

**Enhancing Intercultural Communicative Competence and Cultural Awareness
through ESP Materials for Iranian Psychology Students****Abstract****Article Type:****Original Research****Authors:****Mona Zanganeh¹**ORCID: [0009-0003-9930-1769](https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9930-1769)**Bahram Mowlaie²**ORCID: [0000-0002-5248-5690](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5248-5690)**Hossein Rahmanpanah³**ORCID: [0000-0001-9696-8857](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9696-8857)**Article History:****Received:** 2025.07.24**Accepted:** 2025.11.17**Published:** 2025.12.15

This study investigated the impact of newly developed English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials on enhancing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and cultural awareness among Iranian undergraduate psychology students. Addressing the need for culturally responsive communication and limitations of conventional materials, researchers designed a 5-unit coursebook based on Byram's (1997) ICC framework and the ICC materials development framework proposed by Mishan and Kiss (2024). Employing a mixed-methods design over a 10-week semester, 60 homogeneous students were equally assigned into two groups: an experimental group received newly developed ESP materials that integrated cross-cultural case studies, dialogic activities, and culturally diverse psychological modules, while the control group used traditional textbooks. Quantitative data from ICC questionnaires revealed a significant increase in ICC within the experimental group. Qualitative analysis of student reflections and interviews indicated enhanced intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and cultural awareness, reflecting meaningful shifts in perspectives for the experimental group. These findings underscore the effectiveness of ICC-focused ESP materials in preparing psychology students for culturally sensitive practice. The study contributes to the development of ESP materials by advocating for the intentional integration of intercultural competence to cultivate globally competent practitioners.

Key Words: Cultural awareness, ESP materials, Intercultural Communicative Competence development, Intercultural communicative competence

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1. Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has emerged as a cornerstone of effective global communication. Defined as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Byram, 1997), ICC extends beyond mere language proficiency. It encompasses crucial intercultural knowledge, open attitudes, critical cultural awareness, and robust interactional skills. Byram's foundational model highlights five key dimensions: attitudes of openness and curiosity, knowledge of social practices, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Mastering these competencies is vital for learners to navigate intercultural encounters with sensitivity, adaptability, and respect (Deardorff, 2020; Lázár, 2022).

Given the constant intercultural exchange characterizing our globalized world, the integration of ICC into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is more urgent than ever (Ayed, 2022; Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013). Within English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where language instruction is tailored to professional and academic domains, fostering ICC becomes paramount. For instance, in disciplines like psychology, students routinely engage with culturally diverse populations in clinical, academic, and research settings. This engagement makes strong intercultural competence an undeniable professional necessity (D'Orazi & Marangell, 2005; Yamazaki, 2005).

Despite this clear and growing need, many existing ESP materials—especially those designed for psychology students—critically fall short in meaningfully addressing ICC. Research by Amerian and Tajabadi (2020), Hoffman et al. (2015), and Morady Moghaddam and Tirnaz (2024) consistently reveals that these materials often overemphasize technical vocabulary and Western-centric perspectives. This oversight neglects crucial intercultural engagement and fails to cultivate inclusive global viewpoints. In contexts like Iran, where instructional materials serve as learners' primary exposure to English, this deficiency can significantly hinder their intercultural readiness and cultural awareness (Newton et al., 2010; Rezaei et al., 2020).

This critical gap unequivocally underscores why materials development has become a central concern in applied linguistics. Well-designed materials are not merely conduits for linguistic input; they are powerful tools that actively foster discovery, reflection, and interaction, making learning cognitively engaging and culturally resonant (Tomlinson, 2023). Effective coursebooks and other instructional resources must facilitate deeper connections between learners' own experiences and the target language culture (Mishan & Kiss, 2024; Newton et al., 2020). When widely adopted global textbooks fail to address specific local and cultural contexts,

it reinforces the crucial need for context-sensitive and purpose-driven materials that directly support learners' development of ICC and cultural awareness (Munezane, 2025; Sheldon, 1988).

In response to these identified challenges, the present study focused on the development and rigorous evaluation of new instructional materials specifically tailored for Iranian undergraduate psychology students at one of the branches of Islamic Azad University in Tehran. Designed within an ESP framework, these materials were meticulously structured according to Byram's (1997) ICC model and Mishan and Kiss's (2004) framework. Mishan and Kiss's framework provided additional guidance by emphasizing educational objectives such as cognitive and affective challenge, and intercultural learning objectives focused on making connections between cultures and fostering critical reflection on cultural assumptions. They explicitly target the enhancement of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural awareness through highly relevant, psychology-related content. Indeed, the researchers investigated the effectiveness of these materials in fostering students' ICC development and cultural awareness using a mixed-methods design. In light of this background, this study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent do the newly-developed ESP materials significantly impact Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) among Iranian undergraduate psychology students?

RQ2. To what extent do the newly-developed ESP materials enhance the cultural awareness of Iranian undergraduate psychology students?

2. Review of the Related Literature

The development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has become increasingly vital in language education, particularly for students in specialized professional fields such as psychology. Given that the field of psychology inherently involves engagement with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, psychology students need to develop the skills necessary to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural boundaries (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). ICC is a multifaceted construct that encompasses the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed for effective intercultural interaction. For psychology students, this competence is particularly important because psychological theories, research methodologies, and clinical practices are deeply influenced by cultural contexts (Lee & Khawaja, 2013; Lewenstein, 2017; Patterson et al., 2018; Wickline et al., 2024).

2.1. Intercultural Communicative Competence: Core Concepts and Byram's Model

ICC is not merely about linguistic proficiency; it involves a broader set of competencies that enable individuals to interact meaningfully across cultures (Fantini, 2021; Klyukanov, 2024). Among the various theoretical frameworks, Byram's (1997) model of ICC has gained widespread prominence in foreign language teaching due to its comprehensive and practical elaboration of the dimensions essential for intercultural interaction. This model underscores that intercultural competence is achieved through the development of five interlinked components, often referred to as 'savoirs':

Savoir être (Attitudes): This refers to an individual's open-mindedness, curiosity, and willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief in one's own culture. It involves openness to new experiences and a readiness to relativize one's own values, beliefs, and behaviors, and to avoid prejudging others.

Savoirs (Knowledge): This encompasses knowledge of one's own culture and other cultures, including social groups, their products, and practices, as well as knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels. It also includes understanding the explicit and implicit cultural norms that govern communication.

Savoir comprendre (Skills of Interpreting and Relating): This is the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, explain it, and relate it to documents or events from one's own culture. It involves identifying and explaining potential misunderstandings or areas of cultural difference.

Savoir apprendre/faire (Skills of Discovery and Interaction): This refers to the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real-time communication and interaction. This includes the capacity to observe, analyze, and infer cultural meaning.

Savoir s'engager (Critical Cultural Awareness): This is the ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. It encourages a critical stance towards cultural assumptions and values, fostering responsible global citizenship.

These dimensions are particularly relevant for students in fields like psychology, where understanding human behavior requires the consideration of diverse cultural contexts. Psychology students, therefore, need not only to grasp psychological theories but also to understand how these theories are shaped by cultural norms and practices. Without adequate

cultural understanding, psychology students risk misapplying psychological principles or failing to account for cultural differences that may affect their research or clinical work (Lewenstein, 2017).

2.2. The Interplay of Language Learning Materials and ICC Development

Language learning materials are fundamental components of any successful language acquisition process, serving as critical mediators for effective teaching and learning (Tomlinson, 2011). These materials function as a core resource, guiding learners through established curricula and facilitating deeper engagement. Crucially, their design directly influences the extent to which learners develop intercultural communicative competence and cultural awareness.

However, many existing ESP coursebooks, particularly those for psychology students, tend to prioritize purely linguistic proficiency over the cultivation of essential intercultural competence (Aguilar & Rodríguez, 2012; Çelik & Erbay, 2013). This imbalance often stems from a global "fit-to-all" approach to coursebook design (Sheldon, 1988; Tomlinson, 2012), which may overlook the specific cultural and communicative needs of learners in unique contexts. Consequently, such materials may leave students ill-prepared to engage meaningfully in real-world professional settings, where understanding cultural nuances is paramount (Mitchell, 2016). Given the centrality of cultural understanding to the psychology discipline, ESP materials designed for psychology students must be purpose-built to integrate ICC components, thereby equipping them to navigate intercultural interactions in globalized professional environments (Arno-Macia & Aguilar, 2018).

Therefore, the recognized need for ESP learners, particularly in culturally sensitive fields like psychology, to develop strong intercultural communicative competence underscores the critical role of thoughtfully designed materials in applied linguistics (Tomlinson, 2023). Moving beyond traditional approaches that prioritize linguistic skills alone, effective instructional resources must intentionally integrate cultural elements, utilizing authentic scenarios (Berardo, 2006), to create a context-rich environment directly conducive to fostering both ICC and deeper cultural awareness (Mishan & Kiss, 2024; Munezane, 2025; Sheldon, 1988).

2.3. Integrating ICC through Material Design

To effectively foster ICC, materials development must go beyond superficial cultural content. It needs to involve designing materials that systematically target Byram's (1997) "savoirs":

For developing *Savoir être (Attitudes)*: Materials should expose learners to diverse perspectives through authentic texts, videos, and case studies that challenge

preconceived notions and encourage empathy. Activities could involve perspective-taking exercises or critical incident analyses where learners reflect on different cultural reactions to a situation.

For building Savoirs (Knowledge): Materials need to provide explicit information about target cultures (social practices, beliefs, values, communication styles) and encourage comparison with learners' own culture. This can be achieved through readings, factual presentations, or mini-ethnographies of cultural phenomena. For psychology students, this means exploring how psychological concepts manifest differently across cultures.

- ≠ **For enhancing Savoir comprendre (Skills of Interpreting and Relating):** Materials should offer opportunities to analyze culturally rich texts or interactions, identify potential misinterpretations, and develop strategies for relating diverse cultural meanings. Exercises might involve interpreting non-verbal cues or analyzing communication breakdowns in cross-cultural scenarios.

For cultivating Savoir apprendre/faire (Skills of Discovery and Interaction): Materials should incorporate interactive tasks that simulate real-world intercultural encounters, allowing learners to practice newly acquired knowledge and skills. Role-plays, simulations, problem-solving tasks involving cultural differences, and guided observation tasks (e.g., analyzing cultural artifacts or media) are vital.

For fostering Savoir s'engager (Critical Cultural Awareness): This is perhaps the most advanced and crucial aspect. Materials should include activities that prompt learners to critically evaluate values and beliefs in both their own and other cultures. This could involve discussions of ethical dilemmas with cultural dimensions, analysis of cultural stereotypes, or debates on global issues from multiple cultural viewpoints. The goal is to move beyond mere tolerance to a deeper, critical understanding of cultural relativity and societal values.

Although psychology is inherently cross-cultural, ESP coursebooks for psychology students often prioritize linguistic mechanics—such as academic writing and discipline-specific vocabulary—while offering limited intercultural content (Ali Akbari, 2004; McConachy, 2019; Sharif & Yarmohammadi, 2013; Siddiqi, 2011). Many of these materials predominantly reflect Western perspectives (Ryder et al., 0000), which restrict students' exposure to the diverse viewpoints essential for developing ICC. Without such exposure, students may struggle to navigate multicultural academic and professional environments effectively.

While Iran is sometimes perceived as culturally homogeneous, its universities enroll students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and frequently engage in international collaborations. These factors create inherently diverse contexts for intercultural learning. Consequently, pedagogical tools such as case studies, culturally adapted interventions, and reflective exercises are essential for fostering perspective-taking, empathetic communication, and a deeper understanding of cultural influences (Lewenstein, 2017; Mitchell, 2016).

Considering the above points, this study had a dual objectives. First, it aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of newly developed ICC-focused ESP materials in enhancing students' linguistic proficiency, intercultural competence, and cultural awareness. These skills enable students to understand diverse perspectives, interpret others' experiences, and communicate effectively—competencies that support academic, research, and professional development, including in clinical contexts, without implying direct clinical training. Second, it strived to address the gaps in existing materials by designing learner-centered ESP resources based on Mishan's (0044) framework. The key elements of these materials included connecting cultures, fostering comparative perspectives, challenging assumptions, promoting dialogue, and developing empathy. Pedagogical strategies such as structured reflective tasks, critical thinking prompts, and learner presentations were integrated to support active engagement and the real-world application of these skills.

3. Method

3.1. Design

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2005), involving the concurrent collection and independent analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of the new instructional materials and to gain a deeper, triangulated understanding of the development of students' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

3.2. Context and Participants

This study was conducted at one of the branches of Azad University in Tehran, Iran. This university was chosen due to the researchers' direct access to the student participants currently enrolled in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses within the psychology department.

The Participants in this study were 60 undergraduate psychology students (32 females,

28 males; mean age = 23.9 years, range = 22–26). All were senior students, ensuring comparable disciplinary backgrounds. Initially, 75 students from ESP courses volunteered and were recruited through convenience sampling (Creswell, 2012). To reduce heterogeneity, all 75 completed the Cambridge English B1 Preliminary (PET) reading test, to ensure participants possessed the necessary linguistic ability to comprehend the ESP materials and engage meaningfully with the complex reflective and communicative tasks. Based on the CEFR scoring band (140–159), 15 students were excluded, leaving 60 participants with the required intermediate proficiency.

The 60 eligible students were then randomly assigned using a computer-generated random number sequence into either an experimental group ($n = 30$), which received ICC-focused ESP materials, or a control group ($n = 30$), which used *The Elements of Counseling* (Meier & Davis, 2010).

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics for Initial PET Reading Scores of Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	M	SD
Experimental	30	148.87	5.12
Control	30	148.13	5.58

As shown in Table 1, the mean scores of the two groups were almost similar. An independent samples t-test confirmed no statistically significant difference, $t(58) = 0.54$, $p = .591$, indicating that the groups were homogeneous at baseline.

The same instructor (who was also one of the researchers) taught both groups using the same lesson plans, equal instructional hours, and identical classroom conditions. All participants provided written informed consent, were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty, and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. Ethics approval was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee at the University.

3.3. Instruments

To investigate the development of ICC and cultural awareness among Iranian EFL psychology students, three complementary instruments were employed: a validated questionnaire, structured reflective tasks, and semi-structured interviews. This mixed-methods approach enabled a robust triangulation of findings, capturing both measurable change and deeper learner perspectives.

a) Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire (ICCQ)

To address the first research question, a 22-item Intercultural Communicative Competence Questionnaire (ICCQ) was administered to both the experimental and control groups at the pre-test and post-test stages (see Appendix A). The instrument was adapted from Mirzaei anz Forouzandeh (0033) and grounded in Deardorff's (0066) framework.. It was explicitly aligned with Byram's (9977) three main components—attitudes, knowledge, and skills—ensuring conceptual coherence with the instructional design and the objectives of the newly developed materials. The ICCQ employs a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and evaluates three key domains: knowledge (cultural self-awareness and sociolinguistic knowledge), skills (cross-cultural communication), and attitudes (openness, respect for difference, and ambiguity tolerance). These domains were selected as they directly correspond to the learning outcomes targeted by the ESP materials, with the skills domain of cross-cultural communication encompassing Byram's *savoir-faire* (interpreting/relating and discovery/interaction skills).

To ensure cultural relevance and clarity for Iranian EFL psychology students, the ICCQ was reviewed by three experts in applied linguistics and intercultural communication. Minor modifications were made, including adaptation of specific items to reflect culturally relevant examples and simplification of language for clarity. The instrument retained acceptable psychometric properties from its original validation (KMO = .11, Bartlett's test $p < .11$, $\alpha = .11$). In the present study, reliability analysis with the sample confirmed consistent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .777.. Post-adaptation validity was confirmed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

b) Student Reflection Tasks

To qualitatively trace the development of ICC and address the first research question, students in the experimental group completed structured reflective tasks throughout the 10-week intervention. These tasks were explicitly designed to align with Byram's five ICC components and to promote metacognitive engagement with intercultural insights.

Weekly reflection prompts, adapted from Deardorff (2011), encouraged students to respond to questions such as: "I learned that... This is important because... As a result of this learning, I will..." . Reflections were completed individually in Persian and submitted electronically, typically requiring 150–250 words each. The researcher-instructor facilitated instructions to ensure consistency but did not influence participants' reflections, maintaining neutrality by only

grading the task for completion, not content or viewpoints.

Reflections were thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Two researchers independently coded the data, with initial codes deductively aligned to Byram's (1997) ICC model. The coding was performed on the original Persian texts to preserve nuance and minimize translation bias. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa = .222$), indicating strong agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion to enhance credibility and dependability. This systematic approach ensured a transparent examination of ICC development while maintaining participant anonymity.

c) Semi-Structured Interviews

To gain deeper insights into the impact of the newly developed materials on students' cultural awareness and ICC, addressing the second research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 students purposefully selected from the experimental group before and after the 10-week intervention. Selection ensured balance in gender, academic performance, and engagement levels to capture diverse perspectives on the intervention's effects.

The interview protocol was developed based on the ICC literature (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2011) and aligned with the five ICC components: attitudes, knowledge, interpreting/relating skills, discovery/interaction skills, and critical cultural awareness. Questions were piloted to ensure clarity and relevance (see Appendix B for the interview protocol).

Interviews lasted approximately 20–30 minutes, were audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Two researchers independently coded the transcripts. Inter-rater reliability was calculated at 0.99, indicating substantial agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. To further enhance credibility, initial findings were subject to member checking with two participants. Selected excerpts were translated into English for reporting, preserving meaning and nuance. This qualitative data provided rich, contextual evidence of the change in student perspectives and enhanced cultural awareness attributed directly to the newly developed ESP materials.

3.4. Materials

In this study, the development of instructional materials involved selecting, adapting, and creating resources tailored for undergraduate psychology students at one of the branches of

IAU in Tehran. The core textbook, *The Elements of Counseling* by Meier and Davis (2010, 7th ed.), provided foundational disciplinary content but lacked explicit guidance on intercultural and communicative competencies. For example, although the traditional textbook presented theoretical explanations of empathy and counseling techniques, it did not address cultural variability in rapport-building, emotional expression, or dialogic communication across diverse cultural contexts.

To address these critical disciplinary and communicative gaps, the researcher designed five comprehensive instructional units integrating linguistic, psychological, and intercultural dimensions. These units were selected as the most salient themes for developing entry-level counseling skills and intercultural competence within a 10-week intervention period (each unit covering two weeks):

1. Building Rapport and Trust in Counseling
2. Understanding and Expressing Emotions Across Cultures
3. Managing Stress and Coping Strategies
4. Active Listening and Reflective Responses
5. Ethical and Intercultural Sensitivity in Counseling Practice

Each unit included a reading section based on authentic or adapted psychology texts, accompanied by pre-reading and while-reading questions as well as post-reading reflective and dialogic activities. The tasks comprised comprehension questions, vocabulary matching, scenario-based discussions, pair or group role-plays, cultural comparison exercises, and short writing assignments that encouraged learners to connect psychological concepts with culturally diverse contexts.

For instance, within the "Building Rapport and Trust" unit, a scenario-based discussion activity was specifically designed to target attitudes (*savoir-être*) and interpreting/relating skills (*savoir-comprendre*). Students were presented with a scenario where a client exhibits indirectness regarding a family conflict, and the task required learners to discuss how different cultural norms surrounding face and directness could influence the counselor's interpretation and response, moving beyond a universal application of clinical empathy.

Additionally, each unit featured a brief multiple-choice quiz and self-assessment prompts designed to help students monitor their progress in intercultural awareness and professional communication. Specific examples of activities and a one-sample unit are provided in Appendix

C.

The adapted materials were reviewed by two experts: one holding a Ph.D. in psychology and the other an applied linguist specializing in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The review process focused on the accuracy of the psychological content, the relevance of intercultural tasks, the clarity of instructions, and the alignment with ICC objectives. Based on their feedback, minor revisions were made, including refining reflective prompts, simplifying complex scenarios, and clarifying task instructions to enhance learner engagement and comprehension.

The development process was rigorously guided by Byram's (1997) ICC model, Tomlinson's (2001) principles of ESP materials design, and Mishan and Kiss's (2004) intercultural materials framework. Specifically, the materials adhered to Tomlinson's principles of "impact" and "authenticity," ensuring the psychological scenarios were intellectually stimulating and presented in realistic contexts. They also incorporated Mishan and Kiss's emphasis on "critical inquiry" and "affective challenge" through open-ended tasks that required students to engage in critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*). Each unit was meticulously designed to integrate linguistic, psychological, and intercultural elements, fostering reflection, purposeful interaction, and deeper cross-cultural understanding.

In summary, the materials effectively align with these theoretical frameworks, ultimately preparing learners to operate with heightened sensitivity, adaptability, and insight within the "third space" between cultures (Bhabha, 1994).

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

To mitigate potential researcher and participant bias, a standardized protocol was applied throughout all data collection phases. This included structured interview guides and independent coding of all qualitative data to ensure inter-rater reliability. Additionally, the same instructor taught both groups to minimize instructional inconsistencies. To mitigate potential performance bias or enthusiasm bias, the instructor adhered strictly to standardized, pre-developed lesson plans for both groups.

The study was conducted over a 10-week semester at one of the branches of Azad University in Tehran and involved an experimental group and a control group of undergraduate psychology students. Data were collected in two phases: a pre-intervention phase to establish baseline measurements and a post-intervention phase to evaluate the impact of the intervention. All quantitative data were analyzed using raw pre- and post-test scores; no data points were excluded or adjusted, thereby preserving the integrity of the findings.

Pre-Intervention Phase (Week 1)

In Week 1, both groups completed the ICCQ as a pre-test. The assessment was administered simultaneously under standardized instructions. Concurrently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive subset of 10 students from the experimental group to establish a qualitative baseline for subsequent change in cultural awareness.

Intervention Phase (Weeks 2–9)

The intervention involved 16 instructional sessions (two 90-minute sessions per week) over eight weeks. The experimental group received instruction based on the newly developed ESP materials, while the control group followed the standard ESP textbook. Both groups received equal instructional time and were taught by the same instructor.

During this phase, the experimental group worked sequentially through the five instructional units. The five units were systematically distributed across the 16 sessions, with each unit being covered in three to four sessions to allow for depth of engagement with the reflective tasks. They completed structured reflection tasks after each unit. The control group completed standard textbook comprehension and grammar exercises without intercultural elements.

Post-Intervention Phase (Week 10)

In Week 10, both groups completed the ICCQ again as a post-test. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the same 10 selected students from the experimental group to explore their cultural awareness and perceptions of intercultural learning experiences attributable to the new materials.

3.6. Data Analysis

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and cultural awareness among Iranian EFL psychology students. Quantitative analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 28, with the significance level set at $p < .05$, while qualitative data were analyzed using a deductive thematic approach grounded in Byram's (1997) ICC framework.

For the quantitative data, analysis began with preliminary screening to ensure data accuracy and completeness, and to identify any missing values. The distribution of the data was examined to confirm that assumptions for parametric testing were satisfied. The internal consistency and reliability of the Intercultural Competence Questionnaire (ICCQ) were assessed for the study sample using Cronbach's alpha, which confirmed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .71$).

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and sample sizes, were calculated for pre- and post-intervention ICCQ scores for both the experimental and control groups to summarize overall trends and characteristics of the data. To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in addressing the first research question, inferential analyses were conducted. A paired-samples t-test examined whether the mean ICCQ scores of the experimental group differed significantly between pre- and post-intervention assessments. In addition, an independent-samples t-test was performed on post-intervention scores to compare the experimental and control groups, with Levene's Test for Equality of Variances applied to confirm the homogeneity of variance assumption. To assess the practical significance of the intervention, Cohen's w was calculated as a measure of effect size.

Qualitative analyses were conducted to address the second research question and to provide a deeper understanding of students' development in cultural awareness and ICC. Data from reflective journals and semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim, and since the original materials were in Persian, a rigorous translation process was employed to produce accurate English versions for analysis. The research team then engaged in repeated readings of the transcripts to familiarize themselves with the content and to generate initial codes identifying excerpts in which students expressed attitudes, knowledge, skills, or awareness relevant to intercultural encounters. These codes were systematically organized into five pre-defined themes corresponding to Byram's model: Attitudes (*savoir être*), Knowledge (*savoirs*), Skills of Interpreting and Relating (*savoir comprendre*), Skills of Discovery and Interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and Critical Cultural Awareness (*savoir s'engager*). To ensure rigor, coding and thematic categorization were independently reviewed by a second researcher, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was achieved, ensuring the final thematic structure accurately reflected the data.

To complement the qualitative analysis and facilitate triangulation, the coded data were quantitatively summarized by counting the number of students in the experimental group demonstrating evidence of development within each ICC component at pre- and post-intervention stages, thereby providing a numerical representation of qualitative shifts. A student was recorded as "demonstrating development" in an ICC component if at least one coded excerpt from their reflective journals or post-intervention interview transcripts aligned with the established thematic definition for that component. This provided the frequency counts for Table 7.

4. Results

This section presents the findings from the data analysis, organized by research question

4.1. Research Question One

4.1.1. Quantitative Data: ICC Questionnaire (ICCQ)

Prior to conducting the main analyses, the normality of the data was examined, and the reliability of the ICCQ was assessed as mentioned above. The ICCQ demonstrated acceptable reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of .71 as reported in the Instruments section. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for pre- and post-intervention ICC scores across both groups.

Table 2.

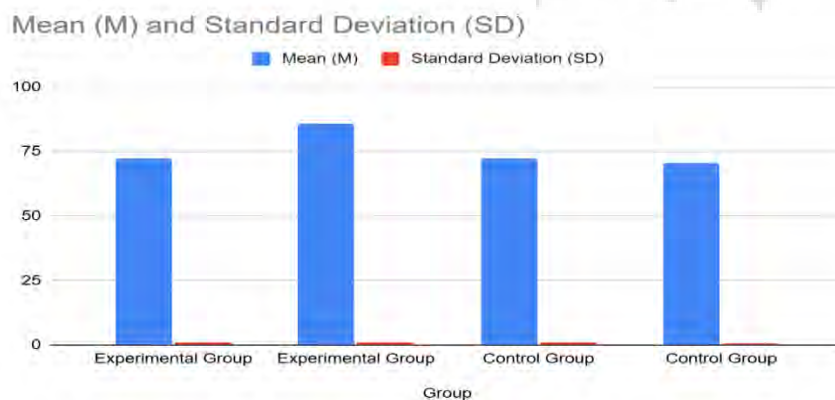
Descriptive Statistics for ICC Scores

Group	Time	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	N
Experimental Group	Pre-Intervention	72.30	1.10	30
Experimental Group	Post-Intervention	85.70	0.95	30
Control Group	Pre-Intervention	72.50	1.15	30
Control Group	Post-Intervention	70.50	0.85	30

Also, Figure 1 illustrates the mean ICC scores for both the experimental and control groups before and after the 10-week intervention. The experimental group exhibited a substantial increase in mean ICC scores from pre-intervention ($M = 72.30$) to post-intervention ($M = 85.70$), whereas the control group showed a slight decrease from pre-intervention ($M = 72.50$) to post-intervention ($M = 70.50$). It is noteworthy that the control group exhibited a slight decline in mean ICC scores post-intervention, suggesting that mere exposure to general ESP material does not facilitate ICC development, thereby underscoring the specific impact of the new materials.

Figure 1.

Mean ICC Scores Across Experimental and Control Groups at Pre- and Post-Intervention.



A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to examine the effect of the intervention on the experimental group's ICC scores.

Table 3.

Paired-Samples t-Test for Experimental Group ICC Scores

Comparison	Mean Difference	t	df	p
Pre-Intervention vs Post-Intervention	13.40	-12.34	29	< .001

The results, presented in Table 3, revealed a statistically significant improvement in ICC after the 10-week instructional period, $t(29) = -12.34$, $p < .001$, with a substantial mean increase of 13.40 points as observed in the pre- and post-intervention means in Table 2.

To determine the effectiveness of the new materials by comparing the experimental and control groups' ICC levels after the intervention, an independent samples *t*-test was performed. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Post-Intervention ICC Scores

Test	Statistic	df	p	Mean Difference
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F = 0.50	58	.48	
Independent Samples t-Test	t = 5.62	58	< .001	15.20

As shown in Table 4 Levene's Test for Equality of Variances indicated that the assumption of equal variances was met ($F = 0.50$, $df = 58$, $p = .48$). The results of the independent samples *t*-test revealed that the experimental group scored significantly higher on the post-intervention ICC questionnaire compared to the control group, $t(58) = 5.62$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.99$). This large effect size suggests a substantial practical significance of the new materials in enhancing intercultural communicative competence.

4.1.2. Qualitative Data: Reflective Journals as Supportive Evidence

To complement the quantitative ICCQ findings, qualitative data from student reflection journals and interviews were analyzed to provide a richer understanding of the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) across Byram's (1997) five components. Student responses, translated from Persian into English, were categorized under the overarching ICC dimensions: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Table 5 presents representative excerpts illustrating

these themes.

Table 5.

Student Reflections Categorized According to Byram's ICC Model

Byram's ICC Component	Thematic Code	Sample Student Reflection Excerpt
Attitudes	Openness to cultural diversity	"At first, I hesitated to discuss cultural differences, but now I appreciate diverse psychological perspectives"
Knowledge	Understanding cultural systems	"I learned how mental health treatment varies in different cultures, which broadened my understanding"
Skills of interpreting and relating	Comparing cultural meanings	"Analyzing body language differences helped me realize how gestures may be misinterpreted across cultures"
Skills of discovery and interaction	Active cultural inquiry	"I researched counseling practices abroad and asked my instructor questions to deepen my intercultural understanding."
Critical cultural awareness	Reflective evaluation of assumptions	"I used to think Western therapy was the standard, but now I see how culture influences views on counseling"

These reflections highlight the nuanced ways in which the new ESP materials influenced students' ICC development. For example, the journals illustrate increases in openness and reduced hesitation to discuss cultural differences, providing concrete evidence beyond the numerical gains captured by the ICCQ. Students' reflections also reveal a deeper understanding of cultural variations in psychological practices, conscious analysis of cross-cultural communication cues, and proactive engagement in learning from diverse cultural contexts. Most notably, the data illuminate the development of critical cultural awareness, as students reflected on prior assumptions and recognized how cultural perspectives shape counseling practices. Overall, the qualitative findings enrich the quantitative results by offering contextualized evidence of students' growth across all five ICC dimensions.

4.2. Research Question Two

This section addresses the second research question: To what extent do the newly-developed ESP materials enhance the cultural awareness of Iranian undergraduate psychology students? To explore this, qualitative data derived from pre- and post-intervention interviews with the experimental group were systematically analyzed. This analysis was specifically framed around Byram's (1997) five components of ICC. The subsequent findings detail how the instructional materials specifically influenced students' cultural awareness and sensitivity within relevant psychological contexts.

4.2.1. Attitudes (*Savoir Être*)

To assess students' attitudes, specifically their open-mindedness and curiosity, participants were asked: "How do you recognize and handle your own bias when trying to understand someone from a different culture?" Analysis of their responses revealed a significant shift in the experimental group post-intervention.

Pre-Intervention (Experimental Group): Many students struggled to define bias, often assuming that treating everyone identically negated personal bias. A common response was, "I try to treat everyone the same way, so I don't think bias is an issue."

Post-Intervention (Experimental Group): Students demonstrated significantly increased self-awareness, acknowledging the pervasive role of cultural background in shaping perceptions. For instance, one student articulated, "I now realize that I have unconscious bias that can affect my judgment. To handle them, I must first recognize them and then actively listen to the client's perspective"

4.2.2. Knowledge (*Savoirs*)

To evaluate the acquisition of cultural knowledge, the participants responded to: "How can cultural background influence the way people experience and talk about mental health?"

Pre-Intervention (Experimental Group): Students generally offered generic responses, lacking concrete explanations of cultural influences. A typical comment was, "Mental health problems are the same everywhere, but maybe some cultures don't talk about them."

Post-Intervention (Experimental Group): These students demonstrated a nuanced understanding of cultural variations in mental health expression, conceptualization, and treatment-seeking behaviors. For instance, one student explained, "Some cultures view depression as a physical illness rather than a mental one. Others may not even have a word for anxiety, which affects how people seek help."

4.2.3. Skills of Interpreting and Relating (*Savoir Comprendre*)

To gauge students' skills in interpreting and relating across cultures, they were asked: "If you had a client from a very different culture, how would you try to understand their feelings and experiences?" Responses indicated a marked improvement in cultural sensitivity within the experimental group.

Pre-Intervention (Experimental Group): Students predominantly emphasized applying universal psychological theories without accounting for cultural context. A typical response was, "I would diagnose them using what I learned in class. . ulture doesn't change psychological conditions."

Post-Intervention (Experimental Group): These students clearly acknowledged the imperative for culturally sensitive questioning and interpretation. One student articulated, "I would ask open-ended questions to understand their experiences before applying any psychological model. It's important to respect their cultural beliefs."

4.2.4. Skills of Discovery and Interaction (*Savoir Apprendre/Faire*)

To assess skills related to discovery and interaction, participants were asked: "If you had the chance to work with people from another culture, what would you do to learn more about their values or communication style?"

Pre-Intervention (Experimental Group): (Added for consistency) Students showed little initiative for cultural learning, often relying on existing knowledge. A representative comment was, "I would just follow what I know from psychology; I don't think I need to learn more about their culture."

Post-Intervention (Experimental Group): Students expressed a significantly greater appreciation for cultural diversity and articulated practical strategies for navigating cross-cultural communication and learning. One student stated, "I'd try to learn about their customs and ask colleagues from similar backgrounds. Understanding their worldview helps me build trust."

4.2.5. Critical Cultural Awareness (*Savoir S'engager*)

To evaluate critical cultural awareness, participants' responses were analyzed for their ability to critically evaluate cultural practices and assumptions.

Pre-Intervention (Experimental Group): Many students assumed the universality of psychological principles and believed stereotypes had minimal impact on professional judgments. A sample reflection showed: "Everyone should be treated the same; culture doesn't really matter in psychology."

Post-Intervention (Experimental Group): Students exhibited a profound recognition of the pervasive impact of stereotypes on diagnosis and treatment, and the need for cultural adjustment. For example, one student insightfully stated, "I realized that my judgments

come from my own culture. I need to question those and avoid stereotypes when interpreting clients' behavior."

Table 6 is a summary of thematic shifts in ICC across the five components of Byram's ICC model.

Table 6.

Development in ICC Components (Experimental Group)

Component	Pre-Intervention (Experimental Group)	Post-Intervention (Experimental Group)
Attitudes (Savoir Être)	Did not recognize own bias; assumed treating everyone the same is fair.	Acknowledged bias and the need for cultural self-awareness.
Knowledge (Savoirs)	Limited understanding of cultural impact on mental health.	Recognized how different cultures define and express mental health differently.
Skills of Interpreting (Savoir Comprendre)	Applied psychological theories without cultural adaptation.	Prioritized active listening and culturally sensitive questioning.
Skills of Discovery (Savoir Apprendre/Faire)	Limited exposure to cultural diversity; no strategies for learning about other cultures.	Showed greater interest in learning through interaction, research, and engagement.
Critical Cultural Awareness (Savoir S'engager)	Assumed stereotypes had minimal impact on treatment.	Recognized how stereotypes can lead to misdiagnosis and misinterpretation.

Table 7 shows the frequency and percentage of students in the experimental group across Byram's ICC components, illustrating the observed changes.

Table 7.

Frequency and Percentage of Students across ICC Components

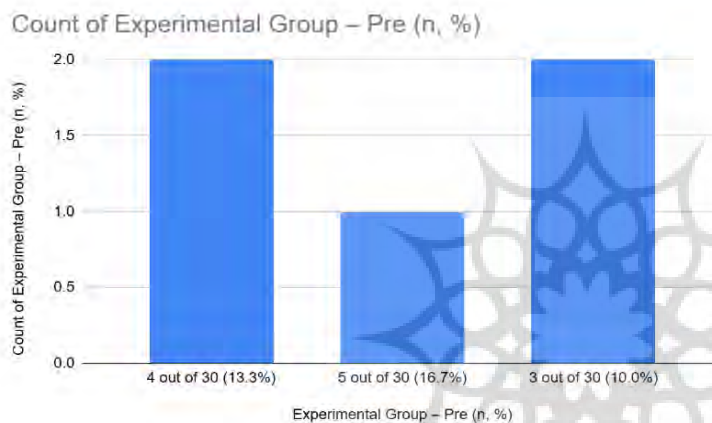
ICC Component	Experimental Group – Pre (n, %)	Experimental Group – Post (n, %)	Magnitude of Change (Experimental)
Attitudes	4 out of 30 (13.3%)	21 out of 30 (70.0%)	+56.7%
Knowledge	5 out of 30 (16.7%)	22 out of 30 (73.3%)	+56.6%
Skills of Interpreting	3 out of 30 (10.0%)	23 out of 30 (76.7%)	+66.7%
Skills of Discovery	4 out of 30 (13.3%)	20 out of 30 (66.7%)	+53.4%
Critical Cultural Awareness	3 out of 30 (10.0%)	24 out of 30 (80.0%)	+70.0%

As illustrated in Table 7, the mixed-methods analysis reveals a systematic and substantial progression across all ICC components within the experimental group. The percentage of students demonstrating development in each area rose significantly post-intervention, particularly in Critical Cultural Awareness (Savoir S'engager), which experienced the most dramatic increase of 70.0% (climbing from 10.0% pre-intervention to 80.0% post-intervention). Large gains were also observed in Skills of Interpreting and Relating (+66.7%) and Attitudes (+56.7%), resulting in

76.7% and 70.0% of students demonstrating competence in these areas, respectively. These frequency data reinforce the detailed qualitative findings (Tables 5 and 6) and provide robust, triangulated evidence that the instructional materials resulted in a profound shift from a limited understanding of cultural influences on psychological practice to a much deeper comprehension of cultural nuance. The consistency between these qualitative shifts and the large quantitative effect size (Cohen's $d=1.19$) observed in the ICCQ provides strong convergence for the efficacy of the intervention.

Figure 2.

Post-Intervention ICC Component Levels



Notably, there was a clear quantitative progression across all components following the intervention. For instance, the experimental group exhibited a remarkable increase of 56.7 percent in recognizing and managing their own bias (Attitudes), rising from 13.3% pre-intervention to 70.0% post-intervention. Similarly, their critical cultural awareness experienced an even more dramatic increase of 70 percent, climbing from 10.0% to 80.0%. These significant gains indicate a substantial shift from a limited or naive understanding of cultural influences on psychological practice to a much deeper comprehension of cultural nuances and the impact of stereotypes.

This clear progression in the magnitude of change, particularly in the most complex dimensions of ICC, provides robust, triangulated evidence that the instructional materials were highly effective in fostering deeper cultural awareness and competence among the EFL psychology learners.

5. Discussion

The findings of this convergent parallel mixed-methods study provided compelling empirical evidence that embedding Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)-focused content into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials significantly enhances students' ICC and cultural awareness. The study's results offer a robust, dual-strand validation: a statistically significant quantitative gain in ICC for the experimental group, which was richly explained and contextualized by the qualitative evidence detailing the deep, nuanced shifts in students' attitudes, knowledge, and critical awareness. This synthesis confirms that the intentional design of the new materials was the attributable factor for the observed development.

Quantitatively, the significant increase in ICC scores observed in the experimental group, coupled with a large effect size ($d=1.19$), aligns with research highlighting the positive impact of targeted intercultural interventions in language education (Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2000). This large effect size is particularly notable, suggesting that the materials' focus on discipline-specific, reflective inquiry within the context of psychology was uniquely effective, exceeding typical gains reported in studies that rely on general language-learning or short-term mobility. The concurrent lack of improvement in the control group's ICC scores supports earlier findings that conventional ESP curricula often fail to foster ICC development (Nemouchi & Byram, 2025). This divergence underscores that the substantial gain was attributable to the intervention materials rather than general learning or maturation.

Complementing these quantitative results, the qualitative data from student reflections and interviews illustrated the depth of change in accordance with Byram's five-component ICC model, providing tangible evidence for the statistical gains.

The enhancement in Attitudes (*Savoir Être*) was vividly demonstrated by post-intervention interview statements (see Results, 4.2.1), where students shifted from denying the presence of personal bias to actively articulating the need for cultural self-awareness. This shift indicates the materials successfully promoted openness to cultural diversity and curiosity, foundational components of ICC.

Students' Knowledge (*Savoirs*) likewise expanded to include a nuanced understanding of culturally embedded psychological practices and expressions of mental health. For example, students recognized how cultures define mental health differently, directly addressing the need for future psychology professionals to recognize these influences. Improvements in Skills of Interpreting and Relating (*Savoir Comprendre*) and Skills of Discovery and Interaction (*Savoir*

Apprendre/Faire) were also evident, indicating that the materials effectively facilitated the interpretation of cultural nuances and encouraged active, proactive engagement in intercultural contexts, aligning with earlier recommendations to integrate experiential and reflective learning into ESP.

Most significantly, the marked increase in Critical Cultural Awareness (Savoir S'engager) demonstrated the materials' effectiveness in enhancing students' ability to critically evaluate their own assumptions. Post-intervention, students exhibited a profound recognition of how cultural stereotypes and dominant Western theories might influence diagnosis and treatment, moving them toward a state of necessary culturally sensitive adaptation in professional judgment.

This research carries significant implications for both theoretical models of materials design and practical curriculum development. Theoretically, this study provides a clear model for integrating the affective, cognitive, and skill-based domains of ICC into an ESP context guided by Tomlinson's principles of impact and authenticity. It demonstrates that the development process can be rigorously guided by frameworks like Byram's ICC model to bridge the gap between language study and professional competence.

Practically, these findings indicate that psychology programs in multicultural contexts could substantially benefit from integrating ICC-focused ESP modules to promote culturally competent professional practice and improve client outcomes. ESP curriculum designers are strongly encouraged to embed structured intercultural tasks and reflective exercises into their materials, particularly for students preparing for multicultural professional contexts, thereby addressing key gaps in traditional ESP instruction.

Despite these encouraging results, several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size was limited to 60 students from a single university, which potentially restricts the generalizability of the results, although the large effect size observed ($d=1.19$) indicates sufficient statistical power to detect meaningful intervention effects.

Furthermore, data collection relied in part on self-reported reflections and interviews, which are susceptible to subjectivity and social desirability bias. However, these issues were mitigated through triangulation with the quantitative questionnaire data and reflective questioning, thereby enhancing interpretive rigor.

The relatively short duration of 10 weeks also limited the ability to capture long-term ICC development. Additionally, the findings are situated within the Iranian educational and socio-cultural context, which may influence student engagement and limit their transferability to other

contexts. Finally, reflecting on one of the researcher's positionalities, being both instructor and researcher provided unique insights into classroom dynamics but also introduced potential bias. To mitigate this, a rigorous two-researcher coding protocol was implemented.

Future research should build on these findings by exploring how the benefits of ICC integration can be sustained and extended across diverse contexts and disciplines, potentially using longitudinal and behavioral measures to capture long-term impact on professional practice.

6. Conclusion

This study provided robust empirical evidence in support of integrating intentional Intercultural Communicative Competence content and reflective tasks into ESP materials designed for psychology students. The findings demonstrated that this approach led to significant and practically meaningful improvements in students' ICC scores, cultural awareness, and professional readiness. This research offers a theoretically grounded and empirically supported model for cultivating globally competent practitioners through integrated, intentional instruction.

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APPENDIX A

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (ICCQ)

Sex: Female O Male O
 Age: Under 20 O 21-25 O Over 26 O

➤ **Imagine** you are living and working in the United States. Now, you are discussing with your native classmate about your reflection on different concepts in different cultures and giving your opinion truthfully.

✓ Tick the number that best corresponds to your level of agreement with each statement below.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree			
1	2	3	4	5			
Statements			1	2	3	4	5
1. When I am uncertain about cultural differences, I take a tolerant attitude.							
2. I believe that intercultural experiences can add some information to my previous knowledge.							
3. I am eager to read articles on foreign cultures.							
4. I cannot easily deal with ambiguities during the communication in L2.							
5. I do not make an effort to discover the norms of the L2 culture that I am communicating with.							
6. The right of people from other cultures to have different values from my own is respectable.							
7. I try to encounter well with the different dress customs of people in other countries.							
8. When I meet foreign adolescents, I cannot open a conversation in a culturally appropriate manner.							
9. I rarely accept the others' values and norms during the communication in L2.							
10. I can cope well with spoken language and body language of people from different cultures.							
11. I can take part in any L2 conversation dealing with daily life issues.							
12. Most of the time when I am communicating in L2, I try to learn through discovery during actual experience.							
13. I believe that marriage between different cultures is wrong.							
14. I am often motivated by curiosity to develop my knowledge of my own culture as perceived by others.							
15. I watch more national news than international news on TV.							
16. I am not always aware of differences of the foreign cultures.							
17. I believe the social system of where the person is from has effect on the decision-making process.							
18. I am able to deal tactfully with the ethical problems while communicating in L2.							
19. I take pleasure in listening to music from another culture.							
20. Religious arrangements in different cultures are not fascinating for me.							
21. When I am reading a story book written in L2, I always try to analyze, interpret, and relate concepts to each other.							
22. I think we are responsible for people of other races as our people.							

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND HONESTY!

Appendix B

Interview Introduction and Conclusion Scripts

Introduction: "Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This session is part of our study on the newly developed ESP materials and will take approximately 20–30 minutes. I will ask questions about your experiences and perspectives on cultural communication within a psychology context. Your responses are completely confidential, and participation will not affect your grades. Do I have your permission to record this session and use your responses for research purposes?"

Conclusion: "That concludes the interview. Thank you very much for your time and for sharing your thoughtful insights. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and will help us better understand the impact of the ESP materials."

Interview Guide Questions

Dimension (Byram, 1997)	Interview Questions
Attitudes (Savoir Être)	How do you recognize and manage your own biases when trying to understand someone from a different culture? Can you share a specific example of a time you needed to do this?
Knowledge (Savoirs)	In your experience or opinion, how can cultural background influence the way people experience and talk about mental health?
Skills of Interpreting and Relating (Savoir Comprendre)	If you were working with a client from a very different cultural background, how would you try to understand their feelings and experiences? What steps would you take to avoid misunderstandings?
Skills of Discovery and Interaction (Savoir Apprendre/Faire)	When interacting with people from different cultures, what new skills or knowledge have you developed in order to communicate effectively? Can you describe a situation where you had to adjust your approach?
Critical Cultural Awareness (Savoir S'engager)	How do cultural stereotypes influence the way psychologists perceive and treat their clients? To what extent do you think psychological theories and practices should be universal, or adapted to different cultural contexts? Can you give an example? Why is it important for psychologists to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds?

Appendix C

UNIT ONE

Building Rapport: The Foundation of Therapeutic Relationships

Establishing strong rapport is crucial for creating a therapeutic alliance that fosters client growth and positive change. Rapport, the harmonious connection between two individuals, is fundamental to effective counseling and therapy. It establishes a safe and trusting environment where clients feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. Building rapport is an ongoing process that begins from the very first interaction and continues throughout the therapeutic relationship.

Core Components of Rapport:

Active Listening: Paying close attention to both verbal and nonverbal cues, demonstrating genuine interest and understanding. (e.g., maintaining appropriate eye contact, nodding, using verbal affirmations).

Empathy: Understanding and sharing the feelings of another. This involves recognizing the client's emotional state and responding with sensitivity. (e.g., reflecting the client's feelings, validating their experiences).

Respect: Valuing the client as an individual, regardless of their background, beliefs, or behaviors. (e.g., using preferred pronouns, and acknowledging cultural beliefs without judgment).

Warmth: Conveying a sense of acceptance, caring, and genuine positive regard. (e.g., using a warm tone of voice, or offering a genuine smile).

Cultural Considerations and Intercultural Competence (ICC):

Building rapport becomes even more nuanced when working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Intercultural Competence (ICC) is the ability to effectively communicate and interact with people from different cultures. It involves understanding one's own cultural biases and being open to different worldviews. Cultural norms and communication styles can significantly influence how rapport is established and maintained.

For example, in some cultures, direct eye contact is a sign of respect, while in others, it may be considered disrespectful. Similarly, the appropriate level of physical touch can vary greatly across cultures. Communication styles can also differ; some cultures value direct and explicit communication, while others prefer more indirect and subtle communication. Concepts of time can also vary (monochronic vs. polychronic). Understanding these differences is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication.

Example Scenario:

Dr. Lee, a therapist with experience working with immigrant populations, is meeting with a new client, Maria, who recently immigrated from Mexico.

Dr. Lee: "Hello Maria, welcome. Please, have a seat." (Offers a warm smile and gestures towards a chair).

Maria: "Thank you." (Sits down, maintaining a slightly lowered gaze, her voice tinged with a hint of sadness).

Dr. Lee: "How was your journey here today?" (Starts with a neutral, non-intrusive question).

Maria: "It was fine, thank you."

Dr. Lee: "I understand you've recently moved to this city. How are you finding it so far?" (Open-ended question, showing interest in Maria's experience).

Maria: "It's... different. I miss my family and friends back home." (Expresses feelings of homesickness).

Dr. Lee: "Moving to a new place can be challenging. It's understandable to miss the familiar. Many people experience similar feelings when they relocate. It's important to acknowledge and process those feelings."

Important Considerations:

Nonverbal Communication: Be mindful of your own nonverbal cues (e.g., facial expressions, body language, tone of voice) and how they might be interpreted by clients from different cultures.

Communication Styles: Be aware that communication styles can vary across cultures. Some cultures may value direct communication, while others may prefer more indirect or subtle communication.

Cultural Sensitivity: Avoid making assumptions or generalizations about clients based on their cultural background. Instead, strive to understand each client as an individual.

Exercises:

1. Analyzing the Scenario: Identify examples of active listening, empathy, respect, and warmth in the interaction between Dr. Lee and Maria.
2. Cultural Awareness: Research different cultural norms related to greetings, eye contact, and physical touch. Discuss how these norms might impact the process of building rapport.
3. Dialogic Interaction: Rewrite the scenario to demonstrate a less effective approach to building rapport. Then, rewrite it again to show how dialogic interaction could be used to address a potential misunderstanding or cultural difference in communication style. For example, what if Maria's lowered gaze was interpreted by Dr. Lee as disinterest? How could Dr. Lee use dialogic interaction to clarify this?
4. ICC Application: Imagine you are meeting a client from a culture you are unfamiliar with. What steps would you take to ensure you are demonstrating intercultural competence and building rapport effectively?

Multiple Choice Exercises:

Instructions: Choose the best answer for each question.

1. **Which of the following is NOT a key element of building rapport?** a) Active listening b) Empathy c) Imposing personal beliefs d) Respect
2. **Active listening involves:** a) Waiting for your turn to speak b) Paying attention to both verbal and nonverbal cues c) Offering unsolicited advice d) Interrupting to clarify points
3. **Empathy can be defined as:** a) Feeling sorry for someone b) Understanding and sharing the feelings of another c) Offering solutions to someone's problems d) Judging someone's emotional response

4. **Cultural awareness in building rapport means:** a) Assuming all clients from the same culture are the same b) Recognizing and respecting the values, beliefs, and practices of different cultures c) Ignoring cultural differences to treat everyone equally d) Imposing your cultural norms on clients
5. **Which of the following demonstrates cultural sensitivity in a therapeutic setting?** a) Making generalizations about a client based on their ethnicity b) Asking open-ended questions to understand a client's individual experience c) Assuming a client's communication style based on stereotypes d) Avoiding any discussion of cultural differences
6. **In some cultures, avoiding direct eye contact is a sign of:** a) Disinterest b) Respect c) Dishonesty d) Confusion
7. **Which of the following is an example of a culturally sensitive approach to building rapport?** a) Insisting on a handshake even if the client seems uncomfortable b) Being mindful of personal space and physical touch c) Immediately discussing highly personal topics d) Making assumptions about a client's beliefs based on their cultural background
8. **If a therapist notices a client from a different cultural background consistently avoids direct eye contact, a culturally sensitive response would be to:** a) Insist on maintaining eye contact to build trust b) Assume the client is being dishonest c) Consider that this might be a cultural norm and adjust their behavior accordingly d) Confront the client about their lack of eye contact
9. **Dialogic interaction in the context of building rapport emphasizes:** a) The therapist's expertise and authority b) A one-way flow of information from the therapist to the client c) Mutual respect, active listening, and collaborative communication d) The client's responsibility to adapt to the therapist's communication style
10. **Which scenario best exemplifies intercultural competence?** a) A therapist assumes all clients from a particular country share the same values. b) A therapist adapts their communication style to be sensitive to a client's cultural background. c) A therapist avoids discussing cultural differences to prevent misunderstandings. d) A therapist insists on using their preferred communication style regardless of the client's background.

