of a participant as it is evident in the following excerpt:

EXCERPT 5

The Indian culture is good. They have many cultures like: they greet by head and hand; some of Indian people eat on tables (IE-11)

This intertextual analysis reveals that this participant has 'good' attitude about Indian culture as he has been to India. This finding indicates the importance of a visit abroad for enhancing intercultural competence among students. Although many Indians are working in Saudi Arabia, it is found that recontextualisation has positive impact for intercultural attitude.

4.2 Intercultural Knowledge

The data analysis reveals discourse of 'Self' intercultural unawareness. Eight participants did not respond to the question about conception of culture in a global world. It indicates that these participants lack intercultural self-awareness. Five participants reported more with 'Self' culture and less with 'Others' cultures as it is evident in the following excerpt:

EXCERPT 6

the Arabic culture means habits that allow to do good thing (IE-3)
I wear thoab (Arab dress) and drinking coffee and tea (IE-6)
in Saudi Arabia, men wear thoab and also women don't drive (IE-1)
Smile to other people. Say bismi Allah (in the name of Allah) before eating (IE-9)
Culture is the way we act, the way we live with own life. Saudi people wear white piece of clothes called thoab. (IE-14)

As it is evident in this excerpt, the participants revolve around their 'Self' culture. Regardless of any aspect of culture such as food, clothes or customs; it seems that these participants see the world from the point of their own culture.

The data analysis also reveals lack of deep intercultural knowledge. In response to their conception of intercultural awareness, seven participants reported that they do not know about intercultural awareness. Other five participants understand that intercultural awareness is to know 'Others' as it is evident in the following excerpt.

EXCERPT 7

I think it is knowing something about other countries and people. (IE-2)
it is important because when you travel to another country and you know nothing about their culture, you will be in trouble. (IE-7)
culture one has to go another country facing other cultures. it is important because you must interact with other people and cultures. (IE-10)
to have many information about culture in the world.. it will help you to communicate with others and you can know where a person from. (IE-8)
I need learning culture of the United States because I want to speak with people. (IE-13)

As it is evident in this excerpt, these participants revolve around understanding 'Others' cultures; something that might neglect self-awareness.

Two participants understand that intercultural awareness refers to language and social media networks as it is evident in the following excerpt.

EXCERPT 8

it is in the newspapers, twitter and facebook (IE-4)

In English and Arabic; I am speaking English and Arabic (IE-12)

In response to their intercultural challenges, thirteen participants reported that they have not travelled outside Saudi Arabia though they wish to. Yet, two participants have been to other countries; they faced some cultural challenges as it is evident in the following excerpt

EXCERPT 9

I visited America, they like to live in big cities..women drive cars... I faced cultural challenge when I have been in America like different food (IE-5)

I have visited India. I faced many cultural challenges, the culture of religions... In India, I faced many cultural changes.. in the wedding, men and women have party together. Every adult man has girlfriend." (IE-11)

These two participants understand that intercultural awareness is to know 'Self' and 'Others' cultures as it is evident in the following excerpt.

EXCERPT 10

it is a combination of local culture and foreign culture. (IE-11)

intercultural (awareness) is very important... because the Saudi culture is different from the American culture like in what we wear and how we speak." (IE-5)

In short, thirteen participants show lack of intercultural knowledge. Either they are confined to their 'Self' culture or they are revolved around other culture. It is only those two participants who had abroad visits reflect reasonable intercultural knowledge.

4.3 Intercultural Skills

Written intercultural skills are manifested in the form of the participants' ability to analyze, interpret and relate in intercultural texts. The participants were given the intercultural assignment to analyze and interpret the intercultural embedded messages. By writing an encounter discourse to the disseminated discourses in the intercultural assignment, the participants are expected to 'relate' and express their intercultural skills. These skills can be revealed through discourses.

The data analysis reveals conflicting intercultural identities. Discourse of 'Self' regional representation vis-à-vis 'Others' national representation was evident in the students' reflective writings. These competing discourses were identified through the use of social actors or the participants of some clauses as it is manifested in the following examples.

EXCERPT 11

The Middle-East businessman will be late a little bit time. (IA-7)
 the Middle-East business man will come a little bit late. (IA-15)
 The Middle-East businessman was late for the invitation. (IA-12)
 The American man was angry with the Arab man because of
 being late. (IA-1)
 why you are late as we already ate the dinner. (IA-13)
 The two brothers from the Middle East came late. (IA-14)

As it is evident in these examples, 'Self' social actor is represented as *Middle Eastern businessman*, *Middle East businessman*, *Arab man*, *the Eastern*, and *the two brothers from the Middle East*. As it is repeated in several identified discourses, the participants used the term *Middle-Eastern businessman* many times; this use can be explained as the participants replied to the question of the assignment in which the 'Self' social actor was represented, as the original text, *Middle-Eastern businessman*. Few participants used the term *Arab man* and *Arab businessman*. Another participant used the same participant *The two brothers from the Middle East* which was represented in the reading passage. This use indicates that the participants do not employ linguistic tools to overcome the constructed social actors of the intercultural assignment.

'Others' social actor is represented as the *American (man)*, *the American businessman* and *Americans* as it is manifested in the following examples.

EXCERPT 12

The American asked the Eastern, (IA-2)
 The American man was angry with the Arab man. (IA-1)
 He said to the American businessman, (IA-9)
 the American businessman paid just his bill (IA-6)

'Others' social actor is mainly represented as the American as it is evident in these and other examples disseminated in the analysis. Although *American businessman* was foregrounded in the question of the assignment, the participants frequently used the term *the American* as social actor. Such use reflects generalization of social actor regardless of the business communicative event.

The analysis also shows conflicting discourses of 'Self' lateness and 'Others' punctuality. Discourse of 'Self' lateness is revealed through the tool of 'circumstances'; i.e., prepositional phrases of time and adverb; presuppositions and modals, i.e., future tense in a story telling; and material processes as it is evident in the following excerpt:

EXCERPT 13

The middle-eastern businessman will be late a little bit time. (IA-7)
 The middle-eastern businessman will come a little bit late. (IA-12)
 He was late for the invitation. (IA-4)
 the Arab man because of being late (IA-5).
 why you are late as we already ate the dinner. (IA-13)
 The middle-eastern businessman did not come on time. they already
 ate the food. (IA-11)
 They came late. They did not come on time. (IA-1)
 The American man waited the Arabian for long time. Lately, the
 Arabian came (IA-5).
 did not come on time; he came 10 minutes later from the
 appointment. (IA-7)
 The middle-eastern businessman came late not on time. (IA-2)
 The Middle-East businessman thought the dinner will be late. (IA-11)

This discourse is manifested in adverbs of time like *late*, *not on time*, *a little bit late*, *did not come on time*, *10 minutes later*, *being late*, *already*, and *late not on time*. These expressions show that discourse of 'Self' lateness is expressed in the participants' representation of their 'Self' identity. Similarly, the participants used future tense in a story telling and the relational process to reflect their presupposition about 'Self' lateness. This is manifested in modals like *will be* and *will come* and the relational process *was*. One participant associated 'Self' lateness with past continuous tense as in *being late*. 'Self' social actors are also associated with material processes such as *came*, *arrived* and *knocked*. 'Self' lateness was also indirectly expressed in the use of passive form as in *was finished*. In fact, Arab culture deals with time in terms of range rather than specific time.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings show that the participants are confined to their similar tribal bonds. These findings indicate that intercultural competence is underdeveloped in the students' reflective writings. Thirteen participants clearly show lack of intercultural competence.

Some participants expressed negative intercultural attitude. They are demotivated to learn 'Others' culture as they feel that the other culture would affect their local culture. This finding is in agreement with Fageeh's (2011) call for a comparative perspective as a pedagogical means of raising a motivation for learning the culture of English. It is also found that the participants are eager to exchange their 'Self' culture with 'Others' culture on the ground of their 'Self' culture first. This finding is in agreement with Aldosari (2013), who found that the Saudi students' background heritage affected their performance in cross-cultural competence. Al Musaiter (2015) found that the negative stereotypes of both Saudi and American people blocked the interaction between them.

Most of the participants lack intercultural knowledge. These participants either revolve around their 'Self' identity or 'Others' identity. This lack of

intercultural competence is in agreement with previous research which calls for highlighting the intercultural element in EFL teaching and learning (Ahmad, 2015). Al-Jarf (2004) found that EFL Saudi students developed global perspective and writing communication skills when they interacted online with Ukrainian and Russian students. Similarly, Benahnia (2014) emphasized that the concept of identity can be used as a vehicle towards a better understanding and accepting 'Others'. Elyas (2014) found that EFL Saudi students aligned themselves with globalisation, the information age and individuality. Al Musaiteer (2015) found that Saudi students in America were more engaged with Americans who respect their culture and religion, and they were not engaged when they felt that Saudi identity was threatened.

Most of the participants lack intercultural skills. In general, the participants were unable to analyze, interpret and relate the intercultural assignment. This finding shows the potential for introducing CDA analytical tools to the minds and hands of our students. CDA would play an important role in increasing high level of intercultural awareness among our students. Tools of CDA include naming the social actors, modality, circumstances and choice of verbal processes. The use of 'social actors' would enhance intercultural identities. These findings are in agreement with (Rahimi, 2013) who recommended CDA techniques to help students have a deeper understanding of reading texts. Modality is another effective tool in enhancing positive attitude in intercultural communication.

Although the fifteen participants have intermediate linguistic level of English language, only two participants have a reasonable level of intercultural competence. It is found that these two participants have been abroad to study English language in their overseas visits to America and India. This finding is in agreement with Benahnia's (2014) recommendation of the impact of intercultural exchange among various international students. The finding, however is not in agreement with (Taj, 2017), who found that EFL Saudi students in Britain need identity awareness; something indicates that exchange programs without identity awareness are not sufficient for intercultural competence.

The findings call for an intercultural turn in English language teaching. Language teachers can be equipped with CDA tools for them to use in their reading and writing classes. They can select appropriate simplified terms of CDA to analyze intercultural issues embedded in intercultural texts (Amari, 2015; Hazaea & Alzubi, 2017; Yelubayeva & Zhukova, 2015).

6. CONCLUSION

The article investigated intercultural competence (intercultural attitude, intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills) as evident discourses in the students' baseline portfolios. EFL Saudi Students with intermediate level were selected for an enrichment critical reading class in the Preparatory Year of Najran University. An empirical qualitative research design was used to analyze the baseline data using the ideological critique of CDA. Culture is operationalised as intercultural discourses that can be revealed at three levels of analysis: intercultural textual analysis, intercultural discourse analysis

and intercultural critical discourse analysis. The data analysis showed that although the participants had developed linguistic skills, they lacked intercultural competence in their intercultural writings. They expressed negative intercultural attitude, inappropriate intercultural knowledge, and ineffective use of linguistic tools to enhance intercultural communication.

This article has contributed to CDA research for intercultural communication. It recommends introducing CDA to EFL reading and writing classes for the sake of fostering intercultural awareness among EFL students. To promote intercultural awareness, a teacher has to teach critical reading courses along with creative writing courses. The teacher-researcher has interest in CDA; yet teachers need to be trained for developing teaching strategies that promote intercultural awareness through CDA. Subsequently, students can be equipped with CDA analytical tools to help them analyze and interpret intercultural messages embedded in intercultural texts. Then, they can creatively write intercultural texts.

CDA work is interpretative in nature; other interpretations might be revealed. The findings are limited to the 'world' of the collected texts. The teacher-researcher shares the cultural codes with the participants; it might affect the production of the texts. As I am the target reader of the participants' reflective writings, students' writings might be different in case the teacher-researcher was British or American. Another limitation is that the participants are only males. While these are some limitations of the article, they are recommendations for further research on intercultural communication among females in the Saudi context as well as gender differences in EFL contexts.

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APPENDIX

INTERCULTURAL ASSIGNMENT

NAME: _____ ACADEMIC N^o: _____

Analyze the passage critically and answer the question that follows: (Reading Interactions 1 by Kirn & Hartmann 2012, p. 116).

A Middle-Eastern businessman and his brother invited an American guest to their family home for dinner. The American got there on time and enjoyed the interesting conversation, the tea, and the attention. But as time passed, he got very hungry. Finally, he politely whispered to his host, "Excuse me, but are we going to eat dinner?"

"Of course!" answered his host. "We usually serve the evening meal around 9:00, and when we have guests, we enjoy the long conversation before dinner."

At the dinner table everything was delicious, and the hungry American guest ate quickly. He emptied his plate, and his host put more food on it. As soon as he cleaned his plate a second time, the host gave him more. After several plates of food, he could eat no more. He was going to burst! "Please, please, please — don't give me any more food," he begged them. "I finished the food on this plate, but I can't eat another bite!"

Even then, his host insisted. The guest accepted a little more and ate it with difficulty. Finally, the supper dishes were removed. There was more conversation — with more tea and coffee. At about midnight, the server brought a pitcher of ice water. The tired American knew it was OK to thank his hosts and leave.

Q: Write a similar passage about an American businessman inviting a Middle Eastern businessman to an international restaurant in New York. Keep in mind the intercultural aspects wherever it is possible.

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