

Learners' and Teachers' Perspectives on How Intercultural Podcasts Enhance Identity Awareness in EFL Contexts

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Amel BOUMARAF

Abbes Laghrour University, Algeria
amel.boumaraf@univ-khenchela.dz

Noura BOUMARAF

Batna 1 University, Algeria
noura.boumaraf@univ-batna.dz

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Abstract: This research explores how both students and teachers perceive the influence of intercultural podcasts on fostering identity awareness among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In an era marked by increasing global interconnectedness, developing intercultural understanding and a reflective sense of identity has become essential within language education. Podcasts, recognized for their authenticity, accessibility, and diversity of cultural content, expose learners to multiple viewpoints, potentially shaping their understanding of their own identities as well as others'. To gain a fuller picture of these perceptions, the study employs a mixed-methods design. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to (30) EFL students from various academic levels and through interviews conducted with 8 English language teachers at the Department of English, Abbes Laghrour University, Khenchela. Results reveal generally positive perceptions of intercultural podcast use. Students noted improvements in motivation, participation, and personal reflection about cultural and linguistic identity. Teachers highlighted podcasts as valuable tools for encouraging critical thinking and promoting intercultural dialogue, while also noting difficulties related to choosing suitable content and integrating it effectively into lessons. Overall, the study suggests that intercultural podcasts can play a meaningful role in enhancing identity development and language learning. The paper concludes with recommendations for structured incorporation of podcasts to support learners' intercultural awareness and overall educational development.

Keywords: interculturality, podcasts, identity, awareness, motivation.

TITLU: „Perspectivele elevilor și ale profesorilor asupra modului în care podcasturile interculturale contribuie la dezvoltarea conștiinței identității în contexte EFL (engleză ca limbă străină)”

REZUMAT: Această cercetare explorează modul în care atât elevii și cât și profesorii percep influența podcasturilor interculturale asupra dezvoltării conștiinței identității la studenții care învață limba engleză ca limbă străină (EFL). Într-o eră marcată de o interconectare globală din ce în ce mai mare, dezvoltarea înțelegerii interculturale și a unei conștiințe reflective a identității au devenit esențiale în educația lingvistică. Podcasturile, recunoscute pentru autenticitatea, accesibilitatea și diversitatea conținutului lor cultural, expun cursanții la multiple perspective, influențând astfel înțelegerea propriei identități, cât și a celorlalți. Pentru a obține o imagine mai completă a acestor percepții, studiul utilizează un design metodologic mixt. Datele au fost colectate printr-un chestionar structurat aplicat la 30 de studenți EFL din diferite niveluri academice și prin interviuri realizate cu 8 profesori de limba engleză de la Departamentul de Engleză al Universității Abbes Laghrour din Khenchela. Rezultatele relevă percepții, în general, pozitive cu privire la utilizarea podcasturilor interculturale. Studenții au semnalat îmbunătățiri în ceea ce privește motivația, participarea și reflecția personală asupra identității culturale și lingvistice. Profesorii au evidențiat podcasturile ca instrumente valoroase pentru încurajarea gândirii critice și promovarea dialogului intercultural, menționând, în același timp, dificultăți legate de selectarea conținutului potrivit și de integrarea eficientă a acestuia în lecții. În ansamblu, studiul sugerează că podcasturile interculturale pot juca un rol semnificativ în dezvoltarea identității și în procesul de învățare a limbii. Lucrarea se încheie cu recomandări privind integrarea structurată a podcasturilor pentru a sprijini conștiința interculturală a cursanților și dezvoltarea lor educațională generală.

CUVINTE-CHEIE: interculturalitate, podcasturi, identitate, conștiință

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, language learning is no longer confined to the acquisition of grammatical rules and vocabulary. It is increasingly viewed as a broader process of social participation, identity construction, and intercultural interaction. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the task goes beyond mastering a linguistic code; it involves entering a globalized space where cultural diversity, dialogue, and self-awareness play a central role.

The forces of globalization and rapid technological innovation have made intercultural competence more essential than ever. As students interact within international networks, exposure to varied cultural perspectives often reshapes their own sense of identity. Within this framework, identity awareness refers to the learner's ability to recognize, reflect upon, and position their cultural and linguistic self in relation to others.

Technology has also revolutionized language education by providing learners with authentic resources that connect classroom instruction with real-world communication. Among these innovations, podcasts, easily accessible through downloads or streaming, have become particularly effective. Intercultural podcasts, in particular, give learners access to diverse voices, personal stories, and cultural contexts. Such exposure fosters critical reflection, nurtures empathy, and supports the ongoing development of learners' identities.

This study explores the viewpoints of EFL students and teachers at Abbes Laghrour University, Khenchela, regarding the role of intercultural podcasts in developing identity awareness. It seeks to answer two key questions:

- How do students perceive the impact of intercultural podcasts on their identity awareness and language learning?
- What are teachers' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of using intercultural podcasts in the EFL classroom?

2. Literature Review

In contemporary language education, there is growing recognition that mastering a language involves much more than acquiring grammar and vocabulary; it also requires cultivating cultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity. Effective learners engage with diverse cultural perspectives, reflect on their own identities, and develop the skills needed for meaningful cross-cultural communication. Digital resources, particularly podcasts, have become increasingly important in this context, providing authentic, flexible, and multimodal opportunities to experience varied voices and cultural viewpoints. This literature review explores the concepts of intercultural competence, identity in language learning, and the contribution of podcasts to both linguistic and cultural growth, establishing the foundation for the present study in EFL education.

2.1. Intercultural Competence in Language Education

Intercultural competence has become a cornerstone of contemporary language education, reflecting the growing recognition that language learning is inseparable from cultural learning (Byram 2020). As globalization has intensified intercultural interactions, language education has increasingly shifted from emphasizing linguistic accuracy alone to fostering learners' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across diverse cultural contexts (Deardorff 2006). Consequently, intercultural competence is now widely regarded as an essential dimension of communicative competence, enabling learners to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity, flexibility, and mutual respect. According to Byram (1997), intercultural competence encompasses not only linguistic proficiency but also attitudes of openness, curiosity, and respect, together with the knowledge, skills, and critical awareness required for successful intercultural communication. Fantini (2009) further argues that intercultural competence is a developmental process involving continuous reflection and adaptation rather than a static set of skills. Likewise, Risager (2007) emphasizes that language education should move beyond a nation-based understanding of culture and adopt a transnational perspective that reflects the complex realities of multilingual and multicultural societies. These perspectives suggest that language learners must move beyond the mastery of grammar and vocabulary to engage critically with the cultural meanings, values, and social practices embedded in language use.

Building on this perspective, Kramsch (1993, 2013) conceptualizes the language classroom as a symbolic space in which learners negotiate and reconstruct their identities through intercultural interaction. Exposure to diverse cultural perspectives encourages learners to question preconceived assumptions, compare cultural practices, and critically reflect on their own beliefs and values. Identity awareness, therefore, becomes a fundamental element of intercultural competence, as it enables learners to understand both their own cultural positioning and that of others (Hart et al. 2020; Hatoss 2019; Corder and U-Mackey 2015). Norton (2000) similarly argues that language learning is deeply intertwined with identity formation, as learners continuously negotiate their social identities while engaging with new linguistic and cultural communities.

For EFL learners, whose opportunities for authentic intercultural interaction are often limited to educational settings, the language classroom serves as one of the principal environments for developing intercultural awareness. Integrating intercultural content systematically into language curricula enables learners to explore multiple cultural perspectives while strengthening their understanding of both their own identities and those of others, thereby preparing them for effective participation in increasingly interconnected global communities (Xu et al. 2025). Baker (2015) further contends that English should be viewed as a global lingua franca through which learners engage with diverse cultural identities rather than merely acquiring the norms of native-speaker cultures. In this regard, intercultural learning promotes critical reflection, encourages learners to interpret cultural meanings beyond stereotypes, and develops the ability to mediate between different cultural perspectives (Liddicoat and Scarino 2013).

2.2. Identity and Language Learning

Identity in language learning is not fixed but rather dynamic, constantly evolving through processes of social interaction, personal reflection, and exposure to multiple and diverse voices (Peirce 1995; De Costa and Norton 2016). Learners bring to the classroom their own histories, experiences, and aspirations, which interact with the cultural and linguistic practices they encounter. This interaction shapes how they see themselves as language users and members of different cultural communities. Learners' identities are closely tied to their motivation, sense of agency, and degree of engagement in language learning. In other words, the way learners perceive who they are and who they wish to become directly impacts the effort they invest and the opportunities they seek in language learning contexts (Norton 2013). Language learning is therefore not merely the acquisition of linguistic forms but also a process through which individuals negotiate social relationships, power dynamics, and future possibilities. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) argue that multilingual learners continuously negotiate and reconstruct their identities across different social and cultural contexts, while Norton (2000) emphasizes that learners' investment in language learning is closely connected to the identities they aspire to develop.

Language learning is closely linked to identity negotiation because language serves not only as a communication tool but also as a marker of belonging and self-expression (Block 2007). Learners continuously position themselves in relation to target language communities, which shapes both their linguistic development and their evolving sense of self (Darvin and Norton 2015). Identity formation is particularly significant in EFL contexts, where learners often imagine future participation in global academic, professional, and intercultural communities. Baker (2015) further suggests that the use of English as a global lingua franca enables learners to engage with multiple cultural identities rather than orienting exclusively toward a single native-speaker norm.

Moreover, reflecting on one's identity allows learners to understand how they are positioned in relation to others, which in turn deepens their awareness of the cultural dimensions inherent in language use (Mughal 2021). Such reflection is particularly important in EFL contexts, where learners may not have frequent opportunities for authentic intercultural encounters. Intercultural podcasts, by presenting genuine voices and narratives from a variety of cultural settings, create an avenue for learners to engage with perspectives different from their own. This exposure does not simply expand linguistic knowledge but also acts as a catalyst for identity reflection, prompting learners to consider how their own cultural and linguistic identities are constructed, perceived, and reshaped through contact with others. Through repeated engagement with diverse voices and experiences, learners may develop greater critical awareness of their own assumptions, values, and cultural positioning, thereby strengthening both their intercultural competence and their evolving sense of identity as language users.

2.3. Podcasts in EFL Education

Podcasts are digital audio resources that can be streamed or downloaded, making them accessible anytime and anywhere. Their growing popularity in language education stems from their flexibility, authenticity,

and ability to expose learners to natural spoken language in a variety of communicative contexts (Hasan and Hoon 2013). Unlike traditional classroom materials, podcasts provide learners with authentic speech produced by native and non-native speakers, enabling them to experience real-world discourse beyond the confines of textbook dialogues. Rosell-Aguilar (2007) argues that podcasts represent an innovative form of mobile-assisted language learning by providing learners with continuous access to authentic language input and opportunities for independent learning. Research has consistently shown that podcast-based learning enhances listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and learner autonomy, while allowing students to learn at their own pace and revisit content whenever necessary. Stanley (2006) also highlights that podcasts encourage self-directed learning by enabling learners to integrate language practice into their daily routines outside the classroom.

From an intercultural perspective, podcasts serve as valuable windows into diverse cultural contexts by exposing learners to authentic conversations, personal narratives, and culturally situated experiences (Fox 2008). They enable learners to hear multiple varieties of English, regional accents, and diverse viewpoints, thereby challenging stereotypes and broadening intercultural understanding (Karakas 2023; Stevani 2024). Jenkins (2015) argues that exposure to different English varieties better reflects the global use of English and helps learners develop the intercultural communicative competence required in international contexts. Podcast-based learning environments have also been shown to foster active learner engagement while creating opportunities for collaborative reflection and intercultural dialogue (McBride 2009). Furthermore, digital media contributes to the development of linguistic and cultural identities by facilitating meaningful intercultural interaction and sustained exposure to diverse voices and perspectives (Vandergriff 2016). Godwin-Jones (2018) further emphasizes that digital technologies, including podcasts, promote authentic communication, learner autonomy, and intercultural engagement by connecting learners with real-world linguistic and cultural practices beyond the traditional classroom.

2.4. Intercultural Podcasts and Identity Awareness

Unlike conventional language-learning resources, which typically provide a restricted view of culture, often privileging a standardized and idealized version of the “target” culture through scripted dialogues, oversimplified examples, and generic cultural notes, intercultural podcasts introduce learners to a far richer landscape of perspectives. They offer multiple voices and viewpoints that mirror the lived, negotiated, and hybrid nature of cultural reality. Through elements such as personal narratives, interviews, regional varieties of speech, counter-discourses, and informal conversational genres, podcasts capture dimensions of language and culture that textbooks rarely represent. This diversity confronts learners with nuance, ambiguity, and the layered complexity of real-world interaction.

Such authentic exposure encourages learners to critically evaluate their own cultural assumptions, values, and stereotypes, as they interpret and compare the cultural meanings expressed in podcast content with their prior understandings (Thelamour and Chang 2025; Dressen-Hammouda 2011). Regular engagement with this plurality of perspectives can foster critical cultural awareness: learners begin to question dominant cultural representations, acknowledge marginalized voices, and recognize the contextual nature of cultural practices. In doing so, podcasts support deeper processes of identity reflection rather than the surface-level acquisition of cultural facts.

In addition, the digital affordances of podcasts, such as on-demand accessibility, the ability to subscribe, and the availability of archives, enable learners to revisit episodes, reflect at their own pace, and engage in discussion with peers. These features reinforce the reflective and dialogic processes central to identity development. Research has shown that digital tools more broadly can facilitate intercultural dialogue and enhance cultural awareness by promoting asynchronous interaction, multimodal learning opportunities, and collaborative discussion (Dugartsyrenova and Sardegna 2019; Yelubayeva and Mustafina 2020). Yet, despite these advantages, the unique impact of podcasts on identity construction—specifically how they shape learners’ sense of self, cultural positioning, or linguistic identity—remains insufficiently examined. This gap underscores the importance of targeted empirical studies in this emerging area.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' and teachers' viewpoints. The sample included:

- Thirty (30) EFL students at Abbes Laghrour University, representing various academic levels (first-year to Master's level). Including students from various academic levels strengthens the study by avoiding reliance on a single cohort. This diversity enhances the validity and generalizability of the findings and provides a fuller understanding of how intercultural podcasts contribute to language development and identity formation across different stages of higher education.
- Eight (8) English language teachers, offering a professional perspective that complemented the students' views and enriched the overall findings.

To gather comprehensive data on the role of intercultural podcasts in EFL learning, the study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments. A structured questionnaire was designed for students to measure their attitudes, experiences, and reflections regarding podcast use, focusing on aspects such as language learning, cultural awareness, and identity development. Complementing this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to gain in-depth insights into classroom integration, pedagogical benefits, challenges, and the impact of podcasts on students' intercultural understanding and identity awareness. Together, these instruments enabled a holistic exploration of both student perceptions and teacher perspectives.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequencies, to summarize and present the overall patterns that emerged from the students' responses. In parallel, qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification, categorization, and interpretation of recurring themes, particularly those related to motivation, identity, and challenges.

4. Findings

4.1. Students' Questionnaire:

Students' Responses to the Questionnaire

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Accessing and using podcasts for learning purposes is straightforward.	2%	8%	15%	48%	27%
Using podcasts contributes to the improvement of my listening skills.	1%	9%	19%	52%	19%
Compared to traditional materials, podcasts are more engaging.	6%	12%	25%	38%	19%
Podcasts enhance my understanding of cultural diversity.	1%	8%	15%	46%	30%
I gain insights into authentic cultural practices through podcasts.	1%	4%	18%	51%	26%
Podcasts expose me to viewpoints that are absent in textbooks.	2%	6%	18%	41%	33%
Listening to podcasts prompts me to reflect on my cultural identity.	4%	12%	21%	39%	24%
Exposure to diverse voices in podcasts makes me reconsider my assumptions.	1%	9%	21%	42%	27%
Podcasts help me feel more connected to English users worldwide.	2%	8%	22%	41%	27%

The questionnaire results reveal generally positive attitudes toward the use of podcasts in EFL learning. A large proportion of students (48% agree, 27% strongly agree) found accessing and using podcasts straightforward, indicating that technical barriers were minimal. Similarly, more than 70% of participants agreed

that podcasts significantly enhanced their listening skills, while just under 60% reported that podcasts were more engaging than traditional materials, although about a quarter remained neutral. Cultural learning was particularly emphasized: over three-quarters of the students agreed that podcasts deepened their understanding of cultural diversity and provided authentic insights into cultural practices not typically available in textbooks. With regard to identity, approximately two-thirds of respondents acknowledged that podcasts encouraged them to reflect on their own cultural identity and reconsider prior assumptions, highlighting their role in fostering intercultural awareness. Finally, 68% felt that podcasts helped them feel more connected to global English users, underscoring their value in bridging the classroom and real-world communication. Overall, the data demonstrate that podcasts are perceived not only as effective linguistic tools but also as catalysts for cultural and identity development.

Results of Open-Ended Questions on Intercultural Podcasts

Theme	Open-Ended Question	Key Findings
Cultural Awareness	How have intercultural podcasts shaped or broadened your knowledge of different cultures?	Reported greater awareness of cultural diversity and recognition of stereotypes.
	Did listening to podcasts make you rethink or alter any cultural stereotypes you once held?	Many students indicated that prior assumptions were questioned or reshaped through podcast content.
Motivation & Engagement	Compared with traditional resources like textbooks, how do you feel about learning through podcasts?	Students described podcasts as more engaging, enjoyable, and interactive.
	Do podcasts increase your motivation or enthusiasm for learning English? Please explain.	A majority linked podcasts to increased motivation and willingness to participate in discussions.
Identity Reflection	Have podcasts encouraged you to think about your own cultural or language identity? If so, in what way?	Students reported reflecting on their own identity and comparing it with other cultural voices.
	When hearing perspectives from other cultures, what reflections do you have about your own?	Some noted a stronger appreciation of their own culture, others questioned certain assumptions.
Challenges & Barriers	What kinds of difficulties, if any, do you encounter while using podcasts for learning?	Challenges included language complexity, fast speech, and occasional technical access issues.
	In your opinion, how could podcasts be made more useful or supportive for your learning needs?	Suggestions included guided questions, simpler language options, and better integration in class.

The open-ended responses provided richer insights into students' personal experiences with intercultural podcasts. In terms of cultural awareness, many students reported that podcasts broadened their understanding of cultural diversity and helped them recognize, question, or even dismantle stereotypes they previously held. Motivation and engagement also emerged strongly, with learners consistently describing podcasts as more enjoyable and interactive than traditional resources, often linking them to heightened enthusiasm and greater willingness to engage in classroom discussions. Identity reflection was another recurring theme, as several participants noted that exposure to diverse cultural voices encouraged them to reflect on their own cultural and linguistic identity, leading either to stronger appreciation of their background or to rethinking certain assumptions. At the same time, students highlighted challenges, such as the complexity of language, fast delivery, and occasional technical difficulties, which at times hindered their learning experience. To address these barriers, learners suggested improvements like incorporating guiding questions, offering simpler language versions, and ensuring better integration of podcasts into classroom activities. Overall, the qualitative findings reveal that intercultural podcasts serve not only as a linguistic resource but also as a platform for cultural reflection and identity development, while still requiring thoughtful adaptation to maximize accessibility and effectiveness.

4.2 Teachers' Interview

The findings from the semi-structured interviews with teachers provide deeper insights into how intercultural podcasts are perceived in terms of language learning, classroom integration, and the development of students' cultural awareness and identity.

1. In your view, how do intercultural podcasts contribute to students' language learning?

Teachers emphasized that intercultural podcasts serve as a rich source of authentic language input, exposing students to a variety of accents, speech speeds, and informal expressions that are rarely encountered in textbooks. They reported that repeated exposure to these podcasts helps students improve listening comprehension, expand vocabulary, and better understand the pragmatic use of language in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, teachers highlighted that podcasts encourage autonomous learning, as students often choose episodes of personal interest, pause or replay sections to improve understanding, and discuss content with peers, thereby enhancing both receptive and productive language skills. Podcasts were also described as bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use, allowing students to encounter natural dialogue, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references that support both linguistic and communicative competence.

2. What advantages and difficulties have you noticed when trying to incorporate podcasts into classroom activities?

Teachers acknowledged several advantages, including increased student motivation, engagement, and participation. They noted that podcasts often spark curiosity and critical thinking, as students are exposed to new ideas, social norms, and cultural practices. Classroom activities such as group discussions, debates, or reflective writing based on podcast content were highlighted as particularly effective in promoting interaction and deeper understanding. However, teachers also mentioned challenges, such as finding content that is both linguistically accessible and culturally appropriate for all proficiency levels. Technical issues, such as internet access or device compatibility, were occasional barriers. Moreover, integrating podcasts effectively into existing curricula required careful planning to ensure that episodes aligned with learning objectives and that comprehension and reflection tasks were sufficiently structured.

3. How does listening to intercultural podcasts expand students' understanding of other cultures and influence their personal identity awareness?

Teachers observed that intercultural podcasts provide students with a window into diverse cultural experiences, traditions, and perspectives, often challenging preconceived notions and stereotypes. Listening to authentic voices from different countries encouraged students to critically evaluate their own beliefs, compare cultural practices, and recognize both similarities and differences in social norms. Teachers noted that this exposure fostered empathy, cultural sensitivity, and a more nuanced understanding of global perspectives. Many teachers reported that students became more reflective, considering how their own cultural background shapes their communication style, attitudes, and decision-making processes. In this way, podcasts acted not only as a tool for language acquisition but also as a catalyst for identity development and intercultural awareness.

4. In what ways do intercultural podcasts prompt students to reflect specifically on their own cultural identity in comparison with others?

Teachers highlighted that students frequently engaged in reflective thinking about their own culture when exposed to intercultural podcast content. They reported that learners often compared their cultural values, habits, and communication patterns with those presented in the podcasts, which encouraged self-assessment and introspection. This reflective process led many students to reconsider stereotypes they had previously held and to articulate a more informed understanding of their cultural identity. Teachers noted that students became more conscious of their positioning within a globalized context and demonstrated increased confidence in expressing their cultural viewpoints, while simultaneously developing respect for cultural diversity. The comparison between self and others, facilitated by podcast listening, was described as particularly effective in strengthening students' intercultural competence and identity awareness.

5. From a teaching perspective, how should podcasts be positioned within EFL instruction to be most effective?

Teachers suggested that podcasts should be integrated strategically rather than used as standalone materials. They recommended pairing episodes with guided activities, such as comprehension questions, reflective journaling, discussions, or group presentations, to ensure that students engage critically with both the language and the cultural content. Content selection should consider language level, thematic relevance, and cultural authenticity, with scaffolding provided for learners who may struggle with comprehension. Teachers also emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for peer interaction, where students can share interpretations, personal reflections, and cultural insights drawn from the podcasts. When used thoughtfully, podcasts can complement traditional instruction by reinforcing listening skills, stimulating intercultural dialogue, and fostering ongoing reflection on language, culture, and identity.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the significant role that intercultural podcasts play in fostering language learning, cultural awareness, and identity reflection among EFL learners. Both quantitative and qualitative data from students, complemented by teachers' insights, reveal a generally positive perception of podcasts as an educational tool with multiple pedagogical benefits.

The Likert-scale results show that a majority of students found podcasts straightforward to access and use, indicating minimal technical barriers. More than 70% agreed that podcasts improved their listening skills, while nearly 60% considered them more engaging than traditional materials. These results are reinforced by teachers' observations that podcasts provide authentic language input, exposing learners to varied accents, speech speeds, and informal expressions rarely encountered in textbooks. The repeated exposure helps students improve listening comprehension, expand vocabulary, and understand pragmatic language use in diverse contexts. Both students and teachers emphasized that podcasts support autonomous learning, allowing learners to select content of personal interest, replay episodes, and engage in discussion, thereby enhancing their overall linguistic competence.

Both students and teachers indicated that podcasts contribute significantly to the development of intercultural competence. Open-ended responses from students suggest that podcasts expand their awareness of cultural diversity, challenge existing stereotypes, and encourage reflection on both other cultures and their own. Teachers observed that authentic cultural narratives presented in podcasts foster empathy, cultural sensitivity, and a more nuanced understanding of global perspectives. Students' engagement with these materials often leads them to compare their own cultural practices with those presented in podcasts, promoting introspection and a deeper sense of cultural identity. The consistency between students' and teachers' perceptions confirms that podcasts are effective tools for cultivating both cultural understanding and identity awareness.

Students described podcasts as more engaging and enjoyable than traditional learning resources, linking their use to increased motivation and willingness to participate in classroom discussions. Teachers also noted that podcasts stimulate curiosity, critical thinking, and interactive learning. Nevertheless, the findings reveal that careful planning is essential for effective integration. Teachers reported challenges such as selecting content suitable for different proficiency levels, ensuring cultural appropriateness, and addressing occasional technical problems. Students suggested using guided questions, simpler language versions, and structured classroom activities, which aligns with teachers' recommendations for purposeful integration. These insights highlight the importance of guided and scaffolded podcast activities to maximize linguistic, cognitive, and cultural outcomes.

The results indicate that podcasts should be more than supplementary tools; they should be systematically embedded into the curriculum. Pairing episodes with guided listening exercises, reflective journaling, group discussions, or presentations can promote deeper understanding and intercultural dialogue. Teachers emphasized that thoughtful content selection and structured classroom engagement ensure that podcasts enhance not only language proficiency but also students' awareness of cultural differences and identity. By offering authentic, multimodal learning experiences, podcasts bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world communication, supporting learners' linguistic, cultural, and personal development simultaneously.

Despite their advantages, students reported challenges such as fast speech, complex language, and occasional technical difficulties. Addressing these issues is crucial to optimize learning outcomes. Teachers and students recommended strategies like differentiated content, guided tasks, and seamless classroom integration to

ensure accessibility and effectiveness. This highlights the need for careful design and implementation to fully harness the potential of intercultural podcasts in EFL learning contexts.

All in all, the study demonstrates that intercultural podcasts are highly valued by both students and teachers for their dual function in enhancing language skills and promoting intercultural and identity awareness. They improve listening proficiency, stimulate learner motivation, broaden cultural understanding, and encourage reflection on personal and social identity. When integrated thoughtfully into EFL instruction, podcasts serve as a powerful pedagogical resource supporting both linguistic development and holistic cultural education.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance the effective integration of intercultural podcasts in EFL teaching. First, teachers are encouraged to incorporate intercultural podcast episodes systematically within the curriculum rather than using them sporadically. Regular exposure allows learners to continuously develop linguistic competence while simultaneously strengthening their intercultural and identity awareness. To maximize the pedagogical value of these resources, teachers should design structured pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening tasks that support comprehension, promote reflection, and encourage critical engagement with cultural themes. Clear criteria for selecting podcast content are also essential. Therefore, institutions should provide guidelines that help teachers evaluate podcasts according to language level, cultural relevance, authenticity, and alignment with course objectives.

In addition, professional development opportunities are needed to equip teachers with the skills necessary to integrate digital tools effectively. Training workshops can assist teachers in selecting appropriate materials, designing reflective activities, and using technological platforms efficiently. Students, on the other hand, should be supported with scaffolding strategies such as transcripts, glossaries, slowed audio versions, and segmented listening activities to help them manage the linguistic complexity of some episodes.

Finally, the study suggests the need for further research on the long-term impact of intercultural podcasts on learners' identity development. Future investigations could adopt longitudinal designs, explore differences across proficiency levels, or examine the effects of engaging students in the production of their own intercultural podcast episodes. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital audio resources can shape cultural awareness and identity in EFL contexts.

Conclusion

This study examined EFL students' and teachers' perceptions of the role of intercultural podcasts in enhancing identity awareness. The results suggest that podcasts are valuable educational resources that support both language acquisition and cultural understanding. Students reported that engaging with podcasts improved their listening skills, increased motivation, and provided a more enjoyable learning experience, while teachers highlighted their potential to encourage critical thinking, intercultural dialogue, and autonomous learning. Importantly, podcasts prompted learners to reflect on their own cultural identities in relation to others, thereby fostering intercultural competence. The study also identified several challenges, including complex language, rapid speech, technical limitations, and the need for careful selection and integration of content into lessons. Addressing these issues through scaffolding, guided activities, and thoughtful planning is crucial to optimize the educational benefits of podcasts. In conclusion, intercultural podcasts represent a flexible and authentic tool for EFL education, enhancing both linguistic proficiency and cultural reflection. Their systematic use in the classroom can strengthen students' identity awareness, empathy, and intercultural sensitivity, equipping learners to navigate and participate effectively in an interconnected, globalized environment.

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BIONOTES:

Dr. Amel Boumaraf holds a Doctorate in Applied Linguistics, and she is an Associate Professor at the department of English of Abbes Laghrour University, Khenchela, Algeria. She actively participates in both national and international academic conferences and contributes to the publication of research articles in the field of language studies.. She serves as a member of the scientific committee of the Faculty of literature and Foreign Languages, as well as a member of the Faculty Scientific Council at the same university. She has taught several modules, including written comprehension and expression, oral expression, study skills, research report, linguistics, techniques of university work. She has also taught ENS students (Higher Teacher Training School) at the same university. Her research and teaching interests include English-Medium Instruction (EMI), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), educational technology, artificial intelligence in language education, intercultural communication, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition. amel.boumaraf@univ-khenchela.dz

Dr. Noura Boumaraf holds a Doctorate in Contemporary Algerian History. She has taught several modules, including the history of Europe and the America, scientific research Methodology, and Modern Algerian History. She has also taught at both Batna university and Barika University, Algeria. Her academic interests include contemporary history, Algerian political and social history, international relations, and historical research methodologies. She is also a member of the Laboratory of Studies in History, Culture, and Society. Noura.boumaraf@batna-university.dz