

Incorporating intercultural communicative competence through short stories (a case study of an Armenian EFL classroom)

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Abstract

In the educational context, the linguistic aspect of language learning should be observed in parallel with intercultural communicative competence since this interwoven unity will facilitate students to enhance cultural understanding and develop critical reading skills, thus acquiring novel cultural frames of reference and a transformed world view. The aim of the article is to underpin the significance of short story inclusion in the EFL classroom as a powerful tool to foster ICC. The three socio-constructivist approaches suggested in the article are targeted at working on multicultural literary texts at cognitive and critical levels by focusing on the development of intercultural communicative competence. The article is a case study experience carried out in an intermediate EFL classroom at YSU in Armenia, in 2019. The qualitative analysis of the data provides us with valuable insights about the integration of literary texts in teaching language and constructing cultural knowledge through social interaction. The results can be further utilized by textbook writers and implemented in teacher training courses.

Keywords: Authentic literary texts; constructivist model; Inquiry-based approach; Content-based approach; Transactional approach; Intercultural communicative competence.



1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing tendency of intercultural contacts and interaction as well as the application of English as the global language pose drastically changing challenges to EFL education worldwide. In the past if the chief goal of foreign language education was to promote learner's near-native linguistic competence, currently, English predominantly serves for communication between representatives of different cultures who speak it as a second or third language. Therefore, in view of exploring how language and culture can be increased in EFL teaching and learning process, the article posits that one of the effective means to assist EFL learners to develop intercultural communicative competence at a critical level is the incorporation of multicultural literature, a conducive tool that might prepare students to become critical intercultural thinkers in this globalized scenario.

Currently teachers are well-aware of the fact that one of the essential objectives of language teaching is to facilitate learners to communicate effectively with people from various cultural backgrounds. Albeit there are many approaches to assist EFL learners to attain communicative competence in English, EFL instruction in the Armenian context, still has shortage of incorporation of ICC since classes are chiefly based on the study of language forms and communicative functions. In this sense, a myriad number of scholars such as [Lázár \(2003: 54\)](#) indicates that irrespective of the *Common European Framework of Reference to Languages* (CEF), the focus of language learning is still the study of grammatical and lexical competences. In this vein, [Byram \(1997: 85-88\)](#) claims that cultural competence has often been neglected in EFL because the focus of language teaching lies in the study of grammatical forms. Hence, [Kramersch \(2001: 37\)](#) states that the core aim of second language learning should not only be effective interaction, but the pursuit of understanding cultural constraints and the attempt to meet the terms with those boundaries. Accordingly, [Lázár \(2003: 16-19\)](#) explains that intercultural communicative competence can feasibly be extended in EFL through various ways such as speaking with members of a specific cultural ethnicity and implementation of textbooks, media and movies. It is a common knowledge that in the EFL setting the opportunities of learners to communicate with native English speakers are restricted. Thus, teachers are to apply merely instructional materials such as songs, videos, movies and, very often, communicative textbooks in their classes.

Another view suggested by [Brown \(2009: 238-245\)](#) pinpoints that, albeit communicative textbooks supply with a series of readings with various topics, the diversity of material is not sufficient because most textbooks mainly comprise magazine-style reading passages, excluding other types of genres such as poetry and short stories. Furthermore, there are still EFL textbooks lacking authentic language, respectively cultural materials are scarce. In this vein, [Berardo \(2006: 60-69\)](#) explains that the language in non-original texts often might be artificial and focus on forms that have to be taught and are not easily comprehensible. Similarly, [Stryker and Leaver \(1997: 51-55\)](#) confirm that rated language textbooks include "artificial language" which lacks natural communication that EFL learners may encounter in real life.

The present article is a case study conducted in Yerevan State University in 2019 which aims to suggest mechanisms of promoting intercultural communicative competence through inclusion of literary texts. In this respect the key objective of the study is to incorporate authentic literary short stories in an intermediate English class based on the concept that literary texts are ideal means to assist EFL learners to evolve intercultural communicative

competence. With these goals in mind, the following two questions are under consideration of this research:

- *Which are the effective means for EFL students to develop intercultural communicative competence through literary texts?*
- *Which teaching approaches might be feasible to foster EFL learners to develop intercultural communicative competence through the study of literary selections?*

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). Interculturality plays a key role in the modern world, as it is grounded on the recognition and respect of the nationalities, and comprises enrollment in interaction to accept diversity. The views of cultures and interculturality are the basis for the understanding of ICC, which is “the ability to communicate with others, to mediate between various perspectives, to be conscious of their evaluation of difference”. (Byram, Nickolas, Stevens 2009: 5)

According to Byram’s well-known model ICC consists of three key components: *knowledge* “social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country” (p. 35) since learners become acquainted with aspects such as beliefs, relationships, values, etc., *skills* “building up specific knowledge as well as the understanding of the beliefs, meanings, and behaviors which are intrinsic in particular phenomena, whether documents or interactions” (p. 38), and *attitude* such as tolerance of otherness, empathy and openness. These key components are the basics for stimulating cultural awareness, which is a competence to accept both similarities and differences among different nationalities and lifestyles (Byram 1997: 55).

Byram’s model has been used as the theoretical backbone of the present study. We have intended to explore if the integration of literary texts based on short stories and cultural points of EFL learners can affect their level of ICC. More specifically, the role of literary texts in providing a platform for identifying intercultural issues was investigated.

3. LITERARY TEXTS AS A TOOL TO FOSTER INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

By and large, the materials suggested for reading such as newspapers, magazines, and books are obviously charged with diverse levels of cultural expression because, over all, they are the product of a specific society vitally depicting cultural content. Yet, it is important to point out that literary texts are considered challenging to be assimilated and understood by EFL learners. Kramersch (2001: 18) notes that teachers are hesitant to use literary texts in the language classroom because they seem to be competent particularly in teaching conventional texts for their general interest and for their information value. However, it is quintessential to assume that literary texts in EFL are effective materials to foster meaning negotiation and key to cultural knowledge. According to Kramersch (2001: 20-25) EFL learners have to be exposed to various kinds of reading material, from conventional (textbooks, newspapers, and magazines) to literary texts because they enable EFL learners to encounter with various cultural representations.

In the view of outstanding scholars such as Carter (1996: 1-15), McKay (2001: 319-331) and Amer (2003: 63-66) EFL learners are prioritized to be open to cross-cultural experiences

and to enhance their language learning process when they negotiate meaning during their interactions with authentic literary texts. Therefore, literature acts as a conducive agent to develop students' intercultural awareness while evoking empathy and tolerance for diversity. The *Common European Framework of References to Languages* also highlights the importance of literature in EFL as a powerful tool to evolve language and interculturality: Imaginative and artistic implementation of language are of crucial importance both educationally and in their own right. Aesthetic activities of language may be productive, receptive, interactive or meditative, that is, they embrace production, reception and performance of literary texts e.g. reading and writing texts (poetry, novel, short story, etc.) (Council of Europe 2001: 56).

Intercultural communicative competence is the key aim to attain second language learning, it is of paramount importance to take into consideration the incorporation of carefully selected literary texts, if possible, at all levels of instruction. Whereby, we are exposed to read or listen to various literary pieces from a very early age in our own language, such as, fairy tales, legends, and other literary works from children's literature, reflecting the specific heritage of our own culture and traditions. At the same time, selecting adequate literary pieces, we might enable the EFL learners to perceive diverse cultural expressions (Maley 2001: 180-185).

4. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF AMERICAN SHORT STORIES IN EFL SETTING

The incorporation of literary texts can stimulate reflection on cultural diversity, enhance perception of the source culture, accordingly foster tolerance and openness towards target culture. Relevant literary pieces not only enable students to develop a platform for critical thinking of other cultures but also impact on students' vicarious experience of foreign attitudes and values. Therefore, cultural awareness can be achieved through a careful selection of literary texts. In this respect, the selected short stories are typically *authentic* materials in which culture-biased beliefs, viewpoints and habits can be revealed. Since short stories carry brief compositions and one single plot they do not impede obstacles for EFL students to read and discuss them in a short period of time.

The pedagogical reasons for choosing the given short stories are conditioned by the fact that by means of multicultural literature learners can identify, draw parallels and oppose the diversities and similarities between their home culture and those of others. Therefore, students can decrease discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes. Whereby, multicultural literature contributes to students' awareness to develop intercultural communicative competence.

In this connection, three short stories by American authors "Cat in the Rain" by E. Hemingway, "The Fire" by W. Saroyan, "The Story of an Hour" by K. Chopin were selected.

5. TEACHING APPROACHES

Since the research project proposes the enhancement of ICC through American multicultural literature three pedagogical approaches based on the constructivist model, Inquiry-based approach, Transactional approach and Content-based approach were incorporated for the analysis of literature in the EFL classroom. Clarification and application of the aforementioned approaches will be revealed further in the article.

5.1. Three basic constructivist approaches for teaching multicultural literature in EFL setting

Social and cultural interactions are of great prominence for teaching and learning process. In view of Vygotsky's theory on socio-cultural learning the importance of co-constructed knowledge and scaffolding is underpinned, which is conducive for assisting and engaging EFL students in the learning process. Constructivism, as a pedagogical tool, is based on some teaching approaches which are prone to meet the aim of teaching literature in EFL. In this sense, teaching literary pieces in the EFL classroom should be taught through appropriate teaching approaches that might foster meaning negotiation and knowledge construction. As Vygotsky stated, the socio-constructivist approach is a solid basis for activating learners' role and engagement in the classroom enabling them to experience the world so that they construct their own knowledge within meaningful contexts, sometimes through trial and error, because making mistakes is a normal part of the learning process (Vygotsky 1978: 88).

In this respect, a considerable number of scholars view this pedagogical model as an indispensable part of teaching-learning process claiming that, in this day and age, teachers should be more pragmatic and seek for variety of creative mechanisms to set up an engaging and thought-provoking environment for students with various learning paces. Hence, especially such kind of pedagogical intervention can be an incentive to teach multicultural literature in EFL since it becomes a great background to acquire cultural knowledge, to value literature and improve their language competence simultaneously (Scholnik & Kol 2006: 12-20, Schowalter 2003: 68). Therefore, Inquiry-based, Transactional and content-based approaches are in the focus of the case study.

5.2. Inquiry-based approach

Implementation of this approach is of great significance, since it mainly gives priority to students' viewpoints, perceptions and interaction with their peers in the classroom. According to Gellis (2002: 15-35) inquiry-based learning facilitates active learning and enrolls students in critical exploration and in the knowledge construction through a process of meaning negotiation. Inquiry-based learning models diverse activities for studying literature and better connect various students to the literary community of practice. The practices utilized in the classroom supply with a compelling pattern of how literature analysis can be carried out in a way that makes intercultural features accessible for students irrespective of linguistic differences. In this vein, McKay (2001: 319-331) explains that through this model, teachers can prepare their learners for the lesson by means of guided questions that will motivate them to "inquire" the truth. In their firm belief, this model aims at obtaining more applicable and useful knowledge prioritizing learners' ideas, reflections and criticism.

5.3. Transactional approach

The transactional approach is of great avail especially for teaching multicultural literature for the purpose of developing ICC. This approach is based on Rosenblatt's transactional and Bank's transformation theories (1995: 121-125) which facilitates students to get engaged in transaction with literature about unfamiliar cultures, broadens their horizons to encompass temperaments and cultures various from their own and encourages them to reflect on their attitudes, assumptions and beliefs. One of the most Rosenblatt's crucial contributions is the humanistic approach to literature in the process of teaching literature in EFL. According to the

author; literature comprises features of real life and human experiences, so while reading the literature students strive for perceiving human behavior and circumstances. In light of this assertion, one of the key challenges of English teachers should be the study of literature as a tool of constructing our understanding of reality and the world around us. This notion becomes imperative in the EFL setting since EFL learners deal with the world around them and crave for understanding intercultural conceptions. Consequently, literature is one of the best keys to become more culturally tolerant, respectful and open-minded to various cross-cultural experiences.

5.4. Content-based approach

The requirement of content-based model is becoming increasingly omnipresent in EFL since foreign languages are currently deemed as the medium through which subject matter is taught. It aims at transferring from the traditional grammar-oriented focus to the study of subject matter, since dealing with topics and the realities of the world is more significant than just learning grammar structures (Stryker & Leaver 1997: 67). The content-based instruction is targeted at combining two types of knowledge simultaneously: content knowledge and knowledge of language since materials are arranged based on contents which challenge learners to consciously reflect on the language (Schcolnik & Kol 2006: 79). In this vein, Richards & Rodgers (2001: 63) claim that for effectively teaching academic subject matter and foreign language skills, EFL teachers should collaborate content-based instruction and literature study. Consequently, McRae (1996: 15) explains that literature is a valuable language tool (with authentic texts), so it can assist language minority students to enhance their motivation, explore prior knowledge, and improve literacy development. Hence, the incorporation of content-based approach favours in applying perfectly selected authentic materials taken directly from the culture under consideration, and make the texts accessible to the students at their level of proficiency. Therefore, in order to successfully achieve these benefits, EFL instructors should design the collaborative content-based literature class meticulously to meet the needs of their students.

6. CONTEXT FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY

This research is carried out in an intermediate English class at the department of Theory and Translation at YSU in 2019. The faculty aims at preparing EFL learners who will eventually work as qualified English translators in diverse institutions in Armenia. The academic strengths and the pedagogical backgrounds to do such a job are highly required for the employment. Therefore, learners' focus of study is the language in all its diverse manifestations, embracing the native language, foreign languages, literature, translation theories and those other alternatives applied for the point of communication and cognitive construction. This focus implies that students have to be prepared not only to learn English as a foreign language, but to be supplied with the pedagogical approaches to teach it. Consequently, during this research, learners were expected to become informed of the teaching tools utilized for the reading of literary texts, so as to enable them to use the aforementioned approaches in their future teaching careers.

6.1. Participants

The present case study was designed for and carried out in two groups of 20 *intermediate* EFL freshmen each (total 40 students, 37 females and 3 males) aged 18 to 20. The particular course called “Major English” aims to achieve B2 level of *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* at the end of semester. Based on CEFR requirements, a B2 learner can understand the key concepts of complicated texts on both general and abstract topics; can communicate fluently and spontaneously without tension; can convey clear thoughts on any topic and discuss one’s viewpoints on any suggested issue giving the benefits and drawbacks of various options. The participants were regular students; hence, they could easily get enrolled in classroom activities. All in all, the students’ proficiency level is the same, otherwise it would impede difficulties to arrive at reliable results. In the first academic semester of English courses they worked with the communicative textbook “English for Translators” (Part I) (Khachatryan A., Charchoghlyan L., Gabrielyan S., Hakobyan G., Harutyunyan N., 2012) which is a four-part course book intended for the students studying at the department of Translation Studies. Albeit the students did not have any problems in understanding the texts assigned for the course, the reading materials selected were novel to them. It should be also noted that these students had already passed some relevant English courses, including Phonetics and Intermediate Academic Writing, with the same teachers. Furthermore, they had worked on class projects to study cultural content of the U.S. and the United Kingdom. These students had also been delivered adapted and short versions of reading passages and some authentic reading from “Breaking News” and “VOA” websites. However, they hadn’t much dealt with authentic reading materials of the US and UK literature previously. Hence, the piloting phase helped the researchers make some modifications in the content and methodology of the course.

6.2. Pedagogical procedure

For the purpose of the project, 3 multicultural literary pieces were incorporated in an intermediate English course as a tool to facilitate students to enhance their intercultural communicative competence. For the implementation of the research students were assigned to read and analyze the aforementioned stories within 10 days.

Initially, *Inquiry-based approach* was utilized when students dealt with the short story “Cat in the Rain” by O. Henry. Proceeding the key points of this approach, a study guide was delivered to students comprising 5 questions with special focus on their reading process. At the initial stage, learners were to read the story on their own by responding the questions during the reading process. At the next stage they were to exchange the feedback of the reading piece with their peers (see questions sample, [Appendix A](#)).

In the next pedagogical procedure, the *transactional approach* was applied during the reading of “The Fire” written by the Armenian-American writer William Saroyan. At this phase, students reflected on the story comparing their own experiences with that of the leading character of the literary work. Through the selected approach students got engaged in revealing and identifying literary topics such as emotions, confrontation with the reality, symbols, key concepts and viewpoints. Furthermore, students were able to speak about psychological depression, values and aspects which will be examined in further findings since these are consistent with the development of intercultural communicative competence.

Analysis was carried out through the *content-based approach* in reference with the short story “The Story of an Hour” by the American novelist Kate Chopin. The freshmen not only

analyzed the characters, exchanged their opinions about feminism, oppressive marriage, but also after carrying out some research tasks on the relevant themes shared their experience and referred to bleak situations where women were different from the traditional ones. The aforementioned will be discussed in the findings of this case study.

7. RESEARCH METHOD

7.1. Diagnosis

Before embarking on research students underwent a diagnosis stage comprising 3 key questions: 1. Are you aware of the notion of intercultural communicative competence? 2. Have you previously read authentic literary texts in English? 3. Have you ever heard of the term American multicultural literature? Regarding question one the vast majority of students (37 out of 40) claimed not to be aware of the term. As for question two, some students (10 out of 40) appeared to have dealt with the authentic literature and for the last question they affirmed that they were not familiar with the multicultural literature.

After the survey students were briefly introduced to the key concepts of ICC, its peculiarities and importance in the literature. This precise presentation was aimed at promoting students' awareness of the relevant issues in the teaching and learning process and for further implementation in their study.

7.2. Data analysis and findings

After the pedagogical intervention a qualitative analysis of the data was gathered from the students' comments and observations. Questions guiding this study were gathered during class sessions and right after students had read and discussed each short story. Essentially, there were 2 data collection instruments.

Direct observations: Participants were observed during the development of the pedagogical implementation to define how they dealt with the constructivist approaches in the study of literary texts. Descriptive field notes were taken to acquire data of the various situations taking place in class (see [Appendix B](#)). Participants were aware of the notes taken.

In-depth interviewing: Students were interviewed and recorded individually (with their prior approval) on one occasion to collect data from their critical responses about the readings and the methodological procedures suggested. Each interview lasted five to eight minutes. It was a structured interview which aimed at asking respondents three key questions: 1. What cultural information have you gained through the reading of authentic literary texts? 2. What was your experience of reading multicultural literary texts in this course? 3. Are you in favour of implementing the aforementioned approaches in this course? The recordings were transcribed directly into a computer file.

Eventually, giving grounds for the incorporation of multicultural literature in EFL setting participants' viewpoints and applied pedagogical approaches as salient data were taken into account. For instance, several patterns of students' reflective feedback in regard to the effectiveness of the inquiry-based and content-based approaches are registered in [Appendix C](#).

7.3. Responses and discussions with reference to inquiry-based instruction

Before reading the short story “Cat in the Rain”, students were initially asked key questions to enable them to view the story from a more critical standpoint, which was a very productive teaching technique. The mentioned strategy increases students’ engagement in discussion-based classes underlining students’ significant contribution in the negotiation of meaning while interpreting their views on the story. During the pedagogical procedure students individually responded the questions posted in the study guide (Appendix A) trying to explore salient features in the literary pieces. Moreover, the inquiry-based approach provided reflective reading with which EFL learners were enthusiastic to respond questions in order to encourage interrogation of texts and foster critical analysis. Consequently, the scripts of the field notes show that with regard to the first question, most Armenian respondents (15) claimed the key message of the short story was the loneliness and isolation of the American wife, whereas 3 respondents stated that solitude was the result of the age difference between the couple, finally 3 note that it was the outcome of modern life and the immorality of the Western lifestyle. In the character with whom most respondents (16) were sympathetic was the American wife explaining that their sympathy was due to her loneliness, 2 mentioned that it was because of her inability to communicate with her spouse, and 2 referred to her obsession with possession. Significantly, students’ interviews and comments greatly promoted the inquiry-based process for the construction of knowledge. As a result, it has become obvious that through the incorporation of the inquiry-based approach students did not only increase communicative competence, but at the same time gained intercultural information. Assuming field notes, two types of attitudes towards the short story were revealed. The first group of students evidently viewed the story as representing the materialism and consumer culture of the West and the United States in particular. Some members of this group believed that Hemingway was condoning this lifestyle and implying that possessions, even though trivial, could fill the void which may be felt in life. The second group identified the core of the story as one of solitude and loneliness; nevertheless, they did not relate the theme to Western culture, but to contemporary man and the age of industrialization globally. Eventually, the participants in this case study claimed that the story varied from Armenian ones in that it lacked a tight plot and morals, which was deemed to be a distinctive peculiarity of Armenian stories.

7.4. Responses and discussions with respect to the transactional approach

William Saroyan’s story “The Fire” carries a great psychological content. The whole story conveys a little boy’s emotions and profound psychological thoughts caused by his mum’s death. Through transactional approach EFL students vicariously reflected on the content of the story trying to analyze the same situation in their own life context. The monitor of the group was the key person to elicit information from her classmates trying to encourage them to actively get enrolled in the discussion. It turned out that some of the participants had experienced cruel blow of life and they had a feeling of injustice, torture and despair. Surprisingly, almost most of the students (14 out of 20) claimed that they experienced such kind of similar emotions such as vanity, intolerance of destroyed hopes and expectations. This activity contributed significantly to discussion of issues related to facing the reality and life pitfalls and how to get over all these. During implication of transactional approach

participants implicitly detected intercultural elements in the story trying to compare boy's cherished image of the family with theirs. Afterwards the students critically discussed the content stating that W. Saroyan developed in the story multicultural literary components and related them to their own cultural background through a process of interaction and self-reflection.

Students' Voices: In the story I observed that the boy's sufferings were similar to mine. I was permitted to convey my own experience not to be too critical with the hero's abrupt and senseless decision to devastate his memories with his Mum. (Arevik, November 4, 2019, taken from interview)

We have a hot discussion on the plot of the story through self-reflection. It was a quite helpful tool to reveal otherness, to share and welcome the hero's own torments through the story. I like the used approach since it was a new tool for me to analyze the text respectively. (Suzan, November 6, 2019, taken from interview)

7.5. Responses and discussions with regards to content-based instruction

Content-Based Instruction approach was one of the effective tools along with the aforementioned approaches fostering ICC, as the students were engaged more in content of the short story identifying values, the concept of feminism, independence and oppressive marriage depicted in the short story "The Story of an Hour". Students were able to use more advanced thinking skills (HOTS) when learning new information and focused less on the structure of the language.

One of the well-articulated instances pinpointed in the descriptive field notes was when students were able to express their opinions about topics such as freedom, feminism, oppressive marriage scrutinized in the main characters' behavior and attitudes and transfer them into their own culture. Through in-depth analysis and discussions students better perceived and experienced the new culture.

In the scope of classroom activities, the participants came up with their arguments and points involving all the students in class discussion when they read the selected story. In this respect the field notes disclose how one of the participants after gaining sufficient background knowledge dwells upon the concept of feminism relating it to the main character of the story Louise Mallard. The theme enabled other students to express their views supporting their opinions through the examples from the story. Interestingly the opinions were contradictory. In certain cases, within the framework of the present research students conducted individual studies on the feminism in American and Armenian cultures. Once they have carried out the research, they formed groups with other students engaged in the research activities, shared and compared the accumulated knowledge and experience introducing the outcome and their conclusions. The essential outcome of the CBI application was that in line with fostering ICC students developed their linguistic ability in the target language, constructed meaningful knowledge by using the target language English when dealing with the content. Here are some sheer observations taken from the discussions:

Students' reflection: We had a very meaningful discussion and learned about unequal roles in marriages, female's rights and identity in America of the late 19th century. (Eliza, from interview, November 4, 2019)

To my greatest disappointment I found out that women in the American society were repressed in their marriage in the late 19th century. (Ann, from interview, November 4, 2019)

Surprisingly enough I found out that women who worked during the period of the 19th century, especially married ones were denied by the society. (Milena, from interview, November 6, 2019)

The aforementioned observations underpin that students were not only competent to exchange their opinions and talk about the content related to the emerging feminism of the late 19th century, but also determine their attitudes towards their own culture and find out their beliefs concerning the criticism of marriage and independence of women. Consequently, they went through the stage of accepting the otherness.

Taking into account these findings, the students went through the stage of the appropriate research tasks aimed at increasing the level of their cultural awareness. Thus, incorporating literature in the EFL classroom has become a great tool to elaborate and develop ICC. This way a piece of literary work as a content served students to elaborate on different related issues. They investigated different literary topics, put forth personal ideas and addressed and arrived at various deductions.

To sum up, with the application of the abovementioned constructivist approaches EFL students were able to build and develop both knowledge of language and culture through a process of communicating and elaborating the meaning of real language in context.

8. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

To wrap things up, it should be noted that the present qualitative research was conducted to explore the efficient mechanisms promoting ICC through multicultural literature in Armenian EFL setting. According to the collected results (questionnaire/field notes and students' interview recordings), it is detectable that albeit the students belong to the similar cultural and religious backgrounds, they possessed contrasting attitudes and viewpoints towards the same literary pieces.

In this case study three constructivist approaches have been in the limelight which were greatly acclaimed by the targeted participants. However, the students expressed especially tremendous interest towards *Content-based* approach stating that the highlighted tool was the most effective one since it provides students' dramatically increased interaction and motivation to participate in discussions during learning process. Moreover, one of the most essential findings is that students' voices significantly contributed to the improvement of teaching practices. Another inference is that supplying learners with adequate approaches adjacent with guidelines and tasks can facilitate learners to explore and understand authentic texts in a more accessible way.

Therefore, teaching literature especially multicultural literature should be a more constant practice in EFL context, adopting eclectic and solid pedagogical approaches such as those implemented in the article rather than attempting to study those literary pieces in isolation without assuming consistent pedagogical perspectives. Additionally, these productive mechanisms provoke students' creative thinking and provide a platform for the teachers to adopt and adapt a myriad of means for developing intercultural communicative skills through multicultural literature, which provides vicarious experiences from cultures other than their own; and these practices enable them to perceive diverse backgrounds, thereby impacting on their decisions about how they will live in this culturally pluralistic world.

Whereby, EFL classroom can be a quite suitable place in which both teachers and learners can boost critical ICC, set up social awareness and promote resistant multiculturalism.

Therefore, in an attempt to acquire more in-depth results in promoting intercultural communicative competence, particularly through short stories, the following suggestions can be brought up:

- facilitate teachers to select multicultural literature according to some criteria (authentic characters, details, theme, style and etc.)
- foster teachers to incorporate multicultural literature in the curriculum
- introduce EFL students to the diversity that surrounds them
- stimulate students to be proactive in accepting and respecting otherness
- incorporate interactive strategies to increase engaging atmosphere
- develop students critical thinking through multicultural literature
- integrate *Content-based approach* to develop global mindset towards interculturalism
- facilitate students vicariously to get aware of multicultural literature
- motivate students to contrast their own culture with that of other

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: STUDY GUIDE WITH POSTED QUESTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE INQUIRY-BASED APPROACH

Date: November 4,6 2019

"Cat in the Rain" by Ernest Hemingway

The short story is known for its lack of values, and a somewhat nihilistic sense of despair. This story illustrates the futile search for truth in a world governed by chance and it is packed with symbolism.

Explore the short story and respond the subsequent questions. Support your answer basing on key words and events.

1. *What do you think is the main moral/message/theme in this short story?*
2. *Do you sympathize with any of the characters or were you inspired by any of them?*
3. *Which character do you identify with the most?*
4. *In what ways does this short story differ from those of your own culture?*
5. *How is the relationship between the two main characters of this story different or similar to husband-wife relationships in your country?*

APPENDIX B: PATTERN OF OBSERVATIONS (DESCRIPTIVE FIELD NOTES)

Date: November 4,6 2019

"The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin

The short story is the female search for identity and oppressive nature of marriage. The story strongly indicates that women have more social awareness and less social living space.

After reading the short story the students were assigned to carry out a research study on the concept of feminism in general and in America in particular comparing and contrasting it with the Armenian culture. After conducting their individual research, students had a discussion basing it on the [accumulated background information](#), key ideas and events related to their study.

Descriptive Field notes	Comments
<p>Four students were leading the discussion on Kate Chopin's story "The Story of an Hour". During the first stage they presented some autobiographical data of the author relating it to the plot of the short story. The participants also discussed the sensitive and graceful depictions of the women's lives through feminist criticism evolving in America in the late 19th century. They commented on women's restricted rights in regard with education and labor, social norms that limited women's autonomy, one of the most crucial issues of the period reflected in the story. All the collected data and information were new for the students. They reflected on the plight of the main character of the selected story Louise Mallard associating it with the current women's role in the American society.</p>	<p>Participants were competent to speak in English about feminism of the 19th century and related the events of the short story to the public views shaping the image of women in the 20th century.</p>
<p>Some of the participants spoke about American cultural elements referring to traditional marriage presented in the story. They compared and contrasted single and independent woman with the married ones. For example, students said that one of the important cultural values of the American society in the 19th century was that women were inferior to their husbands and that they were expected to lead their lives the way their husbands wished. Also the women had little or no financial or other independence as it was with the main character of the selected story Louise Mallard, who needed freedom so much that found happiness in loss and death of her husband. More particularly, through the sudden death of her husband, the woman is on the cusp of experiencing true independence in the only way available to women at that period of time. Other students expressed the view that Louise Mallard, a woman who searched selfhood and identity, was the victim of the established cultural norms of the period.</p>	<p>This exchange of the ideas was very effective as it gave rise to emotional discussions and the participants were very critical and analytical in terms of revealing crucial cultural values and elements different and similar to Armenian ones. Therefore, the process of the activities showed that students became more interculturally aware of certain cultural aspects and background that the story provided.</p>
<p>One of the participants emphasized that the story showed how important freedom was to a woman. When comparing the source culture to her own culture, she said the relationship between husband and wife portrayed in the story was somehow different from the spouses' relationship in Armenia. This fact was conditioned by the period of time the story was written. Some other students contradicted the aforementioned point saying that the relationship between husband and wife were depicted traditionally and it reflected the reality of male-female relations in the Armenian society. They said that the Armenian husbands used to forbid their wives to do what they wanted, restricted their right to work and participate in social life.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of the implementation of this case study lies in the fact that students were able to focus and talk about issues related to traditional, non-traditional marriages, values and independence.</p>

APPENDIX C: PATTERN OF PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE INQUIRY-BASED AND CONTENT-BASED APPROACHES

Knarik: *"Basically, I would have never thought that inclusion of literature could be so accessible for students. I believe, this is due to the study guide that focuses our attention on key action, words and events. The inquiry-based approach is a perfectly-tailored teaching strategy for us". (Interview, November 11, 2019)*

Celine: *"The study guides were very helpful to get closer with the text symbolism. We could reveal the author's mysterious ideas through the inquiry-based approach and reflect the story from another angle". (Interview, November 11, 2019)*

Margaret: *"With this method, almost all my peers were participating in the brainstorming of the story as it was very thought-provoking and insightful. It was somewhat different from just reading a text and retelling it since it had guidelines which made our exploration deeper. Personally, I enjoyed the applied method". (Interview, November 13, 2019)*

Rubina: *“Due to this approach we were actively involved in all stages of the learning process and through the inclusion of the selected literature we not only developed our linguistic abilities but also enhanced our knowledge of American culture”. (Interview, November 13,2019)*

Diana: *“This really made the process of learning language more interesting and motivating as we greatly enjoyed the small research tasks we were assigned”. (Interview, November 14,2019)*