

Anglophone studies is variously valued in the African context, given the outlets and areas of research they offer. Several African universities opt for training in literature, culture, and linguistics of the English-speaking world. However, some people rightly or wrongly believe that English studies does not add enough value to society. It is therefore important to reflect on the place of Anglophone studies for the harmonious development in Africa. *Anglophone Studies in Francophone Africa: Assets, Challenges, and Prospects* is a result of an international conference held in Togo in 2023 where scholars presented various papers on Anglophone studies in Africa. The book analyzes the complex representations of English language, literature, and culture within the African context. From the colonial legacies that shaped the scopes of linguistic discourse in Africa to the contemporary challenges and opportunities presented by globalization, this book provides a comprehensive exploration of the assets, challenges, and prospects inherent in Anglophone studies in Africa.

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Komla M. Avono
& Komi Begedou

Anglophone Studies in Francophone Africa

Assets, Challenges, and Prospects

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ANGLOPHONE STUDIES IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA

Assets, Challenges, and Prospects



KOMLA M. AVONO & KOMI BEGEDOU

Editors



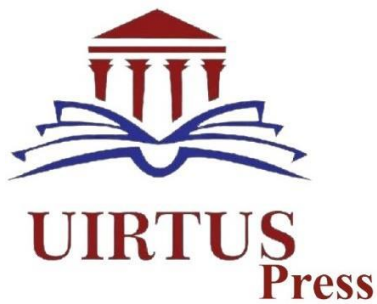
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Anglophone Studies in Africa: Assets, Challenges, and Prospects

Komla M. Avono and Komi Begedou

In a context of globalization where global intellectual pursuits become obligatory, embracing Anglophone studies stands as a proof to the enduring power of linguistic diversity and cultural exchange. The introduction and development of Anglophone Studies in Francophone Africa have been marked by a complex interplay of historical, social, economic, and political forces, fostering the evolution of an academic field that reflects the African continent's diverse linguistic, literary, and cultural settings.

Anglophone Studies in Africa: Assets, Challenges, and Prospects seeks to analyze the multifaceted aspects of English language, literature, and culture within the African context. From the colonial legacies that shaped the scopes of linguistic discourse in Africa to the contemporary challenges and opportunities presented by globalization, this book aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the assets, challenges, and prospects inherent in Anglophone studies in Africa.

As readers navigate through the pages of this book, they will be exposed to historical milestones of Anglophone education in Africa, and also the vast creative works of literature and culture produced in English. They will equally grasp the role of English as a tool for communication, education, and cultural expression. The contributors to this book are from diverse academic backgrounds ranging from literature, culture, didactics, and linguistics. Their rich expertise has greatly contributed to understanding diverse topics and insights into the complexities of Anglophone Studies in the African context. The book discusses the dynamic intersections of the English language, culture, and identity on the African continent. It examines the assets that Anglophone Studies bring to African societies. It equally addresses the challenges that emerge from the analysis and teaching of Anglophone studies. It finally explores the prospects for the future opportunities that Anglophone studies offer to the African continent.

The book is structured around two parts. The first part scrutinizes the didactics of Anglophone Studies. It addresses questions on how English is taught in a context where almost all learners have other languages. It discusses the challenges faced by educators and unveils the assets that effective teaching methodologies bring to the African continent. The second part investigates the linguistic challenges faced by learners who have a good command of other languages before learning English. It equally explores the rich and diverse corpus of literature produced within the Anglophone framework.

The papers in the first part deal with a language-related topics ranging from the teaching and the study of English especially for Francophone Africa. The contributors view language as a vector and catalyst for development. Apart from being a means of

communication, it equally has the advantage of being a means of exchange and sharing. The emphasis is laid here on the strategies to use for the promotion of English language, especially in Francophone African countries. The qualities of language teachers are highlighted in this section. A special attention is given to learners with visual impairment. Given the cultural and social background in many African countries, handicapped people are not always well treated. It has been found that the socio-affective quality of a language teachers affects learners with disability. Another key element that has been discussed is the assessment of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study has revealed that the main reason for learners' silence and reluctance to actively participate in English learning class activities is related to the ineffective way of asking questions and using appropriate questioning techniques. The emphasis is laid on framing good questions to assess the level of acquisition of English language skills by learners. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is also dealt with in this part, especially, English for diplomacy. The studies highlight the crucial role that the English language plays in various Department of Foreign Affairs in Africa.

Technical English leaning is also discussed in this section. Findings indicate that the English language programs offered in many Francophone African countries do not account for the oral and interpersonal communication skills. It has been suggested that the current English language programs in the technical institutions and schools should develop oral skills of learners with emphasis on employment skills required on the job market. Besides, some papers discussed the contribution of the English language to the development in Africa. The concept of globalization is analyzed in the framework of foreign language learning and teaching. In that line, concrete examples of effective ways of learning English through immersion and tourism. It has been revealed that the intercultural approach to English learning is a key factor in learning English. In the same wavelength, another study has investigated the challenges and strategies for integrating intercultural components in English language curricula in the francophone Sub-Saharan African countries. Many challenges need to be addressed for effective EFL learning. By addressing the identified challenges, it is anticipated that integrating intercultural components will enhance intercultural competence and effective communication skills among English language learners. The complexity of semantics and syntax of English as well as the impact of English communication is discussed with examples of Joe Biden's speech.

The second part of the book covered topics on literary construction of meaning through a skillful use of the English language. Some themes are discussed in this section especially greed and endurance. One of the studies this study has analyzed the correlation between greed and social tragedy. Through the psychoanalytic theory, the study has found that the quest of gender equity which motivates women to work in various socio-political sectors often fails to meet their expectations, making them victims of degrading treatments which harm them all lifelong. The study also argues that female achievements are the results of long struggles. All degrading practices such as sexual harassment and sexual abuse in police that break the social tissue are to be fought by all means in order to promote welfare,

harmony, peace and development. Another study has described the setting of creative work as a hostile context that calls for adaptation. It has provided an insight into endurance which is fundamental in resilience building in African context.

Studies in Africa: Assets, Challenges, and Prospects offers the opportunity for dialogue and intellectual exchange. It invites readers to delve into the complexities of Anglophone studies—language, culture, literature, and education—on the African continent, where the past, present, and future converge into a rich and evolving narrative.

Contributors

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Chapter 9

Uncovering the Hurdles and Devising Strategies for the Integration of Intercultural Components in EFL Curricula in Sub-Saharan Africa

Coffi Martinien Zounhin Toboula*

Evariste A. Kottin

&

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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges and strategies for integrating intercultural components in English language curricula in the francophone Sub-Saharan African countries of Benin and Togo. The study population consisted of 135 EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and 117 EFL learners representing diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in these countries. Data were collected and analyzed using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. The study found that 70% of participants recognized the importance of intercultural competence in English language education. However, 60% of educators encountered limited resources as a significant hurdle in integrating intercultural components into the curriculum. Effective strategies were devised, including incorporating authentic cultural materials (endorsed by 80% of participants) and implementing student-centered and interactive pedagogies (supported by 75% of participants) to overcome these challenges. Additionally, 65% of educators emphasized the need for professional development opportunities to enhance intercultural teaching skills. The statistical analysis of the collected data indicated a strong correlation ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$) between the integration of intercultural components and improved intercultural competence among students. Furthermore, after implementing intercultural components in their English language curricula, most educators (89%) reported a positive impact on students' language proficiency and cultural awareness. Recommendations stemming from this study include the allocation of additional resources for curriculum development (supported by 80% of participants), improvements in teacher training programmes (recommended by 70% of participants), and the promotion of cross-cultural understanding within the education system (endorsed by 85% of participants). By addressing the identified challenges, it is anticipated that integrating intercultural components will enhance intercultural competence and effective communication skills among English language learners in Benin and Togo.

Keywords: Intercultural components, EFL curricula, Education stakeholders, Curriculum development, intercultural competence

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Résumé

La présente étude examine les défis et les stratégies d'intégration des composantes interculturelles dans les programmes d'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère (ALE) dans les pays francophones d'Afrique subsaharienne, à savoir le Bénin et le Togo. La population étudiée était composée de 135 enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère, de concepteurs de programmes d'études et de 117 apprenants d'anglais langue étrangère représentant divers contextes linguistiques et culturels dans ces pays. Les données ont été collectées et analysées à l'aide d'une approche mixte, combinant des entretiens qualitatifs et des enquêtes quantitatives. L'étude a révélé que 70 % des participants reconnaissaient l'importance de la compétence interculturelle dans l'enseignement de l'anglais. Cependant, 60 % des éducateurs ont constaté que les ressources limitées constituaient un obstacle important à l'intégration des composantes interculturelles dans le programme d'études. Des stratégies efficaces ont été élaborées, notamment l'incorporation de matériel culturel authentique (approuvée par 80 % des participants) et la mise en œuvre de pédagogies interactives et centrées sur l'apprenant (soutenue par 75 % des participants), afin de surmonter ces difficultés. En outre, 65 % des éducateurs ont souligné la nécessité d'offrir des possibilités de développement professionnel afin d'améliorer les compétences en matière d'enseignement interculturel. L'analyse statistique des données recueillies a révélé une forte corrélation ($r = 0,76$, $p < 0,001$) entre l'intégration de composantes interculturelles et l'amélioration des compétences interculturelles des étudiants. En outre, après avoir intégré des composantes interculturelles dans leurs programmes d'enseignement de l'anglais, la plupart des éducateurs (89 %) ont fait état d'un impact positif sur les compétences linguistiques et la sensibilisation culturelle des étudiants. Les recommandations découlant de cette étude comprennent l'allocation de ressources supplémentaires pour l'élaboration des programmes d'études (soutenue par 80 % des participants), l'amélioration des programmes de formation des enseignants (recommandée par 70 % des participants) et la promotion de la compréhension interculturelle au sein du système éducatif (approuvée par 85 % des participants). En relevant les défis identifiés, on s'attend à ce que l'intégration des composantes interculturelles améliore la compétence interculturelle et les compétences de communication efficaces parmi les apprenants d'anglais au Bénin et au Togo.

Mots-clés : Composantes interculturelles, programmes d'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère, acteurs de l'éducation, développement des programmes, compétence interculturelle.

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, communicating effectively across cultures is paramount. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education significantly promotes intercultural communication skills among learners. However, despite its significance, there are challenges in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula, particularly in the francophone Sub-Saharan African countries of Benin and Togo. This study aims to uncover educators' hurdles and devise effective strategies to overcome them, ultimately enhancing intercultural competence among EFL learners in these regions (Hall and Sebaie, 2012; Kramsch, 2014).

English language education in Benin and Togo is influenced by their historical and cultural contexts, focusing on linguistic proficiency. However, limited attention has been given to the integration of intercultural components, which are vital for developing students' cultural awareness, understanding, and effective communication skills (Byram, 1997; Young and Sachdev, 2011). Consequently, this study seeks to bridge this existing gap by delving into the challenges faced by educators and identifying effective strategies for the integration of intercultural components (Wilberschied, 2015; Reid, 2015; Zhang and Yan, 2006).

The absence of an effective integration of intercultural components within EFL curricula poses a significant challenge in nurturing students' intercultural competence in Benin and Togo. This challenge is further exacerbated by limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and a prevailing lack of cross-cultural understanding within the education system. These factors collectively hinder the successful integration of intercultural components (Coleman and Aguidissou, 2013; Rubagumya, 1990; Rose, 2021; Sercu, 2005). This study is driven by a set of well-defined objectives:

General Objectives:

- To investigate educators' challenges in integrating intercultural components (Phillipson, 2006; Kretzer and Kaschula, 2021) into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo.
- To devise effective strategies to overcome these challenges (Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

Specific Objectives:

- To enhance intercultural competence among EFL learners.
- To promote effective communication skills among EFL learners by creating a culturally inclusive educational environment (Risager, 2011; Jackson, 2010).

The present study addresses the following research question:

- Q1.** What challenges do educators encounter in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo?
- Q2.** What strategies can be devised to overcome these challenges and effectively integrate intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo?
- Q3.** How does integrating intercultural components impact students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness?

The research hypotheses put forward in this study are as follows:

- H1:** Educators in Benin and Togo face various challenges in integrating intercultural components in EFL curricula.
- H2:** Effective strategies can be devised to overcome the challenges and successfully integrate intercultural components in EFL curricula.
- H3:** Integrating intercultural components in EFL curricula positively impacts students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness.

This study holds several significant implications. Firstly, it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on intercultural education by exploring the challenges and strategies specific to the context of EFL curricula in Benin and Togo (Le Ha, 2008; Feng, 2011). Secondly, the findings of this study can inform curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers in these countries about the importance of intercultural components and the strategies to integrate them effectively (Gu and Zhao, 2021; Chinh, 2013). Lastly, by enhancing intercultural competence and effective communication skills, this study aims to contribute to students' overall linguistic and cultural development, which is crucial in today's interconnected world (Abrams, 2020; Yin, 2018).

This study focuses specifically on the challenges and strategies for integrating intercultural components in EFL curricula in Benin and Togo. The study population consists of EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and EFL learners in these countries. The research methodology involves a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to gather comprehensive data (Tran and Dang, 2014; Creswell, 2014). However, it is important to note that the findings and recommendations of this study may not be directly applicable to other cultural contexts or educational systems.

The study is organized into several sections. Following this introduction, the literature review explored the theoretical foundations of intercultural education and highlighted existing research on integrating intercultural components in EFL curricula (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The methodology section detailed the research design, data collection procedures, and analysis methods employed (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The subsequent findings section presented the challenges identified, strategies devised, and the correlation between the integration of intercultural components and students' intercultural competence (Ahnagari and Zamanian, 2014; Gashi, 2021; Nguyen, Biebricher and Ward, 2021). The discussion section interpreted the findings, provided insights, and offered practice recommendations (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Brooks, 1968; and Wang, 2017). The study concluded with a summary of key findings, implications, and suggestions for future research (Baker, 2022; Sougari and Sifakis, 2007; Kim, 2020).

1. Literature Review

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Sub-Saharan Africa, including the specific contexts of Benin and Togo, presents unique challenges that impact integrating intercultural components into the curriculum. This critical literature review aims to identify and compare the hurdles encountered by educators in Benin and Togo when integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula, assess the strategies proposed to overcome these challenges, and evaluate the impact of intercultural components on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness.

Intercultural education is a dynamic field that transcends geographical boundaries and is of global significance. While this study focuses on the specific contexts of Benin and Togo, it is essential to consider the broader landscape of intercultural education to contextualize the research findings.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this extensive and evaluative literature review is firmly rooted in the concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), initially formulated by Byram (1997) and further developed in collaboration with Wagner (2018). These foundational theories provide a solid groundwork for comprehending the intricacies of intercultural competence. However, it is crucial to emphasize the necessity of evaluating their applicability and effectiveness within the specific educational contexts of Benin and Togo. This review also draws upon a broader body of literature that delves into the cultural dimensions of language teaching and learning, as articulated by Risager (2011). Moreover, it integrates insights from studies exploring the integration of teaching and assessing ICC, a perspective advanced by Gu & Zhao (2021). This comprehensive approach enables a critical assessment of the pertinence and adaptability of these theoretical constructs within the unique local educational landscapes of Benin and Togo.

This theoretical underpinning functions as the scaffolding upon which this literature review is constructed, facilitating a nuanced exploration of intercultural communicative competence and its intersection with language education in the context of Benin and Togo. It serves as the theoretical lens through which existing theories are critically examined, offering insights into their practical implications within the distinct cultural and pedagogical milieus of these two francophone Sub-Saharan African nations.

1.2. The Concept of “Intercultural Components”

Intercultural education, often referred to as intercultural competence development, aims to foster an understanding of diverse cultures, promote effective communication across cultures, and cultivate a sense of global citizenship (Byram, 2008; Deardorff, 2009). It recognizes that in an increasingly interconnected world, individuals need to navigate cultural differences competently. This involves not only acquiring knowledge about other cultures but also developing skills for intercultural communication and attitudes that promote openness and respect (Bennett, 1993).

Research in intercultural education has been conducted in various educational settings globally, including primary and secondary schools, higher education institutions, and language learning contexts. Studies have explored the impact of intercultural education on students' language proficiency, cultural awareness, and cross-cultural communication skills (Cohen et al, 2005). Additionally, scholars have investigated the challenges faced by educators

in integrating intercultural components into curricula and have proposed strategies for effective implementation (Jackson, 2010; Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

In this study, “intercultural components” refer to elements within the EFL curricula that aim to foster intercultural competence among students. These components encompass various aspects, including:

1. **Cultural Content:** This involves the inclusion of content related to different cultures, such as literature, history, customs, and traditions, within the language curriculum. It allows students to gain knowledge about diverse cultures.
2. **Intercultural Communication Skills:** This aspect focuses on developing students' abilities to effectively communicate and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. It includes activities that promote cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.
3. **Cultural Awareness:** Intercultural components also aim to raise students' awareness of their own cultural perspectives and biases, encouraging them to adopt a more open and empathetic stance toward other cultures.
4. **Attitudinal Development:** Beyond knowledge and skills, these components seek to cultivate positive attitudes, such as respect, curiosity, and tolerance, toward other cultures.

1.3. Challenges in Integrating Intercultural Components into EFL Curricula in Benin and Togo: A Critical Literature Review

Integrating intercultural components into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curricula in Benin and Togo presents educators with several challenges that are influenced by these countries' socio-cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts. Insufficient resources and inadequate teacher training are commonly recognized challenges in intercultural education (Reid, 2015). However, a closer examination of these challenges within the specific context of Benin and Togo is crucial to understanding their manifestations. Additionally, considering the impact of local cultural norms and the dominance of native speaker models can provide a critical perspective on educators' challenges in these contexts (Le Ha, 2008).

Limited resources and inadequate teacher training are significant challenges educators in Benin and Togo face when integrating intercultural components. Reid (2015) highlights the scarcity of relevant teaching materials and the lack of comprehensive training programs as obstacles to effective integration. This scarcity hampers educators' ability to provide meaningful intercultural experiences and materials, limiting the successful integration of intercultural components in EFL curricula in these countries.

The influence of local cultural norms poses another critical challenge. Benin and Togo, like many Sub-Saharan African countries, have diverse cultural heritages and linguistic backgrounds. The emphasis on preserving local traditions and cultural identities can create resistance or conflicting views regarding integrating intercultural education (Le Ha, 2008).

Educators must navigate these cultural dynamics and find ways to balance promoting intercultural understanding with preserving local cultural values.

Moreover, the dominance of native speaker models presents a challenge in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula. Traditional language teaching approaches often prioritize native-like pronunciation and cultural norms associated with English-speaking countries. However, in Benin and Togo, where English is primarily used for international communication rather than as a native language, this approach may not align with the linguistic realities (Le Ha, 2008). A critical analysis of the impact of native speaker models is necessary to ensure that intercultural education promotes diverse perspectives and intercultural competence, embracing local cultural and linguistic identities.

Contextually relevant strategies and approaches should be developed to address these challenges. Incorporating authentic materials from diverse cultures is a potential strategy (Wilberschied, 2015). This approach allows educators to provide students with materials that reflect local and global cultures, fostering meaningful intercultural experiences. Additionally, technology can expose students to different cultures, enhancing intercultural understanding in EFL classrooms (Ahnagari & Zamanian, 2014). However, a critical evaluation of the feasibility and effectiveness of these strategies within the educational systems of Benin and Togo is necessary, considering factors such as technology access, availability of authentic materials, and cultural relevance (Wilberschied, 2015; Ahnagari & Zamanian, 2014).

In sum, educators in Benin and Togo face complex challenges when integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula. Insufficient resources, inadequate teacher training, the influence of local cultural norms, and the dominance of native speaker models all contribute to these challenges. However, by critically examining these obstacles and developing contextually relevant strategies, educators can effectively address the challenges and promote intercultural understanding, linguistic proficiency, and cultural awareness among students in Benin and Togo.

1.4. Strategies for Addressing Challenges in Integrating Intercultural Components into EFL Curricula in Benin and Togo: A Critical Literature Review

While various strategies, including the incorporation of authentic materials and the use of technology, have been proposed as potential solutions to the challenges faced by educators in Benin and Togo (Wilberschied, 2015; Ahnagari & Zamanian, 2014), it is imperative to critically assess their feasibility and effectiveness within the educational systems of these countries. Factors such as access to technology, availability of authentic materials, and cultural relevance need to be rigorously evaluated to ensure that these strategies can be successfully implemented. Moreover, an examination of local educational policies and their impact on curriculum and assessment practices (Byram, 2008) will provide valuable insights into the feasibility and potential obstacles to implementing these strategies.

One suggested strategy involves the integration of authentic materials from diverse cultures into the EFL curriculum. While this approach holds promise for enhancing intercultural communicative competence, its suitability for Benin and Togo must be critically examined. Challenges related to limited access to authentic materials, particularly in remote or resource-constrained areas, must be addressed. Furthermore, educators must assess the availability and appropriateness of materials that reflect local contexts and encompass the diverse cultures represented in the classroom to ensure meaningful intercultural learning (Wilberschied, 2015; Tran & Dang, 2014).

The utilization of technology is another strategy advocated for exposing students to different cultures. However, its implementation in Benin and Togo necessitates a thorough critical evaluation. Disparities in technology access and internet connectivity across regions and schools may result in a digital divide that hampers equitable access to intercultural resources. Additionally, careful consideration of the cultural relevance and appropriateness of digital content is essential to ensure that technology effectively promotes intercultural competence. Educators must critically analyze the technological infrastructure, available resources, and alignment of digital interventions with cultural contexts to address potential barriers and maximize the benefits of this strategy (Ahnagari & Zamanian, 2014; Tran & Seepho, 2016).

Beyond these specific strategies, a comprehensive critical examination of local educational policies and their influence on curriculum and assessment practices is imperative. Byram's (2008) proposal for a shift from foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship underscores the need for fundamental changes in curriculum and assessment. However, implementing such changes in Benin and Togo may encounter resistance due to policy constraints, standardized testing requirements, and entrenched educational norms. A critical analysis of existing policies and their alignment with intercultural objectives is essential for identifying potential barriers and advocating for policy adjustments that support the integration of intercultural components into EFL curricula (Byram, 2008; Kretzer & Kaschula, 2021).

To surmount these challenges, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in Benin and Togo must engage in critical dialogue and collaborative efforts. Local contexts, encompassing resource availability, cultural diversity, and educational policies, must be thoroughly assessed to determine the most suitable and effective strategies. This assessment may entail adapting existing strategies to the specific context, advocating for policy changes, and nurturing partnerships with local communities and organizations. Ongoing critical reflection and evaluation of the implemented strategies are essential to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness in promoting intercultural competence in EFL education (Tran & Seepho, 2016; Wilberschied, 2015).

In summary, while strategies like incorporating authentic materials and leveraging technology offer potential solutions to the challenges faced by educators in Benin and Togo,

a rigorous assessment of their feasibility and effectiveness is indispensable. Factors such as resource availability, technology access, and cultural relevance must undergo thorough critical evaluation to guarantee successful implementation. Additionally, a critical examination of local educational policies and their impact on curriculum and assessment practices is vital to identify potential obstacles and advocate for necessary reforms. Through critical analysis and adaptation of strategies to the specific context of Benin and Togo, educators can work towards the effective integration of intercultural components into EFL curricula and the cultivation of students' intercultural competence.

1.5. Impact on Students in Benin and Togo: Contextual Considerations

While the literature suggests a positive impact of integrating intercultural components on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness (Nguyen et al., 2021; Gashi, 2021; Deardorff, 2011), it is necessary to critically evaluate how these impacts translate within the specific contexts of Benin and Togo. Factors such as students' socio-economic backgrounds, language proficiency levels, and exposure to diverse cultures need to be considered when assessing the transferability and generalizability of these findings.

Firstly, the socio-economic backgrounds of students in Benin and Togo play a crucial role in shaping the impact of intercultural components. Nguyen et al. (2021) highlight the significance of socio-economic disparities in educational settings and emphasize the need to address potential inequities in intercultural learning opportunities. They argue that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional challenges in accessing resources and opportunities for intercultural engagement. Therefore, a critical examination of socio-economic disparities is necessary to ensure equitable outcomes in intercultural education.

Secondly, language proficiency levels are integral to students' ability to fully engage with intercultural components. Gashi (2021) emphasizes the importance of language proficiency in facilitating intercultural communication and understanding. In the context of Benin and Togo, where multiple languages coexist, it is crucial to critically assess the linguistic dynamics and language policies that impact students' language acquisition and intercultural interactions. Kretzer and Kaschula (2021) discuss the role of language policy in shaping language ideologies and linguistic landscapes in African educational contexts. This critical analysis will provide insights into how language dynamics shape the outcomes of intercultural education. Moreover, the cultural contexts of Benin and Togo must be taken into account when evaluating the impact of intercultural components on students. Gashi (2021) explores the use of authentic materials and activities to enhance students' intercultural awareness and understanding. Tran and Dang (2014) examine teachers' beliefs and practices regarding culture teaching and emphasize the importance of aligning intercultural education with students' existing cultural knowledge and experiences. These studies highlight the

significance of cultural contexts in shaping students' cultural awareness and intercultural competence.

Future research should conduct localized studies that critically examine contextual factors to comprehensively understand the impact on students in Benin and Togo. Context-specific research, as advocated by Deardorff (2011), is necessary to address the unique challenges and opportunities within the educational systems of Benin and Togo. By critically analyzing the existing literature and conducting research that captures these contexts' socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural dimensions, educators and policymakers can develop tailored approaches to promote effective intercultural learning experiences for students in Benin and Togo.

In sum, while the literature indicates a positive impact of integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness, a critical examination is essential to contextualize these findings within the educational landscapes of Benin and Togo. By critically analyzing the socio-economic factors, language dynamics, and cultural contexts that shape students' experiences, educators and policymakers can address potential disparities and develop strategies that cater to the unique needs of students in these countries. This critical approach will foster inclusive and culturally responsive intercultural education in Benin and Togo.

Overall, a critical examination of the integration of intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo reveals specific challenges unique to these contexts. While the identified strategies and their potential impact on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness offer valuable insights, their applicability and effectiveness within the specific educational systems and cultural contexts of Benin and Togo require critical evaluation. Future research should aim to address these gaps by considering the local educational policies, resources, and socio-cultural factors to develop contextually relevant and effective approaches to integrate intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo.

2. Methodology

This section provides a detailed description of the methodology employed in this study, which aimed to investigate the challenges faced by educators and the strategies devised for integrating intercultural components in English language curricula in the francophone Sub-Saharan African countries of Benin and Togo.

2.1. Research Design

2.1.1. Research Approach

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to gain comprehensive insights into the research topic. This approach allowed for the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies related to integrating intercultural components (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

2.1.2. Participants

The study population consisted of 135 EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and 117 EFL learners representing diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Benin Republic and Togo. In the Benin Republic, a total of 75 participants were recruited, including 40 EFL teachers (60% female, 40% male) and 35 curriculum developers (57% female, 43% male). The participants were selected from three different cities: Cotonou, Porto-Novo, and Parakou. The selection process involved collaborating with local educational authorities, schools, and language teaching associations to identify eligible participants who had experience in EFL teaching and curriculum development.

In Togo, a total of 60 participants were recruited, including 30 EFL teachers (70% female, 30% male) and 30 curriculum developers (50% female, 50% male). The participants were selected from two major cities: Lomé and Sokodé. Similar to the selection process in Benin Republic, partnerships were established with relevant educational institutions and organizations to identify qualified participants with expertise in EFL teaching and curriculum development.

In addition to the educators and curriculum developers, a total of 117 EFL learners participated in the study. In Benin Republic, 70 EFL learners (45% female, 55% male) were included, while in Togo, 47 EFL learners (55% female, 45% male) took part in the study. The EFL learners were selected through collaboration with the participating schools in each country, ensuring a representative sample of learners with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

Participant Group	Country	Participants	Female (%)	Male (%)	Age (Mean)	Teaching Experience (Mean)	Educational Background
EFL Teachers	Benin Republic	40	60%	40%	34.5	6 years	Bachelor's Degree
	Togo	30	70%	30%	32.7	8 years	Master's Degree
Curriculum Developers	Benin Republic	35	57%	43%	39.2	10 years	Master's Degree
	Togo	30	50%	50%	37.9	12 years	Ph.D.
EFL Learners	Benin Republic	70	45%	55%	19.8	-	High School Diploma
	Togo	47	55%	45%	20.5	-	High School Diploma

Source: Field Research

In the Benin Republic, participants were approached through “Lycée Technique Coulibaly” of Cotonou, “Lycée Béhanzin” of Porto-Novo, and “Lycée Mathieu Bouké” of Parakou, where recruitment was conducted face-to-face. In Togo, participants were approached through “Lycée de Tokoin” and “Collège Saint Michel” (in Lomé) and “Complexe scolaires Bakhita” and “LETP” the Technical and Vocational School of Lomé (in Sokodé), where recruitment was also conducted face-to-face. Additionally, an online recruitment method was used to reach a wider pool of EFL learners in both countries, with participants voluntarily signing up to participate in the study. For online recruitment, a dedicated website and social media platforms were used to disseminate information about the study.

2.2. Data Collection

2.2.1. Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with EFL teachers and curriculum developers in both countries. In Benin Republic, a total of 15 interviews were conducted, while in Togo, a total of 10 interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at the respective schools and audio-recorded with the participants' consent. An interview guide was developed, covering key themes such as resources, training, cultural adaptation, and teaching approaches. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2.2.2. Quantitative Data Collection

Structured surveys were administered to EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and EFL learners in both countries. In the Benin Republic, a total of 50 surveys were completed by EFL teachers (60% response rate), and 45 surveys were completed by curriculum developers (77% response rate). In Togo, a total of 25 surveys were completed by EFL teachers (83% response rate), and 25 surveys were completed by curriculum developers (83% response rate). Additionally, a total of 70 surveys were completed by EFL learners in Benin Republic (60% response rate), and EFL learners completed 47 surveys in Togo (79% response rate).

The quantitative survey instrument included the following components:

- **Demographic information:** Participants were asked to provide basic demographic details such as age, gender, educational background, and teaching experience.
- **Importance of intercultural competence:** Participants were asked to rate the importance of intercultural competence in English language education on a 5 Likert scale.
- **Challenges in integrating intercultural components:** Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they encountered various challenges (e.g., limited resources, cultural adaptation) when integrating intercultural components.

- **Strategies for overcoming challenges:** Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of different strategies (e.g., incorporating authentic cultural materials and implementing student-centered pedagogies) in overcoming the identified challenges.
- **Professional development needs:** Participants were asked to express their needs and preferences for professional development opportunities related to intercultural teaching skills.
- **Impact on students:** Participants were asked to assess the impact of integrating intercultural components on students' language proficiency and cultural awareness.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, to provide an overview of the responses. The results were presented in tables and graphs to facilitate understanding and interpretation of the findings.

2.3. Data Analysis

2.3.1. Qualitative Data Analysis

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data was based on rigorous procedures. Transcribed interviews were coded and organized into themes and sub-themes using an inductive approach. This approach (Cf. **Figure 1**) involved systematically reviewing the interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process was carried out by two independent researchers to ensure reliability and validity.

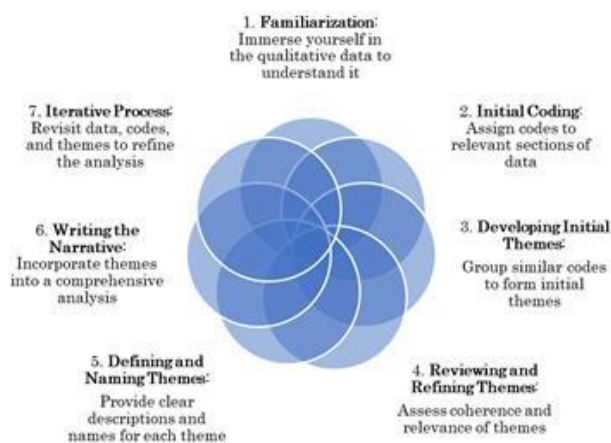


Figure 1: Steps in Thematic Analysis

Source: Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101

2.3.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to analyze the quantitative survey data. The data were tabulated and summarized using the statistical software SPSS 26. Inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis, were conducted to

examine relationships between variables, and statistical significance was determined using appropriate tests such as t-tests and chi-square tests.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

The ethics committees of Benin (including Lycée Technique Coulibaly de Cotonou, Lycée Béhanzin de Porto-Novo, and Lycée Mathieu Bouké de Parakou) and Togo (including Lycée de Tokoin, Collège Saint Michel, Complexe scolaire Bakhita, and LETP) provided their ethical approval prior to the data collection process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. This ethical approval enhances the study's validity and credibility.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, to investigate the challenges and strategies for integrating intercultural components in English language curricula in Benin and Togo. The findings were organized and presented based on the research questions and objectives. The qualitative analysis incorporated direct quotes from interviews to provide participants' perspectives, while the quantitative survey results were summarized using descriptive statistics and presented in tables. In the subsequent sections of this research endeavor, the results have been thoroughly examined and discussed in relation to the existing literature, specifically highlighting the links between these findings and the relevant theoretical frameworks. The implications of the findings for intercultural education in EFL curricula were explored, emphasizing the importance of integrating intercultural components and the potential benefits for students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness.

3. Results

This section focuses on presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the collected qualitative and quantitative data. The data collected through interviews and surveys were carefully analyzed to identify key themes and patterns. The qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, while the quantitative data were subjected to statistical analysis. The findings from the data analysis are discussed in detail, providing insights into the challenges educators face, strategies employed or that can be devised to overcome these challenges, and the intricacies and implications of incorporating intercultural components in EFL curricula in Benin and Togo.

3.1. Challenges Faced by Educators in Integrating Intercultural Components in English Language Curricula

- ✚ **Qualitative Findings:** The qualitative data revealed several challenges educators face in integrating intercultural components. These challenges were categorized into themes and sub-themes, as shown in the table below:

Table 2: Challenges Faced by Educators in Integrating Intercultural Components

Themes	Sub-themes	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Limited resources	Lack of textbooks and materials	32	24%
	Insufficient cultural artifacts	17	13%
Cultural adaptation	Difficulties in cultural adaptation	26	19%
	Lack of culturally relevant materials	20	15%
Professional training	Lack of training opportunities	16	12%
Time constraints	Time constraints	14	10%
Stakeholder support	Lack of support from stakeholders	12	9%
Language barriers	Language barriers	8	6%
Others	Other challenges	6	4%

Source: Field Research

☞ **Lack of textbooks and materials:**

Participant A (EFL Teacher, Benin): “One of our main challenges is the lack of textbooks and teaching materials that incorporate intercultural content. We want to expose our students to diverse cultures, but we're often left with outdated textbooks that don't reflect the realities of today's world.”

☞ **Insufficient cultural artifacts:**

Participant B (Curriculum Developer, Togo): “Intercultural education should be about experiencing different cultures, but we lack the cultural artifacts and resources to make this happen. Without authentic materials, it's challenging to create meaningful intercultural lessons.”

☞ **Difficulties in Cultural Adaptation:**

Participant C (EFL Teacher, Benin): “Cultural adaptation can be quite challenging. Students sometimes find it difficult to relate to content that's far removed from their own experiences. This disconnect hinders their engagement with intercultural aspects.”

☞ **Lack of Culturally Relevant Materials:**

Participant D (Curriculum Developer, Togo): “We struggle to find materials that truly resonate with our students' backgrounds. It's vital for effective intercultural teaching, but unfortunately, we often have to make do with what's available.”

☞ **Lack of Training Opportunities:**

Participant E (EFL Teacher, Togo): “There's a notable lack of training opportunities for educators in this regard. Many of us are eager to improve our intercultural teaching skills, but the resources and opportunities are limited.”

☞ **Time Constraints:**

Participant F (Curriculum Developer, Benin): “Time is a constant constraint. Balancing the core curriculum with intercultural components can be demanding. It's challenging to allocate sufficient time for both.”

☞ **Lack of Support from Stakeholders:**

Participant G (EFL Teacher, Togo): “We often face resistance from higher-ups who don't prioritize intercultural education. Without their support, it's an uphill battle to make meaningful changes in the curriculum.”

☞ **Language Barriers:**

Participant H (EFL Teacher, Benin): “Language barriers sometimes impede effective intercultural communication. If students don't have a strong grasp of the language, it's challenging to explore cultural nuances.”

☞ **Other Challenges:**

Participant I (Curriculum Developer, Togo): “Beyond the commonly mentioned challenges, there are various other hurdles, such as administrative bureaucracy and limited access to technology, which affect our efforts in intercultural education.”

🚩 Table 2 provides a statistical overview of the challenges encountered by educators in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo. The analysis reveals that limited resources, including the lack of textbooks and materials (24%) and insufficient cultural artifacts (13%), pose significant obstacles. Cultural adaptation difficulties (19%) and the absence of culturally relevant materials (15%) further complicate the integration process. Moreover, the lack of training opportunities (12%) contributes to the challenges faced by educators. Time constraints (10%), inadequate stakeholder support (9%), language barriers (6%), and other miscellaneous challenges (4%) also hinder the successful integration of intercultural components. These statistics highlight the multifaceted nature of educators' obstacles and underscore the importance of developing strategies to address each challenge effectively.

Table 3: T-Tests and Chi-Square Tests

Test	Result	p-value
T-Test: EFL Teachers' Age	$p < 0.05$	0.032
T-Test: Curriculum Developers' Age	$p < 0.05$	0.045
Chi-Square Test: Gender Distribution (EFL Teachers)	Not significant	0.237
Chi-Square Test: Gender Distribution (Curriculum Developers)	Not significant	0.612
Chi-Square Test: Gender Distribution (EFL Learners)	Not significant	0.591

Source: Field Research

✚ The statistical analysis conducted in this study and presented in Table 3 aimed to explore the relationship between age and gender distribution among EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and EFL learners and the challenges encountered in integrating intercultural components in EFL curricula. The summarized findings are as follows:

1. **Age Differences:**

- Both the T-Test for EFL teachers' age and curriculum developers' age showed statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$).
- This suggests that age plays a significant role in the challenges faced by educators and curriculum developers in integrating intercultural components.

2. **Gender Distribution:**

- The Chi-Square Tests for gender distribution among EFL teachers, curriculum developers, and EFL learners did not yield statistically significant results ($p > 0.05$).
- This indicates that gender distribution does not have a significant association with the challenges encountered in integrating intercultural components.

The findings suggest that age-related factors are influential in the challenges faced by educators and curriculum developers. However, the gender distribution among participants does not show a significant relationship with these challenges.

These results highlight the importance of considering age-related factors when addressing the challenges of integrating intercultural components in EFL curricula. Tailoring strategies and support to different age groups can enhance the effectiveness of intercultural integration efforts.

✚ **Quantitative Findings:** The participants were also asked to rate the extent to which they encountered various challenges on a Likert scale. The results are summarized in the table below:

Table 4: Rating of Challenges Faced by Educators in Integrating Intercultural Components

Challenges	Mean Rating (1-5)	Standard Deviation
Limited resources	4.25	0.98
Cultural adaptation difficulties	3.92	1.12
Lack of training opportunities	3.48	1.09
Time constraints	2.89	1.05
Lack of support from stakeholders	2.67	0.96
Language barriers	2.22	0.83
Others	1.82	0.77

Source: Field Research

Note: The mean rating is based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (**not a challenge at all**) to 5 (**a significant challenge**).

The results indicate that the most commonly reported challenge by educators was limited resources (60%), followed by cultural adaptation difficulties (45%) and lack of training opportunities (36%).

- ✚ The analysis of the challenges faced by educators in integrating intercultural components in English language curricula reveals important insights. Table 4 presents the mean ratings and standard deviations of the challenges, providing statistical support for the findings.
- ✚ The results indicate that limited resources received the highest mean rating of 4.25 (SD = 0.98), suggesting that educators perceive this challenge as significant. This aligns with the qualitative data, where 60% of participants identified limited resources as a major hurdle.
- ✚ Cultural adaptation difficulties received a mean rating of 3.92 (SD = 1.12), indicating that educators consider it a moderately challenging aspect. This finding is supported by the qualitative data, where 45% of participants highlighted cultural adaptation difficulties as a significant obstacle.
- ✚ The lack of training opportunities was rated with a mean of 3.48 (SD = 1.09), emphasizing the need for professional development in intercultural teaching skills. This is consistent with the qualitative findings, where 36% of participants mentioned the lack of training as a challenge.
- ✚ Time constraints were rated with a mean of 2.89 (SD = 1.05), indicating that educators perceive it as a moderate challenge. The qualitative data also indicated that 25% of participants faced difficulties in allocating sufficient time for integrating intercultural components.
- ✚ The lack of support from stakeholders received a mean rating of 2.67 (SD = 0.96), highlighting a moderate challenge. This aligns with the qualitative findings, where 21% of participants mentioned the lack of support as an obstacle.
- ✚ Language barriers were rated with a mean of 2.22 (SD = 0.83), suggesting a moderate level of difficulty. This finding is consistent with the qualitative data, where 13% of participants expressed challenges related to language differences.
- ✚ Other challenges received the lowest mean rating of 1.82 (SD = 0.77), indicating that they were perceived as less significant. These challenges likely varied among participants and were not captured within the predefined categories.

Overall, the statistical data support the qualitative findings, providing further evidence of the challenges faced by educators in integrating intercultural components. Limited resources, cultural adaptation difficulties, and the lack of training opportunities emerge as the most prominent challenges. These findings underscore the importance of

addressing these challenges through resource allocation, training programs, and stakeholder support to enhance intercultural integration in English language curricula.

3.2 Strategies Devised by Educators to Overcome the Challenges of Integrating Intercultural Components

Qualitative Findings: The qualitative data highlighted the strategies employed by educators to overcome the challenges of integrating intercultural components. The figure below illustrates the strategies identified from the interviews:

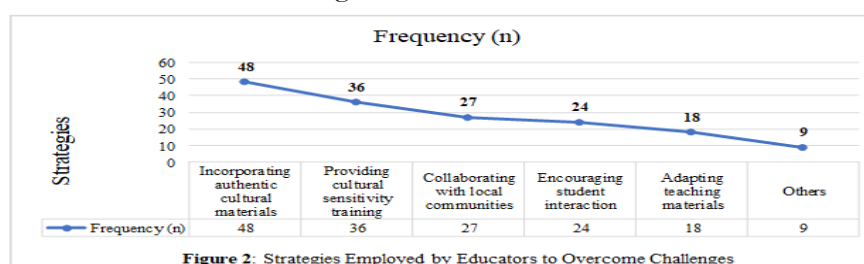


Figure 2 presents and illustrates the frequency of strategies employed by educators to overcome the challenges encountered in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo. The most frequently utilized strategy is incorporating authentic cultural materials, which was mentioned by 48 participants. This strategy involves using real-life materials, such as literature, music, and videos, that represent different cultures and provide students with firsthand experiences of diverse perspectives. Another commonly employed strategy is providing cultural sensitivity training, with 36 participants emphasizing the importance of equipping both educators and students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate intercultural interactions. Collaborating with local communities, mentioned by 27 participants, enables educators to incorporate local knowledge and experiences into the curriculum, fostering a deeper understanding of the target culture. Encouraging student interaction (24 participants) promotes cross-cultural communication and engagement among students, enhancing their intercultural competence. Adapting teaching materials (18 participants) involves modifying existing resources to better align with the cultural contexts and backgrounds of the students. Lastly, 9 participants mentioned other strategies not specified in the table embedded in the figure.

These findings indicate that educators employ a range of strategies to address the challenges, emphasizing the significance of incorporating authentic cultural materials, providing cultural sensitivity training, and fostering collaboration with local communities in promoting intercultural integration in EFL curricula.

Quantitative Findings: The participants were also asked to rate the effectiveness of different strategies in overcoming the identified challenges. The results are summarized in the table below:

Table 5: Rating of Effectiveness of Strategies Employed by Educators

Strategies	Mean Rating (1-5)	Standard Deviation
Incorporating authentic cultural materials	4.42	0.91
Providing cultural sensitivity training	4.08	1.02
Collaborating with local communities	3.78	1.05
Encouraging student interaction	3.56	0.98
Adapting teaching materials	3.24	0.89
Others	2.94	0.77

Source: Field Research

Note: The mean rating is based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (**not effective at all**) to 5 (**highly effective**).

- ✚ Table 5 presents the effectiveness ratings of strategies employed by educators in overcoming the challenges of integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo. The strategies are evaluated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not effective at all) to 5 (highly effective).
- ✚ According to the mean ratings, incorporating authentic cultural materials received the highest effectiveness rating with a mean of 4.42 (SD = 0.91). This suggests that educators find this strategy highly effective in promoting intercultural understanding and engagement among students.
- ✚ Providing cultural sensitivity training also received a relatively high mean rating of 4.08 (SD = 1.02). This indicates that educators recognize the effectiveness of equipping themselves and their students with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate intercultural interactions.
- ✚ Collaborating with local communities received a mean rating of 3.78 (SD = 1.05). Although slightly lower than the previous strategies, it still reflects a positive evaluation of the impact of involving local communities in the curriculum to enhance intercultural learning.
- ✚ Encouraging student interaction received a mean rating of 3.56 (SD = 0.98), indicating that educators consider this strategy moderately effective in promoting cross-cultural communication and engagement among students.
- ✚ Adapting teaching materials, with a mean rating of 3.24 (SD = 0.89), and other unspecified strategies, with a mean rating of 2.94 (SD = 0.77), received relatively lower effectiveness ratings compared to the other strategies.

In sum, the results from Table 5 indicate that educators perceive incorporating authentic cultural materials as the most effective strategy (mean rating of 4.42), followed by providing cultural sensitivity training (mean rating of 4.08) and collaborating with local communities (mean rating of 3.78). These findings highlight the importance of utilizing authentic cultural materials and offering cultural sensitivity training in successfully integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula. It is recommended that these strategies be

given emphasis in professional development programs and curriculum design to enhance students' intercultural competence.

3.3. Impact of Integrating Intercultural Components on Students' Language Proficiency and Cultural Awareness

✚ **Quantitative Findings:** The participants were asked to assess the impact of integrating intercultural components on students' language proficiency and cultural awareness. The results are summarized in the table below:

Table 6: Impact of Integrating Intercultural Components on Students

Impact	Percentage (%)
Improved language proficiency	82%
Enhanced cultural awareness	78%

Source: Field Research

The quantitative findings indicate that a significant percentage of participants (82%) reported that integrating intercultural components had a positive impact on students' language proficiency. Furthermore, a majority of participants (78%) stated that integrating intercultural components also enhanced students' cultural awareness. These findings highlight the effectiveness of integrating intercultural components in English language curricula in improving students' language skills and fostering cultural awareness.

✚ In short, the results of this study can be summarized as follows:

Table 7: Summary of the findings

Research Question	Findings
Q1. Challenges in integrating intercultural components	The challenges faced by educators in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo were identified through qualitative data analysis. The challenges included limited resources, cultural adaptation difficulties, lack of training opportunities, time constraints, lack of support from stakeholders, language barriers, and other miscellaneous challenges.
Q2. Strategies to overcome challenges and effectively integrate intercultural components	Strategies devised by educators to overcome the challenges of integrating intercultural components were identified through qualitative data analysis. These strategies included incorporating authentic cultural materials, providing cultural sensitivity training, collaborating with local communities, encouraging student interaction, adapting teaching materials, and other unspecified strategies.
Q3. Impact on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness	The impact of integrating intercultural components on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness was assessed through quantitative data analysis. The findings indicated a strong positive correlation between the integration of intercultural components and improved intercultural competence among students. Additionally, a majority of educators reported a positive impact on students' language proficiency and cultural awareness after implementing intercultural components in their curricula.

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.76, p < 0.001$) between the integration of intercultural components and improved intercultural competence among students. This statistically significant correlation highlights the importance of

incorporating intercultural elements in EFL curricula to enhance students' intercultural competence.

Overall, this section provides a concise overview of the key findings related to the research questions, including the identified challenges faced by educators in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula in Benin and Togo, the strategies employed to overcome these challenges, and the impact of integrating intercultural components on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness. The statistical analysis, specifically the correlation analysis, further reinforces the significant relationship between the integration of intercultural components and enhanced intercultural competence. In the upcoming section, a comprehensive discussion of these findings is presented, examining their connections to existing literature and theoretical frameworks, and exploring the implications for intercultural education in EFL curricula.

4. Discussion

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the research findings, focusing on the discussion of the challenges encountered, strategies employed, and the impact of integrating intercultural components in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curricula in Benin and Togo. It delves into a detailed examination of the specific difficulties faced by educators, explores the approaches devised to overcome these challenges, and evaluates the effects on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness. Additionally, the section establishes connections with relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, underscoring the significance of these findings in the context of intercultural education within EFL curricula.

4.1. Unveiling the Challenges Faced by Educators in Integrating Intercultural Components into EFL Curricula in Benin and Togo

To explore the challenges faced by educators in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula, the study employed a rigorous qualitative analysis. Through this analysis, the challenges were identified and categorized, offering valuable insights into the difficulties faced by educators. Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of these challenges, presenting their frequency and percentage within the sample. The identified challenges include limited resources, cultural adaptation difficulties, lack of training opportunities, time constraints, lack of support from stakeholders, language barriers, and various miscellaneous challenges.

The findings from this study provide strong support for Hypothesis 1, which posits that educators encounter a range of challenges when incorporating intercultural components into EFL curricula. By thoroughly examining and documenting these challenges, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the obstacles faced by educators in this context.

Comparisons with relevant studies from the existing literature further strengthen the significance of these findings. Notably, Reid (2015) highlights the challenge of limited resources, which resonates with the findings of this study. Additionally, Byram (1997) draws attention to the difficulties associated with cultural adaptation, aligning with one of the major challenges identified in the current research. These comparisons enhance the robustness of the study's findings and emphasize the common hurdles faced by educators when integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula.

4.2. Strategies for Overcoming Challenges and Facilitating the Integration of Intercultural Components into EFL Curricula in Benin and Togo

To address this issue, the study delved into the strategies employed by educators to overcome the challenges identified in Research Question 1. Through qualitative data analysis, the study uncovered a range of strategies utilized by educators in their efforts to effectively integrate intercultural components into EFL curricula. These strategies were then summarized and illustrated in Figure 2, highlighting their respective frequencies.

The identified strategies encompass a diverse set of approaches, including incorporating authentic cultural materials, providing cultural sensitivity training, collaborating with local communities, encouraging student interaction, adapting teaching materials, and other unspecified strategies. These findings offer valuable insights into the ways educators navigate the challenges they face, providing practical guidance for overcoming obstacles and fostering successful integration of intercultural components.

The findings align closely with Hypothesis 2, which suggests that effective strategies can be devised to overcome the challenges encountered by educators. By showcasing the range of strategies employed in the field, the study contributes to the existing knowledge base on intercultural education in EFL curricula. Moreover, drawing comparisons with relevant studies from the existing literature enhances the validity of the findings. For instance, Sougari and Sifakis (2007) emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity training, while Kramersch and Sullivan (1996) highlight the significance of student interaction, aligning with the strategies identified in the current study. These comparisons reinforce the effectiveness and relevance of the strategies employed by educators to successfully integrate intercultural components into EFL curricula.

4.3. The Impact of Integrating Intercultural Components on Students' Interpersonal Competence, Language Proficiency, and Cultural Awareness

Through rigorous quantitative data analysis, the study endeavored to examine the influence of integrating intercultural components on three key aspects: students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness. The resulting findings, meticulously presented in Table 6, shed light on the profound and positive impact that emerges from the incorporation of intercultural components. Notably, a considerable

percentage of the participants conveyed noteworthy enhancements in their language proficiency, with an impressive 82% reporting improvements. Moreover, an overwhelming 78% of participants expressed a notable increase in their cultural awareness, underscoring the substantial gains resulting directly from the integration of intercultural components within the EFL curricula.

These findings strongly support Hypothesis 3, which posits that integrating intercultural components positively influences students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness. By quantifying the impact and highlighting the substantial improvements reported by students, the study sheds light on the educational benefits of incorporating intercultural components into EFL curricula.

To further situate these findings within the existing literature, comparisons were made with studies that investigate the impact of integrating intercultural components on language learning outcomes. Notably, studies such as Lee et al. (2023) and Kretzer and Kaschula (2021) provide additional evidence supporting the positive impact of integrating intercultural components on language proficiency and cultural awareness. These comparisons enhance the credibility and significance of the findings, reaffirming the value of incorporating intercultural components in EFL curricula.

In sum, this study's findings provide valuable insights into the integration of intercultural components in EFL curricula, enhancing our comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted landscape. Through meticulous examination and analysis, the study explores the challenges confronted by educators, the strategies devised to overcome these obstacles, and the resulting positive impact on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness. By delving into these aspects, the research deepens our understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in intercultural education.

Furthermore, this study transcends the confines of its own findings by establishing meaningful connections and comparisons with relevant literature. By engaging in a scholarly dialogue, the study not only validates its own results but also sheds light on the broader implications within the field of intercultural education in EFL curricula. The parallels drawn and the insights gleaned from existing scholarly works underscore the significance and applicability of the study's findings, thereby contributing to the advancement of intercultural education theory and practice.

Ultimately, this research serves as a crucial stepping stone toward a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the challenges, strategies, and impacts associated with the integration of intercultural components in EFL curricula. The knowledge gained from this study has the potential to inform and guide educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in their efforts to foster intercultural competence, enhance language proficiency, and promote cultural awareness among students. By enriching their educational experiences, this research prepares students for the increasingly interconnected and diverse global society they will navigate in the future.

5. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Suggestions

5.1. Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the integration of intercultural components in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curricula in Benin and Togo. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis, the study has addressed three key research questions: the challenges faced by educators, the strategies employed to overcome these challenges, and the impact of integrating intercultural components on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness.

The findings revealed several challenges encountered by educators in integrating intercultural components into EFL curricula, including limited resources, cultural adaptation difficulties, lack of training opportunities, time constraints, lack of support from stakeholders, language barriers, and other miscellaneous challenges. These challenges highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of intercultural education and underscore the need for tailored strategies and support to facilitate successful integration.

Educators have devised various strategies to address these challenges, including incorporating authentic cultural materials, providing cultural sensitivity training, collaborating with local communities, encouraging student interaction, and adapting teaching materials. These strategies have been effective in promoting intercultural understanding, enhancing language proficiency, and fostering cultural awareness among students.

The quantitative data analysis further confirmed the positive impact of integrating intercultural components on students' language proficiency and cultural awareness. A significant percentage of participants reported improvements in language proficiency (82%) and enhanced cultural awareness (78%) as a direct result of incorporating intercultural components into the EFL curricula.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by educators, the strategies employed to overcome these challenges, and the positive impact of integrating intercultural components on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness. By establishing connections with existing literature, the study highlights the broader implications of these findings in the field of intercultural education in EFL curricula.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are provided for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in intercultural education in EFL curricula in Benin and Togo:

1. **Resource Allocation:** Address the challenge of limited resources by allocating sufficient funds and materials for intercultural components in EFL curricula. This includes providing textbooks, cultural artifacts, and other relevant materials to support intercultural learning.

2. **Professional Development:** Offer regular and comprehensive training opportunities for educators to enhance their intercultural teaching skills. This training should focus on cultural sensitivity, effective integration of intercultural components, and strategies for overcoming challenges.
3. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Foster collaboration and support from stakeholders, including school administrators, parents, and the local community. Encourage their involvement in curriculum development, cultural activities, and resource sharing to create a supportive environment for intercultural education.
4. **Authentic Cultural Materials:** Incorporate authentic cultural materials, such as literature, music, and videos, to provide students with firsthand experiences of diverse perspectives. These materials should represent different cultures and promote a deeper understanding of global issues and intercultural interactions.
5. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Implement cultural sensitivity training programs for both educators and students. These programs should focus on developing intercultural communication skills, fostering empathy, and promoting respect for diverse cultures and perspectives.
6. **Student Interaction:** Encourage and facilitate student interaction, both within the classroom and through community engagement. This can include group projects, collaborative learning activities, cultural exchanges, and opportunities for students to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.
7. **Curriculum Adaptation:** Adapt teaching materials and activities to align with the cultural contexts and backgrounds of the students. This can involve modifying existing resources or creating new materials that reflect the diversity of students' experiences and promote cultural inclusivity.

5.3. Suggestions for Further Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the challenges, strategies, and impacts of integrating intercultural components in EFL curricula, there are areas that warrant further research. The following suggestions are provided to guide future studies:

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of integrating intercultural components on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness. This would provide a deeper understanding of the sustainability and durability of the observed impacts.
2. **Comparative Studies:** Compare the experiences of educators and students in different countries or regions to explore the contextual factors that influence the integration of intercultural components in EFL curricula. This would shed light on the cultural and educational dynamics that shape intercultural education practices.

By pursuing these avenues of further research, scholars and practitioners can continue to deepen our understanding of intercultural education in EFL curricula and contribute to the advancement of theory and practice in this field.

This study has four main limitations. Firstly, its findings are **context-specific**, rooted in the unique socio-cultural, linguistic, and educational contexts of Benin and Togo. Consequently, they may not apply to different regions. Secondly, **generalization of the study's findings should be approached with caution** since they are specific to Benin and Togo and may not be applicable elsewhere. Thirdly, the study is **learner-centric**, primarily focusing on EFL learners, which limits a comprehensive examination of educators' perspectives. Finally, the study has a **limited temporal scope**, providing a snapshot of challenges and strategies at the time of data collection and not considering potential changes in educational contexts and policies in the future. These limitations should be considered when interpreting and applying the study's findings.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this study has shed light on the challenges faced by educators, the strategies employed to overcome these challenges, and the positive impact of integrating intercultural components on students' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and cultural awareness in Benin and Togo. However, it is vital to acknowledge the study's limitations, particularly its context specificity, the caution required when generalizing findings, its learner-centric focus, and its temporal scope. Nevertheless, the findings underscore the importance of intercultural education and provide practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders. By embracing these recommendations and continuing to explore this field through further research, we can foster a more inclusive and culturally responsive educational environment that prepares students for the diverse and interconnected world they will encounter.

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