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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN INSTRUCTORS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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En calidad de docente tutor(a) de la Facultad de Educación, Turismo, Artes y Humanidades de la Universidad Laica "Eloy Alfaro" de Manabí, CERTIFICO:

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La presente investigación ha sido desarrollada en apego al cumplimiento de los requisitos académicos exigidos por el Reglamento de Régimen Académico y en concordancia con los lineamientos internos de la opción de titulación en mención, reuniendo y cumpliendo con los méritos académicos, científicos y formales, y la originalidad del mismo, requisitos suficientes para ser sometida a la evaluación del tribunal de titulación que designe la autoridad competente.

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PROPIEDAD INTELECTUAL

Título del Trabajo de Investigación:

Intercultural Competence in Instructors of English as a Foreign Language

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Fecha de Finalización: 22 de julio del 2024

Descripción del Trabajo:

El presente trabajo de investigación tiene como objetivo determinar la evolución de la competencia intercultural de profesores de inglés en Manta-Ecuador. Este estudio está sustentado en una metodología de paradigma posmoderno y el enfoque de investigación educativa mixta.

Declaración de Autoría:

Nosotras, María Belén Sabando Moreira, con número de identificación 1317226031, Jennifer Stefania Franco Catagua con número de identificación 1316754835, declaramos que somos las autoras originales y Jhonny Saulo Villafuerte Holguín, con número de identificación 1305799072, Edder Agustín Intriago Palacios con número de identificación 1308730868, declaramos que somos coautores, en calidad de tutor del trabajo de investigación titulado **"Intercultural Competence in Instructors of English as a Foreign Language"**. Este trabajo es resultado del esfuerzo intelectual y no ha sido copiado ni plagiado en ninguna de sus partes.

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the evolution of the intercultural competence of English language instructors in Manta-Ecuador. It uses the postmodern paradigm and the mixed educational research approach. The participants are 311 instructors working in elementary educational public institutions. The instruments used are open-ended interviews, a survey, and contextualized observation. The results characterize the participants' perceptions of their intercultural competence and contrast with the interviews and teaching practice observations. The findings show high and medium knowledge and intercultural competencies levels. They emphasize the complex, multifaceted nature of intercultural competence and the

contribution of training and teaching practice for developing instructors' professional profiles. It concludes that Ecuadorian EFL instructors report a weakness in their intercultural competence that requires pedagogical support.

Keywords: Intercultural competence, diversity cultural, English instructors, public schools, educational research, instruments.

INTRODUCTION

The exploration of the Ecuadorian educational system shows multicultural diversity in this nation, which demands teachers capable of working in such socio conditions.

Researchers such as Dietz (2018) argue that the relationships between larger and smaller populations in a nation are because of people culture, ethnicity, language, religion, or nationality. Thus, diversity shows numerous cultural characteristics, ethnicity, linguistic, religious, and national identities. Vernimmen (2019) affirms that it is essential to consolidate programs, projects, and works that support more egalitarian relations within the sociocultural development framework and intercultural dialogue in a community. Galimberti et al. (2019) state that educators must be willing to work with ethnically diverse students to provide a multicultural curriculum. Thus, instructors must think critically about students, learn about their circumstances, create democratic classrooms, and reflect on cultural issues. Therefore, there is a need for teachers who can work with groups of students from different cultural backgrounds.

According to Marzulina (2021), the current generation must acquire English language proficiency to access to contemporary literature, media, global communication, and work in the current and future eras. However, Chumana (2022) affirms that the Ecuadorian education policy promotes teaching models to ensure good conditions in educational institutions and develop plans for teachers and the whole education community.

The Ecuadorian Population Census of 2010 shows that people identify themselves according to their culture and customs, resulting in 71.9% as mestizo, followed by 7.4% as Montubio, 7.2% Afro-descendant, 7.0% indigenous, 6.1% white, and 0.4% other ethnicities minorities. Data from the 2022 census shows that most of the immigrant population in the Ecuadorian territory is from Venezuela, followed by Colombia, with a high number from Spain, Peru, the United States, and Cuba. These are factors that ratify to Ecuador as a country with a diverse population.

The authors highlight the relevance of promotion and dialogue about educational inclusion among students for understanding the world. Thus, classrooms should focus on encouraging connections and integrating people to create a future society that is diverse and free of discrimination. Thus, the study begins with a theoretical review of the following constructs (1) Intercultural competence, (2) English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction and the intercultural competence, and (3) Relevance of instructors' intercultural competence development. The research questions that guide the study are:

1. What are the instructors' knowledge and disposition before intercultural diversity in EFL classrooms?

2. What are the instructors' knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of interculturality?

3. What are the Ecuadorian instructors' experiences concerning interculturality in the elementary school?

The study aims to determine the intercultural competence of English language instructors in Manta Ecuador.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Intercultural competence

Guilherme (2000) affirms that intercultural competence is the ability to interact effectively with people from other cultures that are different from one's own. However, Alred (2002) defines intercultural competence as the ability to change knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, intending to be open to learning about other cultures. It includes the knowledge, affective, and behavioral aspects involved in reaching an effective interaction in different multicultural environments. The ability to interact implies knowledge of diverse cultures and the relevance of adapting and understanding cultural differences in effective communication. Meanwhile, Byram et al. (2002) affirm that the acquisition of intercultural competence is a process that never finishes for two reasons: (a) It is impossible to know in advance the knowledge required in interaction with people belonging to diverse cultures, and (b) A person's social identities and values change over time as they interact with other social groups. In addition, Barletta (2009) argues that intercultural competence is related to a person's ability to use their knowledge in multicultural contexts.

According to Díaz et al. (2012), some ways advocate for intercultural competence in foreign language instruction. Thus, globalization is vital for generalizing standard norms related to English language instruction. However, as a resistance to this policy, people are moving towards rescuing local values and traditions.

According to Botero (2017), intercultural competence contributes to 1) overcoming distrust in the imagination, glimpses of judgments and superficial visions, 2) Building narrative imagination through the equity of diverse cultures, 3) Promoting constructive dialogue of narratives to argue debates and cultural confrontations, 4) Stimulates metacognition based on the exchange of communication and replicating experiences, and 5) Reaffirms communication with others, understands the need to return to one's own culture, analyze it and use it to make one's own. other.

On the other hand, Avgousti (2018) emphasizes that there has been fundamental progress in telecollaboration programs for students who are trained for the practical learning of the second language when they develop their intercultural competencies. Subsequently, Sotelino et al. (2019), thanks to the promotion of intercultural competencies, contributed significantly to an intercultural project and learning for academic guidance activities aimed at migrants; recommendations to optimize the learning processes of students from different cultures, initiatives in the field of leisure and free time; design and implementation of awareness, sensitization, and information campaigns.

In the words of Peña et al (2019) indicate that for future projection, the training of foreign language teachers in intercultural competence will no longer train users of the linguistic code but will help establish cosmopolitan individuals who exercise responsible citizenship, which allows them to learn the language. in the classroom, act in the world, and participate in intercultural dialogue and mediation. Meanwhile, Dai (2020), according to his study, has made a substantial contribution to the design of sequence activities from easier to more difficult, structuring a more focused and progressive reflection, moving from superficial learning or specific cultural knowledge to deeper levels of learning. Mayer et al. (2024) stated that people can increase their intercultural competence by having previous knowledge of their culture.

2.2. English as a Foreign Language instruction and the intercultural competence

Teaching English as a foreign language can also address intercultural competence since it comes from a culture different from one's own and can enrich the learning experience of people. Therefore, below is a compilation of studies on research in the teaching of English as a foreign language. In addition, August et al. (2006) consider that a person is bilingual when they speak a

language more than the native language, that is, it must be different from that of the social group in which they are immersed; and can handle the source language as a native.

According to Walsh (2007), Interculturality goes beyond respect, tolerance, and recognition of diversity; promotes a social-political process aimed at the construction of societies, and relationships, especially new living conditions. They emphasize economic conditions and those that have to do with the cosmology of life in general, including knowledge and wisdom, ancestral memory, the relationship with Mother Nature, as well as spirituality. Álvarez (2011) mentions that when teaching a new language, you should never ignore the context in which it is spoken, you should forget the old teaching methods and always propose contextualized activities where the new language is included with the culture. It must be kept in mind that language is an instrument of communication and that students must recognize the sociocultural reality found in speech acts. However, Almécija (2012) explains that foreign language students must learn the culture, not as a component foreign to the general language learning process, but as the central base or point on which exercises, practices, and situations are built. or conversational skills, which help improve their communication capacity in a cultural context.

Lopez (2016) mentions that technology has been an essential advance in the fields of knowledge, and the communicative theory of English gives great value to English as a system whose main function is communication, emphasizing the relationship between linguistic aspects and the context in which the communication exchange takes place. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2016) indicates that the National Curriculum has made a notable contribution to the teaching of the English language and is based on five basic principles: communicative approach, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), international standards, thinking skills, and participant-centered approaches. Likewise, Bustillo et al. (2017) affirm the use of games has contributed beneficially, and these games can be infinite and enriching in the communicative skills of English and especially in listening skills.

According to West (2018), he states that thanks to an active methodology it effectively contributes to the teaching of the English language and the motivation of students, and they can also prepare for debates and conversations in class. In the same way, the Ministry of Education (2019) states that the Ecuadorian curriculum has made a substantial contribution, especially in English, since it mentions the need to learn a foreign language to communicate easily with people from different countries, in this way, an intercultural environment is also built.

On the other hand, Cambridge English (2021) states that the MCE program significantly helps the present the English language, because it is a substantial regulator for the linguistic skills of people worldwide. In addition, the MCE favors the classification of English level according to its scale that starts from a level A1, which is a basic range in English, to a C2, which refers to those who are dominant in the language.

2.3. Relevance of instructors' intercultural competence development
Intercultural competence is increasingly relevant in teaching English as a foreign language. Through intercultural competence it allows effective and appropriate communication with people from diverse cultures, likewise, teachers who develop intercultural communicative competence in their students can help them develop acceptance, respect, and different values between members of other cultures. On the other hand, Sánchez (2015) explains that everyone who has studied a foreign language knows that it is not just a process of learning grammatical rules, vocabulary, or conversational models.

Thus, when people communicate a message, they are also exposed to the culture, and we become participants in intercultural encounters. However, it is necessary to teach about other cultures, but it is also essential to encourage critical reflection and investigate cultural diversity, aimed at intercultural approaches in education. For that reason, Byram et al. (2001) argue that the role of

the teacher is not to provide exhaustive information and try to introduce foreign communities into the classroom so that students can engage in direct learning. Its true mission is to facilitate students' interactions with aspects of another society and its culture, relativize their understanding of their cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors, and encourage them to explore those around them, both inside and outside their society or culture.

As stated by the Cervantes Institute (2002), Communication is directed to the entire community. As social actors, everyone develops relationships with various overlapping social groups that collectively define their identity. One of the fundamental objectives of language education in an intercultural approach is to promote the positive development of students' sense of personality and identity, in response to the enriching experience of facing what is different in the educational fields of language and culture. Based on that statement, it is necessary to know that education and intercultural education are fundamental for learning a foreign language, and for personal development and establishing the construction of a more inclusive society.

On the contrary, Iglesias (2003) states that the development of intercultural competence in the foreign language classroom is not only the acquisition of knowledge of other cultures, nor is it obtaining the ability to behave appropriately in that culture. Developing intercultural competence requires combining a specific cultural approach, emphasizing the understanding of a subjective culture, with a general cultural approach involving issues of ethnocentrism, awareness of one's own culture, and general adaptation strategies. However, it is crucial to improve the basis of intercultural competence in foreign language classrooms because students need to be prepared to face and adapt to cultural and linguistic challenges in an increasingly interconnected world. Therefore, Barros et al. (2012) argue that there is an urgent need to lay a stronger foundation for the development of intercultural competence in foreign language classrooms.

UNESCO (2015) expresses the relevance of culture for learning in the Cultural Policy Declaration, expressing that culture gives human beings the ability to reflect on themselves. Furthermore, through culture one recognizes oneself and realizes that it is an unfinished project, one that questions one's achievements, tirelessly seeks new meanings, and creates works that transcend oneself. For this reason, the teaching of culture is considered an inherent element of the foreign language because it helps students relate to a new world or environment in which they perceive new and significant experiences at a social level, which leads to creating their criteria.

In previous studies related to this research, the authors quote the work Aristulle & Paoloni-Stente (2019) affirms that training is crucial for professional development and improving teaching effectiveness, especially in developing intercultural competence in the classroom. Seminars are an effective way to provide this training and contribute to educators' practice. In addition, the work of Boyes & Villafuerte (2019) showed that the vertical communication style persists in the context of professional training in Ecuadorian universities. Studies in Colombia by Rojas and Barreto (2019) examined the perceptions of three English teachers in a private language center about peer counseling as a professional activity, developing findings that suggest mentoring is an essential strategy to increase intercultural competence. Besides, Mayer et al. (2024) determined that prior knowledge of other people's cultures increases awareness and ultimately the intercultural skills of students. They claim that anticipating students' knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity contributes to the development of communication skills.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research study subscribed to the postmodern paradigm. It used a mixed research methodology, including the following data collection instruments: interviews, surveys or tests, and decontextualized observation.

Participants. – They are 311 instructors and academic administrators working in different educational institutions in the provinces of Esmeraldas and Manabí. Their ages are between 32-55 years. Furthermore, participants will remain anonymous. Data is only used for educational purposes and will never be commercialized. Subsequently, each participant analyzed and signed a consent form to execute each research instrument and did not receive any financial benefit for being involved in this educational project.

Instruments

The instruments used in this research are:

1. Interviews. - The purpose of the instrument is to collect information and opinions from EFL instructors working in public schools in Ecuador. It consists of 10 semi-structured questions about the intercultural context in the elementary English language classes to analyze them and to provide suggestions for improving learning environments. A panel of professors affiliated with the University ULEAM in Ecuador evaluated the instrument. They recommended reducing the number of questions from 14 in the original version to 10 in the final version according to the categories (1) Knowledge of Cultural Diversity, (2) Teacher Training, (3) Values, (4) Teaching practice, (5) Presence of cultural diversity. The interviews consisted of virtually, using the Zoom platform. The time required is 45 minutes per interview, in which three teachers participated, one teacher per session. The interviewers agreed to record their opinions.

2. Likert scale. - The purpose of the instrument is to assess the strength and direction of teachers' attitudes about intercultural competence in EFL classes. The 30 EFL teachers can mark one of the alternative answers from totally disagree to agree. A panel of experts integrated with researchers affiliated with the university ULEAM evaluated the instrument. They are experts in Education, EFL instruction, and Didactics. They recommended revising the redaction of items to warranty the participants' questions comprehension. The instrument execution used Google Forms. It took 4-7 minutes to complete the form.

3. Decontextualized observation form. – Its purpose is to collect information based on the educational experiences of the participants in Ecuador. A panel of experts examined the instrument. The experts affiliated with the Ecuadorian university ULEAM. They recommended revising the observation categories according to the teaching practices in the face of the cultural diversity of each student. The research team classified the evidence using the categories of communication styles: aggressive, passive-aggressive, authoritarian, and discrimination. On the other hand, this instrument also collects information from the categories of instructors' manners as fairness and openness to ethnic differences and organizes them using the subcategories (a) high, (b) medium, and (c) low. The research team supervised the process of observations. The total of observations was 20.

Process:

Stage 1. -The research team selected the participants and prepared the instruments for information and data collection.

Stage 2. - The researcher's team executed the open-ended interviews with semi-structured questions aimed at teachers from different schools in Ecuador determined through the analysis and interpretation of each response given.

Stage 3.- A Likert scale questionnaire is addressed through data collection using a Google form. Subsequently, the research team executed a frequency analysis from completely disagree to agree. This stage lasted one month.

Stage 4. – A decontextualized observation form collected researchers' experiences in educational institutions located in Canton Manta, Ecuador. The research team analyzed based on the interpretation and position of the researchers. The stage execution took two months. The observations registered were 20.

Stage 5.- Writing the information of the research and analysis of data and information.

4. RESULTS

The results presentation follows the order of the research questions.

In answer to question 1. - What is the EFL participants' knowledge and disposition before intercultural diversity in EFL classrooms?

Table 1 shows the participants' perceptions about interculturality practice at the elementary school. The answers given were analyzed using the following categorical tree.

Category 1: Cultural Diversity. – Álvarez (2013) defines cultural diversity as differences in geographic areas where various ethnic groups coexist. It also includes linguistic and religious variations. Subcategories used are high, medium, and low.

Category 2: Teacher Training. -European University (2023) states that teacher training encompasses all policies and procedures designed to prepare teachers to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to work effectively in the classroom and the school community.

Category 3: Values. – Gomez (2017) expresses that values are verbalized social mechanisms that allow the person to acquire a moral understanding of their decisions and gradually implement them in the best way.

Category 4: Teaching practice. – Páez et al. (2018) argue that the education curriculum and teaching practice are considered the core, focus, and resources that include a network of content, regulations, and methods for teaching.

Category 5: Presence of cultural diversity. – Duran (2010) states that in society, there is a presence of different ethnicities and nationalities where they share people's cultural diversity, in which creeds, ideologies, customs, and clothing.

In answer to question 2: What are the participants' experiences concerning interculturality in elementary school? Table 1 shows the voices of 3 participants asked about their experiences concerning intercultural in elementary school.

Table 1. Participants' experiences concerning intercultural in elementary school.

Category	Evidence	Subcategory
1. Knowledge of cultural diversity	S1_ 0:04:41 "The different types of culture that coexist in the same region or country and that share their traditions and way of being always with due respect.	High
	S2_ 0:03:42 "To know different cultural habits of a territory."	Medium
	S3_ 0:02.58 "It is the variety of cultures that exist within social groups and are part of our environment."	High
2. Teacher training	S1_ 0:05:27 "Training in itself on cultural diversity, but if I like to read and in the content of the books of tenth grade. I have been able to learn about the subject".	Medium
		Low

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	S2_ 0:04:21 "I have not received training on cultural diversity. All I acquired by myself." **S3_ 0:4:00** "A few years ago, I received training on cultural diversity, where I highlighted the values and educational inclusion."	High
3. Values	**S1_0:05:51** "I have a student from the highlands because they stayed living in this location."	High
	S1_0:07:18 "I also have students from Venezuela."	High
	S2_ 0:05:29 "students live in Montecristi today, a place plenty of commerce. There are students from that Sierra region living for several years here. For example, a student from Riobamba. They have different pronunciation and accent."	High
	S3_ 0:5:30 "I have a student from the province Esmeraldas. I also have foreigner students. They came from Venezuelans for economic reasons. Now, they are part of our classroom."	High
3. Values	**S1_0:15:15** "It is necessary to learn about other cultures. Another practice means another share."	Medium
	S2_ 0:11:14 "We must respect the dress of the people from the highland region, their dialect, behavior, way of being, get involved and respect their culture."	High
	S3_ 0:15:21 "Admire the type of dress. To take care of the heritages of each culture. Not to judge different ideologies or religions".	High
3. Values	**S1_0:16:07** "Of course. I do not allow any kind of discrimination in the class. I plan very well my classes in advance to avoid hurting the susceptibility of any children from another culture."	High
	S2_ 0:12:35 "It is important to respect our country and the diverse cultures that emerge in it. Another feasible point is that in Ecuador, we are 18 million inhabitants. We do not classify ourselves by origins. The constitution of the republic mentions that we are all equal with due respect before the laws."	High
	S3_0:15:21 "We are all human beings regardless of culture or nationality, that is why we must be respectful."	Medium
4. Teaching practice	**S1_0:06: 38** "Teachers treat all the children in the same way. We teach students to treat their classmates, with care and respect trying they feel at home. To learn from other cultures enriches our own."	High
	S2_ 0:06: 21 "All students in my classroom have been taught respect. We are all alike, there are no differences or discrimination."	High
	S3_ 0:7:30 "It is usually difficult to make students understand that cultural diversity enriches our lives."	Medium
4. Teaching practice	**S1_0:08:27** "I introduce the topic of human rights and remind learners that we are all equal. The importance of loving our neighbors, without making fun of their differences. I promote students share and learn from each other. I promote participation by sharing their culture and how they do things."	High
	S2_0:07:13 "Include and integrate students through games, activities to relate to each other for and by society."	High
	S3_ 0:9: 55 "It is important because they make us understand that we have feeling, and we are proud of our identity."	Medium
4. Teaching practice	**S1_11:08** "I have not had the opportunity, but I would welcome the experience."	Low
	S2_ 0:08:04 "I have students from the highlands and Venezuelans where we try to involve in the behavioral and pedagogical part,	Medium

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	due to the fact that education is not received in the same way and thus integrate them." **S3_ 0:11: 39** "I have related to friends from other professions who are of other nationalities, and we have treated each other with respect, exchanging ideas and opinions."	High
4. Teaching practice	**S1_0:15:01** "Of course we do. It is very important to respect others." **S2_0:09:48** "Sure, we can learn from cultures, customs, and gastronomy. To get involved in the cultures of our country." **S3_ 0:4:00** "We have a lot to discover and learn from other cultures."	Medium High Medium
5. Presence of cultural diversity	**S1_0: 11:33** "Indigenous groups are part of our cultural diversity and enrich our culture. How nice it would be to get more involved with them their language, culture, and way of being." **S2_ 0:09:03** "Respect the ethnic groups and different cultures that exist in our country: We should feel proud of our multiculture." **S3_ 0:12:55** "It is essential because we have diverse country. Different cultures and traditions make us a better nation.	High High High

For the category (1) Knowledge of cultural diversity. In the analysis of the interviews, the first teacher has an elevated level of knowledge about cultural diversity. It evidences that he knows the topic covered. Likewise, the third teacher participating in the interview has a high level in terms of his precise response to define cultural diversity. On the contrary, the second teacher has a medium range of knowledge. The three teachers are attributed a high level concerning each criterion.

The first participant knows the importance of indigenous groups in the country. He affirms that they can enrich our own culture. Likewise, the following mentions and highlights the values and ways of feeling proud of the indigenous groups in the country. The last participant expressed that, thanks to the presence of ethnic groups. Ecuador is a more diverse country due to its culture.

For the category: (2) Teacher Training. - Diverse levels are evident in the participants. The first teacher is a mid-ranking teacher without training to address cultural diversity within the classroom. However, he has sought other means to continue his professional training. On the contrary, the second participant is classified as low level because the teacher has not received training on the topic discussed, but he shows enough interest in it. On the other hand, the third teacher is rated at a high level since this participant mentions that in previous years, he has received training to address academic diversity and educational inclusion.

For the category: (3) Values. - Regarding this question, the participants have a high rank for several reasons. The first teacher mentions that there is cultural diversity within his classroom. Likewise, the second participant comments that he has many students from different cultures in the school. Teachers show different levels for the criterion. The first participant has attributed a low level because the teacher has not worked with a colleague from a different culture. Therefore, he does not have the experience to express how he has dealt with this group of people; however, he would like to live that experience. The next participant reported children from different cultures in the classroom. However, he has not shared the experience of working with another teacher. Therefore, it is considered a medium level. On the other hand, the last participant mentioned that he has had dealings with colleagues from different cultures. However, they have been from other professions, not just educators. Therefore, the level is high.

For the category (4) Teaching practice. - The first two participants are classified as having a high level of knowledge for different reasons. The first teacher states that he promotes human values.

It is not difficult to address cultural diversity in the academic context. The second teacher mentions that through his experience, he has no difficulties addressing cultural diversity with the students he works with. On the other hand, the last teacher expressed that it is hard to address cultural diversity within the classroom. Therefore, this response has a medium scope. Two out of three participants have a medium level in their responses, while another teacher has a high level. mentions ways how to show respect towards other cultures.

For the category: (5) Presence of cultural diversity. - The first two participants have a high level in their criteria. The first teacher mentions to use of different methods to address cultural diversity within the classroom. Likewise, the second participant includes students and relates them to each other. On the contrary, the last teacher did not understand the question but affirmed that he could address cultural diversity methodologies.

A teacher promotes values about interculturality before and after teaching his classes. He considers he shows respect towards different cultures. The next participant affirms and mentions that we are all equal and deserve respect. Therefore, both have a high rank. Finally, highlighting the values, the teacher indicates that people should have respect regardless of culture or nationality. This response shows a medium level.

In answer to the research question 2. What are the English language instructors' knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of interculturality? Table 2 presents the participants' perceptions collected using a Likert questionnaire.

Table 2. English language instructors' knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of interculturality.

Items	VD	D	NA/ND	A	VA
1. I know the institutional barriers such as laws, regulations, or access problems that can affect educational experiences in the classroom when there are students from other cultures.	7,21%	8,1%	23,3%	*46,3%*	15,2%
2. I know of specific teaching strategies used to affirm the identity of students from other cultures.	6,6%	12,2%	24,5%	*44,8%*	11,9%
3. I know how the historical experiences of other cultures can affect the learning of all students.	4,5%	13,1%	29,0%	*41,2%*	12,2%
4. I know about the cultural characteristics that students from other cultures bring to the classroom.	4,5%	7,5%	23,9%	*49,0%*	15,2%
5. I am trained to teach students from other cultures.	5,1%	15,5%	*33,7%*	33,4%	12,2%
6. I can effectively assess the educational needs of students from other cultures.	3,6%	12,2%	34,0%	*39,7%*	10,4%
7. I feel comfortable communicating with people from other cultures.	3,0%	4,8%	13,7%	*45,7%*	*32,8%*
8. I am aware of the cultural preferences that I convey when teaching students from other cultures.	4,2%	9,3%	30,2%	*42,7%*	13,7%
9. I am aware my cultural background has influenced the way I think about students from other cultures.	4,2%	11,9%	26,3%	*41,5%*	16,1%
10. I understand that my cultural background has influenced my approach to students from other cultures.	4,5%	15,2%	28,1%	*39,1%*	13,1%

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	VD	D	ND/A	A	VA
11. I understand that the academic difficulties of students from other cultures are not their fault.	2,4%	5,1%	21,2%	*45,4%*	*26,0%*
12. I understand that students' academic difficulties are not due to the culture to which they belong.	3,9%	5,4%	25,4%	*42,0%*	*23,3%*

Note: VD=very disagree, D=disagree, ND/A=no disagree no agree, A=agree, VA=very agree.

All items show the results of the answers obtained at the very disagreement level. The maximum percentages are: 1. I know the institutional barriers such as laws, regulations, or access problems that can affect educational experiences in the classroom when there are students from other cultures 7,21%, Item 2. I know of specific teaching strategies used to affirm the identity of students from a different culture 6,6%, and Item 5. I know how to teach students from other cultures 5,1%. On the contrary, there is a low percentage: Item 11. I understand that the academic difficulties of students from different cultures are not their fault 2,4%.

The item in the disagreement section with the highest score or percentage is Item 5. I trained to teach students from other cultures 15,5%. The next is Item 10. I understand cultural background has influenced my approach to students from other cultures 15,2%, and Item 3. I know how historical experiences from different cultures can affect the learning of all students 13.1%. However, there is a low percentage of 7. I feel comfortable communicating with people from other cultures 4,8%.

Every item shows a trend in agreement except 5. I trained to teach students from other cultures with a maximum of 33,7% in no agree to disagree. On the other hand, there is the lowest percentage of item 7. I feel comfortable communicating with people from different cultures 13.7%.

Most of the percentages of agreement in the section are above 40%. The three lower percentages are below 40%, with item 6. I can effectively assess the educational needs of students from other cultures, being the lowest with 33.4%, Item 10. I understand my cultural background has influenced my approach to students from different cultures 39,1%, and 6. I can effectively assess the educational needs of students from other cultures 39,7%.

The three highest scoring items in very agree are 7. I feel comfortable communicating with people from other cultures 32,8%. The next percentage is 11. I understand that the academic difficulties of students from other cultures are not their fault 26,0%. And 12. I understand that students' academic difficulties are not due to the culture to which they belong 23,3%. Thus, item 7. I feel comfortable communicating with people from other cultures reports 32,8 %. Reflecting the highest meaningful percentage of communicating with people from other cultures. Nevertheless, the lowest rate is 6. I can effectively assess the educational needs of students from different cultures 10,4%.

In answer to the question 3. What are the participant's experiences concerning the communicational styles in elementary school classrooms? Table 3 shows the results of the observations to determine the EFL communicational styles in elementary school classrooms.

Table 3. Communication styles and manners found in classrooms concerned with student cultural diversity.

a. Communication styles	Subcategory
Category: Aggressive and Discrimination	
P1: "In the first year of high school, I witnessed an environment of discrimination against a classmate who was from the Sierra region. A teacher expressed herself grotesquely in class towards my classmate and did not allow him to participate in class. Repeatedly, the teacher called him: you are like an Indian!"	✓ High
Category: Authoritarian and Discrimination	

"When I was in pre-professional internships there were students from different backgrounds. The teachers in the basic education areas called the students: good-for-nothing!"	✓ High
Category: Aggressive and Discrimination	
When I was in 7th grade, I heard how a teacher discriminated against a classmate for being from a different culture, mentioning several times "serrana come papas con gusano" (a woman who eats potatoes with worms).	✓ High
Category: Passive Aggressive and Discrimination	
"When I was in 3rd grade, I saw how a teacher treated a classmate from another culture differently, that is, when he participated in class, she did not pay attention to him, she took it without importance and when he presented a task with a minimal error, she took it as an excuse to scold him."	✓ High
Category: Passive Aggressive and Discrimination.	
"From one teacher's experience, he has no patience for students. To one of his students whose culture is different and a bit restless. This teacher often tells him that he is "dumb" and that he is a "pendejo" because the student often does not do well in class.	✓ High
Category: Passive Aggressive and Discrimination	
"The teacher is uncomfortable dealing with students he considers to be "dumb". He also tends to be overbearing, saying "Whoever wants to learn should learn, if not, go away".	✓ High
Category: Passive Aggressive and Discrimination	
"In one school a student from another culture did not wear the school uniform because in her tradition she wears her clothes. Some teachers looked down on her custom but respected her. Other teachers ignored her and would not let her participate in classes."	✓Medium

b. Manners	
Category: Politeness - Equity and openness to ethnic differences	
In the 4th grade of an institution, the teacher encouraged respect among students. The reason for his act was that the class was attended by students of color. The teacher demonstrated and encouraged respect for individual differences.	✓ High
Category: Ethnic Inclusion	
In 6th grade, two students were from the Sierra region. They were excluded from class by their classmates because of their dialect. The teacher intervened in every activity so that these 2 students could participate in the various group activities of the students.	✓ High
Category: Empathy	
In 2nd BGU, there was a classmate from another culture, and his accent when speaking was clearly from his place of origin, my classmates always made fun of him because of his accent when speaking, but the teacher always encouraged respect and empathy towards my classmate so that there would be a better educational environment.	✓ High
Category: Motivator	
In 8th grade BGU, there was a classmate from another city so he was new in the institution, after several weeks he did not fit in the school, but a teacher helped him to gradually fit in the new institution and gave him confidence, since he did not want to be part of the class for fear of rejection or that no one would want to be his friend.	✓ High
Category: Equitable / Equitative	
I had a course with children from different cultures, I was impartial with all my students, I treated them all with the same affection, and in class, I gave them the confidence to feel comfortable so that they could participate voluntarily and express their opinions.	✓High

In category 1: Authoritarian and Discrimination, a high level of evidence was found, referring to the instructors in the elementary education areas called the students: " You are good-for-nothing! " As for category 2: Aggressive and Discrimination, high-level evidence was found, referring to a woman who eats potatoes with worms, as evidence of regional discrimination. In category 3: Passive Aggressive and Discrimination, five pieces of evidence were found, four of them of high level and one of medium level. The one that says: "The teacher is uncomfortable dealing with students he considers to be -dumb- is offensive to students.

The five categories observed show positive evidence of the style of manners found in the instructors, all reaching a maximum level.

Thus, it can be observed in category 1: Politeness - Equity and openness to ethnic differences that teachers work with children of color. It is also manifested in category 2, regarding the openness to ethnic differences, empathy, motivation, and equity that the instructors offer to their students.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review and the results obtained, the authors ratify the position of Aristulle & Paoloni-Stente (2019) when affirming that instructors' training is crucial for their professional development and for improving teaching effectiveness. Thus, the development of instructors' intercultural competencies is a priority.

Evidence shows that mistreatment persists in the educational system of the schools observed. Thus, the authors remark on the position of Boyes and Villafuerte (2029) when determining the vertical communication style that persists in the educational context in Ecuador. Communication styles can be aggressive, passive, and discriminatory at a high level. However, researchers observed that some teachers treat students appropriately, politely, respectfully, briefly, and inclusively, including ethnicity, trying to be empathetic and equitable motivators.

In addition, the authors remark on the findings of Mayer et al. (2024) concerning the previos knowledge of the culture of learners can help to having a wide comprehension and appreciation of the. EFL instructors are encouraged to manage classes using diplomacy and openness to cultural diversity.

The research team affirms that cultural diversity promotes innovation in our society, and in schools that create a link for diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial groups, where teachers can foster intercultural competence, adding diversity planning and assessment of intercultural competence as a process to follow. Likewise, teachers need professional guidance and resources to foster and further develop intercultural competence in their students. The mix of the instruments used in this research allows the authors to affirm that teachers are required to stretch their inclusive practice in the classroom and to support their values to ratify diversity as beneficial in the classrooms.

For future studies, the authors advise executing an educational intervention for longer periods and contrast the results with a control group.

Finally, the authors ratify the position of Rojas and Barreto (2019) when suggesting that mentoring is a key strategy to increase intercultural competence. However, considering the local conditions, the exchange of experiences in cultural diversity is another effective strategy to improve instructors' intercultural competencies.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the literary review and the resolution obtained in this study, with the research team, 100% compliance and responsibility in the research are confirmed. For this reason, the main results obtained in this research show that teachers persist in the imperative styles of domains over the student where mistreatment, discrimination, and aggression, among other negative attitudes, are still observed. Fortunately, some instructors respect and have empathy toward students, thus creating a positive educational environment.

In addition, these results must be considered by decision-makers, curriculum designers, and educational authorities in Ecuador because dictatorial, vertical communication persists. Such a situation affects students. Likewise, one of the weaknesses of the study was that it was limited to private educational centers, which reflects a partial vision of the academic context of the canton of Manta in Ecuador.

Finally, for further research, the line of investigation is recommended, which reflects a perspective that enriches the systemic comparison of communication styles between instructors and pupils in public and private environments, thus contributing to and identifying patterns in communication styles that contribute to the development of communicative strategies for the quality of education in intercultural contexts.

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