



Empowering University Students in Intercultural Communication Course: A Service Learning Approach

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Abstract

This paper introduces an in-depth qualitative study investigating the profound effect of Service Learning (SL) on teaching/learning Intercultural Communication courses to university students. These courses develop students' cognitive and behavioral skills and foster their social and cultural awareness. Regarding the methodology, the experience draws on the four stages of Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984/2015): 1) Concrete Experience, 2) Reflective Observation, 3) Abstract Conceptualization, and 4) Active Experimentation. The study chose two authentic civic action projects: an outreach campaign about stereotypes and bias, and an awareness theatrical show about cultural perceptions and their impact on thoughts and behavior. Hence, the study tries to answer two research questions: (1) what effect does SL have on students' intercultural course competencies? (2) how far does Kolb's experiential learning model apply to the Intercultural Communication curriculum? The results revealed that implementing SL into Intercultural Communication courses promotes students' capability to contextualize cultural concepts in real-life situations, increase comprehension of cultural variations, and bridge the gap between academic material and practice. It also presents a systematic framework for applying SL to Intercultural Communication courses. The study limitation was the small number of students, accordingly, it encourages other educators to apply the presented framework to larger groups.

Keywords: *Academic Service Learning, Experiential Learning, Civic Engagement, Civic Action Projects, Intercultural Competence.*

استخدام استراتيجية التعلم الخدمي في تدريس مفاهيم التواصل الثقافي لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تجربة تدريسية حقيقية عن تأثير استخدام التعلم الخدمي (Service learning) في تدريس مقررات التواصل بين الثقافات لطلاب المرحلة الجامعية. تعتمد الدراسة على المراحل الأربع لدورة التعلم التجريبي لکولب (1984-2015): (١) الخبرة الملموسة، (٢) الملاحظة التأملية، (٣) التصور المجرد، و (٤) التجريب النشط. وقد اختارت الدراسة مشروعين للعمل المدني: حملة توعية حول الصور النمطية والتحيز في المجتمع، وعرض مسرحي توعوي حول الصور النمطية الناتجة عن معتقدات اجتماعية وتأثيرها على الأفكار والسلوك. ومن ثم، تحاول الدراسة الإجابة على سؤالين بحثيين: (١) ما تأثير التعلم الخدمي على مدى استيعاب الطلاب لمفاهيم التواصل بين الثقافات؟ (٢) إلى أي مدى ينطبق نموذج التعلم التجريبي لکولب على مقررات التواصل بين الثقافات؟ كشفت النتائج أن التعلم الخدمي يعزز قدرة الطلاب على التواصل التفاعلي وفهم الثقافات المختلفة وسد الفجوة بين المادة الأكاديمية والمهارات الحياتية. كما يقدم البحث دورة التعلم التجريبي لکولب كإطار نظري لتطبيق استراتيجية التعلم الخدمي في تدريس مقررات التواصل بين الثقافات. بناءً على نتائج الدراسة، تم اقتراح التوصيات التالية: (١) يجب دمج نموذج كولب في تدريس مقررات التواصل بين الثقافات، (٢) يجب تدريب المعلمين على كيفية استخدام العمل المدني لتعليم مفاهيم التواصل بين الثقافات. (٣) يجب أن يكون المعلمون على دراية بالمشكلات الحديثة في مجتمعهم المتعلقة بالتواصل بين الثقافات. كما حثت الدراسة المعلمين على تطبيق التجربة على عدد أكبر من الطلاب وفي أماكن مختلفة في مصر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم الخدمي، التعلم التجريبي، مشاريع خدمة المجتمع، المشاركة المدنية، التواصل بين الثقافات.

Empowering University Students in Intercultural Communication Course: A Service Learning Approach

1. Introduction

With the surge of multi-cultures and social interconnectedness, higher education all over the world seeks to grow students' awareness of intercultural communication skills. Intercultural communication is defined as "a type of communication in which the sender and receiver belong to different cultures"; it targets to resolve conflicts among different perspectives and cultures, accelerate the process of globalization, "overcome stereotypes and build tolerance" (Pavlivna & Anatoliyovych, 2024, pp.360-361). According to Byram's model (1997), intercultural communication is accomplished under various factors: (1) people's attitudes, (2) their knowledge about other cultures, and (3) skills of interaction (Barrett & Golubeva, 2022, pp.63-64). In other words, intercultural communication is composed of a set of different competencies: how people show respect for differences, examine the "paradoxes of another culture and society", construct common channels for communication, and respond to different cultures (Pavlivna & Anatoliyovych, 2024, p.364). Accordingly, intercultural communication promotes understanding various cultural systems, questioning the uniqueness of cultural values, compromising cultural practices, and establishing intercultural exchanges (Barrett & Golubeva, 2022, pp.63-64).

UN and European international organizations launched a new horizon of intercultural communication awareness; they recorded a deep interrelation between intercultural and civic education (Ivanov, n.d., pp.3-4). The intersection is mainly concerned with developing citizens' self and others' awareness of differences "to promote social cohesion and challenge antiquated notions" (Linkova, 2014, n.p.). Civic awareness can only be reached if the students are fully aware of the cultural differences in their societies in which "respect [for] diversity" is the key to the success of any social change (Sapriya & Komalasari, 2018, p.305-p. 307). Sandu (2015) highlighted the great impact of the integration between cultural and civic education on the development of the overcome of challenges of "diversity and globalization" (p.1). She clarified that:

Intercultural education without civic education may run into two biases: either the approach in which diversity has to be “dealt with” or the approach in which the intercultural aspects are taken into account, but only on the surface, without [an] in-depth analysis of social and political context and without significant contribution to social transformation. (2015, p. 1)

Besides, Malazonia et al. (2021) shed light on the overlap between civic education and intercultural awareness. They explained that students’ civic knowledge is “influenced by the cultural characteristics” of the surrounding community (p.2). They also determined the importance of intercultural understanding in promoting students’ civic competence “to act actively in a multicultural society” (p. 4). However, Malazonia et al. (2021) indicated that according to Peterson et al. (2014), few educators are willing to consider civic education as one of the main objectives in their curricula (p.3).

Intercultural and civic education have aroused a special demand for applying Service Learning or Community-Based Learning to university curricula. Service Learning and Community-Based Learning are interchangeably employed to refer to “a way of teaching that incorporates meaningful community engagement within an academic course” (Manhattan University, 2024). In civic education, the educators’ role is to create an environment of active learning that “inspire[s], motivate[s], and foster[s]” communication among varied cultural groups. Consequently, students can solve the social problems resulting from the “differences in culture, race, region, ethnicity, and language will respect each other” (Rachmadtullah et al., 2020, p.541).

As a result, Service Learning enhances the perception of intercultural competence as it is “an inclusive and comprehensive way to educate students by creating experiences locally, where students can extend intercultural competence within their own community by engaging and working with children and families who come from different backgrounds” (Wiersma-Mosley et al., 2023, pp. 24-25). Thus, there is an urgent need for “culture courses” to be placed outside classes and “experience cross-cultural situations, reflect on their experience, and act as intercultural speakers/mediators with the ability to communicate and interact appropriately and effectively in different intercultural situations” (Echcharfy, 2019, p.361). Nevertheless, Andolina et al. (2020)

spotted that most of the studies addressing civic projects rely only on surveys, and few introduce systematic empirical methods to reach positive outcomes (p.1206). Hoff (2020) also called for formulating “a comprehensive guideline for intercultural teaching and learning in the 21st-century classroom” (p.55).

In line with the aforementioned studies, the primary aim of this study is to scrutinize the profound effect of utilizing Service Learning on teaching/learning Intercultural Communication courses. It also attempts to figure out a systematic method of implementing Service Learning in teaching intercultural communication courses through civic action projects. Additionally, the study chose Kolb’s learning cycle (1984/2015) as an experiential learning model to formulate two authentic civic action activities. Hence, the study mainly answers two questions: (1) what impact does Service Learning have on students’ Intercultural Communication course competencies? (2) How far does Kolb’s experiential learning model apply to the Intercultural Communication curricula?

2. Literature Review

This section presents an overview of Service Learning and its rationale. It also highlights the relationship between Service Learning and civic action projects. The last part reviews some previous studies that tackled this relationship.

2.1. What is Service Learning?

Harkavy & Hartley (2010) stated that Oak Ridge Associated Universities in 1966-1967 was the first institution to launch the term “Service-Learning” as an approach for a project describing a tributary development in Tennessee (p. 420). Service Learning has been defined as “[a] form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (Kasinath, 2013, p. 2). In other words, it is an educational teaching and learning approach in which students participate in meaningful community services to conceive abstract ideas of academic material. In Service-learning courses, “[s]tudents relate community-based service experience to course objectives using structured reflection and learning activities in a regular academic course” (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, 2024). It teaches students how to utilize real-life knowledge and

skills (Melaville et al., 2006, p.1). Hence, it is “an instructional strategy that ties the study of academic objectives to community service.” (Goldberg, 2009, p.15). In addition, it offers students a purposeful service experience while enhancing “learning outcomes” (Manhattan University, 2024).

The main rationale behind Service Learning is to form a deep integration between students’ knowledge taught in a classroom and the surrounding social circumstances to think critically and solve the problems of their communities (Tietjen, 2016, p.40). It bridges the gap between community needs and academic curriculum in which students should act actively in civic-action activities and “engage in authentic issues in their communities (...) to do civic and behave as citizens” (Andolina et al., 2020, p.1205). Thus, the Service Learning approach strengthens learners’ “knowledge, skills, and attributes of effective citizenship by identifying and acting on issues and concerns that affect their own communities” (Melaville et al., 2006, p.3). It allows students to participate in community services by discussing and implementing their classroom academic topics.

The main goal of Service Learning is to reform students who are “better acquainted with others by stepping out of their comfort zones to volunteer or engage with a community agency” (Wiersma-Mosley et al., 2023, p. 26). It empowers students who are “refer[ed] to as the participatory citizens” and directs their attention to “democratic ideals and on strategies supporting the development of informed, thoughtful, and active citizens” (Kahne & Westheimer, 2000, p. 14). Consequently, “course-based service-learning with meaningful reflection opportunities can affect not only the skills needed to succeed academically and professionally but can also transform students’ plans for their professional future, creating more politically and community-involved students” (Giambo & Garrido, 2024, p. 4). As a result, Service Learning is a “pedagogical strategy [that] can benefit both the immediate and long-term learning experiences of students, practitioners [who] need to examine effective practices of community-based learning” (Scott et al., 2020, p.150). Accordingly, civic action projects are the best-suited project-based learning method for Service Learning.

2.2. Civic Action Projects and Service Learning

Civic Action Project is “a culmination of students’ social studies education, a chance for them to apply what they have learned to the real world and impact an issue that matters to them” (Teach Democracy, 2024). It concentrates on “root causes of social problems, politics, and the need for structural change” to reinforce the relation between “citizenship and service experiences” (Kahne & Westheimer, 2000, p.5, p.14). Through Service Learning and civic action projects, students can explore “community needs”, lay “thoughtful planning of the service project”, and be aligned with “the relationship between their service experience and their more traditional in-class learning” (Kasinath, 2013, p. 1). Consequently, Service Learning and civic action projects support a learner who is active “in community affairs” and who has “self-esteem, willingness to volunteer, and personal responsibility for the environment” and “identify root causes of problems and begin to work with others toward ameliorating them” (Kahne & Westheimer, 2000, pp.5-7).

2.3. Previous Studies

In the last decades, many studies have paid great attention to the role of Service Learning in the learning process of civic and intercultural education. Resch & Schrittemser (2021) underpinned the pre-service teachers’ perception of the Service Learning role in education in Austria (p.1118). According to the study, educators believe that utilizing Service Learning in curricula can emphasize the benefits of “learning outside the classroom, cyclical learning (learning, applying, reflecting) (...), gaining practical experience and reflecting on it in class” (p.1124). Besides, they justified that Service Learning “contributes to reducing the stereotyping of universities as ‘too theoretical’ or ‘unreachable’ for real needs and allows them to be perceived as socially responsible institutions that are embedded in their communities” (p. 1125). Students, under service learning, are capable of confronting “real-life problems in later life [...], manage projects [...] and start to acquire social capital and maintain contacts with people from the community after their service activity” (p.1125).

Khaedir & Wahab (2020) also conducted a qualitative study that verified the role of “multicultural education” in the development of “global citizen”. They started civic action projects in which students, at Makassar High School Celebes Global School in Indonesia, launched open discussions with Australian students about Eastern and Western cultural variations. In addition, students were indulged in other events inside Indonesia and outside like “Hijri New Year, Christian New Year, and Chinese New Year” (p. 510). The results showed that raising students’ awareness of diversities contributes to the growth of global citizens who accept differences and is a fundamental step toward peace in the world (p.511).

The current study chose to apply the four stages of Kolb’s experiential learning framework (1984/2015): 1) Concrete Experience, 2) Reflective Observation, 3) Abstract Conceptualization, and 4) Active Experimentation to an Intercultural Communication course content. Kolb’s experiential learning cycle is described as a well-suited model for applying Service Learning (Snyman, n.d., p.134). It sketches “a powerful theoretical and practical framework for service learning efforts” (Petkus, 2000, p.64). Moreover, Kolb’s (1984) cycle “described a four-part experiential learning theory that has greatly informed service learning’s pedagogical groundings” (Howe et al., 2014, p.52). Additionally, “[s]ervice-learning theory draws on this model [Kolb’s (1984) cycle], particularly in its emphasis on critical reflection as a key component of the learning process” (Howe et al., 2014, p.52). The next section gives a brief explanation of Kolb’s (1984/2015) experiential Learning theory (ELT).

3. Theoretical framework: Kolb’s (1984/2015) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

Kolb (1984/2015) claimed that learning is a process in which “[k]nowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience. Grasping experience refers to the process of taking in information and transforming experience is how individuals interpret and act on that information” (p. 51). Hence, thoughts and ideas are dynamic; they are “formed and reformed through experience” (Kolb, 1984, p.26). Therefore, the key target of experiential learning theory is “to suggest (...) a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior” (Kolb, 1984, p. 31).

Kolb (1984) designed a model of a four-stage cycle including four adaptive learning modes to outline the process of learning through experience. They are (1) “Concrete Experience” (CE), (2) “Reflective Observation” (RO), (3) “Abstract Conceptualization” (AC), and (4) “Active Experimentation” (AE) (Kolb, 2015, p.66). In the “Concrete Experience” stage, the learner encounters a new experience and can give a full description of it. Then in the “Reflective Observation” stage, he/she thinks about the meaning of this experience and starts to utilize skills, knowledge, and prior experience to analyze what this concrete experience means. Kolb (2015) commented that “[i]mmediate or concrete experiences are the basis for observations and reflections. These reflections are assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn” (p.51). So, reflection can be a transaction between the concrete stage and the abstract one. Thereafter, the learner goes to the next stage “Abstract Conceptualism” in which the learner constructs new ideas based on the experience and its reflection. In the fourth stage, Active Experimentation, the learner starts to make use of these abstract ideas in real-world situations. In this stage, the learner is involved in a new experience and loops back around to stage one “concrete experience” (University of Hull, 2024). Accordingly, new information is constructed by the cyclic movement from one stage to another. Kolb (2015) delineated that “the structural bases of the learning process lie in the transactions among these four adaptive modes and the way in which the adaptive dialectics get resolved” (p.66).

The four-stage model depicts “a dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction” (Kolb & Kolb, 2011, p.43). In other words, knowledge resulted from a conflict between two polar opposites: “the concrete experiencing of events at one end and abstract conceptualization at the other” and “active experimentation at one extreme and reflexive observation at the other” (Kolb, 1984, pp.30-31). It also reports four different types of abilities. Students in the experiential learning cycle must:

involve themselves fully, openly, and without bias in new experiences (CE). They must be able to reflect on and observe their experience from many perspectives (RO). They must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (AC), and they must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems. (Kolb, 1984, p.30)

As a consequence, Kolb's model portrays "an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner "touches all the bases"—experiencing (CE), reflecting (RO), thinking (AC), and acting (AE)" (Kolb, 2015, p.51). The process of learning under Kolb's model can take place "in numerous small cycles or partial cycles. Thinking and reflection can continue for some time before acting and experiencing. Experiencing and reflecting can also continue through many iteration[s] before concluding in action" (Kolb, 2015, p.57). In addition, the learning cycle can "start at any point and move through the rest of the categories from there" (Howe et al., 2014, p.52).

The instructor has the choice to decide "how and where to spend class time" (Howe et al., 2014, p.52). This choice is "influenced by the extent of prior experience among students, in both the academic discipline and the community" (Howe et al., 2014, p.52). If the students do not have prior knowledge to build upon it, the instructor may start with the concrete stage in which he/ she exposes students to a short concise real-life project. Next, they continue with the reflective observation stage "before moving into a guided abstract conceptualization (connecting that experience to concepts and theories inherent in the discipline)"; then, the instructor directs students to test their knowledge in a new experience (Active experimentation) (Howe et al., 2014, pp.52-53). Moreover, if students have prior knowledge, the teacher can begin with the Abstract Conceptualization stage based on what they have studied before. Then students engage in an active experiment to reach a new Concrete Experience. Afterward, they reflect on this experience and revise their abstract ideas (Howe et al., 2014, p.53).

4. Methodology

4.1. Intercultural Communication Course' Context and Objectives

Intercultural Communication course is offered in the Translation and Simultaneous Interpreting in English program at the Faculty of Al-Asun, King Salman International University (KSIU), Sharm El-Sheikh campus, Egypt. KSIU is the first university established in Sharm El-Sheikh in 2020. It aims to serve the South Sinai community; one of the main objectives of the university's mission is to disseminate social and cultural tolerance. Sharm El-Sheik is a coastal city located at the Red Sea in the Sinai Peninsula, South Sinai

governorate; it occupies an area of 480 km. In addition to being a highly strategic point link between Africa and Asia; it is distinguished by the beauty of its nature. It is called the City of Peace due to the large number of international peace conferences held in it (Britannica, 2006, & State Information Service: Your Gateway to Egypt, 2022 & Arab News, 2012). The Bedouin tribes are the original inhabitants of the Peninsula. However, in the last decades, Sharm El-Sheikh has attracted other nationalities to come from their countries and start their lives there. As a result, the Sharm El-Sheikh community turns into a cosmopolitan city in need for learning intercultural communication skills.

The Intercultural Communication course was taught to fifteen students, four boys and eleven girls, who belonged to different ethnic backgrounds. They were divided into three categories: international students (Russians), students who hold dual nationalities (Egyptian-Italian/ Egyptian-Russians), and Egyptian students. Even the Egyptian students were from different districts; Alexandria, Upper Egypt, and Sinai. For example, it is claimed that people in Upper Egypt and Sinai are more conservative than people in Alexandria. As a result, the cultural diversity of Sharm El-Sheikh can be reflected in the KSIU students.

The course's primary objectives are to help students recognize the meaning of "culture" and study how culture contributes to understanding in various communicative contexts. In addition, it focuses on reinforcing students' cognitive and behavioral skills to facilitate communication with people from different cultural origins, increase their awareness of social perceptions, and broaden their understanding of the basic elements of interpersonal communication and culture. It covers topics such as what culture is, the basic components of culture, barriers to intercultural communication (culture shock/culture conflict), social perceptions, culture perceptions, stereotypes, and bias. Consequently, the educators of this course tried to establish real-world experiences that integrate Service Learning and the course's intended learning outcomes. The main Intended learning objectives (ILOS) of the Intercultural Communication course are to enable students to: 1. recognize the meaning of "culture" and its components, 2. be familiar with the concepts of cultural perception, 3. compare objectively between different cultures, 4. argue the impact of cultural circumstances on behavior, 5. assess self-awareness and other awareness of the impact of culture and social perception, 6. objectively create viewpoints, 7. adapt to the cultures' differences, and construct effective

communication. The course took place in fifteen weeks during the fall semester of 2023-2024.

4.2. Course design upon the Kolb (1984/2015) four stages

The first three stages in Kolb's (1984) cycle: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, and Abstract Conceptualization were applied in the first six weeks of the semester. During the concrete experience stage, the instructor asked students to surf the internet for some abstract terms such as culture, cultural differences, perception, social perceptions, biases, stereotypes, etc. Then they asked the students to recall past real-life situations in which culture took part and to reflect on their past experiences in the light of the above-mentioned search. The situations, they stated, function as concrete experiences that could help the instructor smoothly turn abstract concepts into tangible incidents and connect the in-class knowledge to the real world. In the Reflection Observation stage, the students went into group discussions and delivered in-class presentations to express their perspectives and exchange ideas and viewpoints. Personalizing these abstract concepts encouraged students to become more enthusiastic and eager to perceive and discuss every single detail about the topics. They critically analyzed their thoughts and feelings toward their past experiences regarding the aforementioned concepts. They also received feedback on their presentations to review and refine it. Moreover, the educators observed their discussions to be sure that they kept on track. The cycle between the first stage, Concrete Experience, and the second stage Reflective Observation went through several rounds before turning to the third stage, Abstract Conceptualization, where they restructured their beliefs besides constructing new ones.

During the second nine weeks of the semester, students were introduced to Kolb's (1984) fourth stage, Active Experimentation, in which they launched civic action projects to implement the knowledge they created through the previous three stages. Hence, this stage connected what was being taught in class to the surrounding communities so that students could learn in a real-life situation and improve their society at the same time. The two civic action activities are: to start an outreach awareness campaign on one of the topics they covered in the course and to perform a play that tackles current issues in the Sharm El-Sheikh youth community. The structure of the two civic action

projects was in line with the course's nature and ILOs. The two projects will be illustrated in detail in the next section.

4.2.1. The First Civic Action Project: An Outreach Awareness Campaign

Students decided to deliver workshops about one of the topics they studied during the course, "Stereotype and Bias". This topic was specifically selected because students identified it as a common scourge in society. They started an outreach awareness campaign by delivering two workshops about stereotypes and biases and their impact on the community of Sharm El-Sheikh. The first workshop was on the university campus; delivering the concepts to sixty of their colleagues in other programs. The second one was presented to forty students, ranging from ten to thirteen years old in Sharm El-Sheikh Public School. Sharm El-Sheikh Public School was determined because of its collaboration with the university and a cooperation protocol with the South Sinai governorate. The university students chose to deliver their workshop to teenagers believing in their receptivity to accept new ideas.

The students spent almost three weeks preparing for the two workshops, till reached the workshops in the ninth week of the semester. They worked in groups detecting and analyzing the actual situations generated by the idea of stereotyping in their daily life and among their colleagues. They also investigated the factors and the reasons behind stereotyping according to the course content. They designed interactive tasks, asked rhetorical questions, played games, displayed images, and opened discussions during their presentations. Furthermore, they predicted some inquiries the audiences may have and tried to prepare convenient answers. They also customized different activities to fit the audiences since grade students and university students won't have the same capabilities and needs. Accordingly, the university students amended the techniques of proposing the concepts of stereotype and bias to school students by using simpler language and preparing more physical interactive activities. In their workshops, the university students explained the concept of stereotypes, how stereotypes can direct our perception, the relation between stereotypes and cultural variations, and how stereotypes influence our decisions and may lead to bias.

They conducted interviews to know how far their colleagues and the school students comprehended the ideas. These interviews helped students view their performance with a critical eye. It highlighted the points of strength and their points of weakness so that they can ensure better performance next time. The students realized how far they grasped the topics when they were able to handle all their audience questions. These interviews also revealed the positive feedback of their audiences; many of the audiences said that they felt pleasant to talk openly about such thorny issues and to express themselves frankly. They also asked for more workshops as the university requires such discussions.

4.2.2. The Second Civic Action Project: A Theatrical Performance

The second civic action activity was to do a theatrical performance that tackled some nowadays Egyptian youth issues and related them to the abstract concepts discussed during the course. Students managed to identify some drawbacks in their community rooted in the intolerance of different cultures. After a while of observations and brainstorming, students created a plot that reveals how discrete cultures, in Sharm el-Sheikh society, are in dispute with each other. They wrote four scenes; the first two scenes were based on cultural misunderstandings. For example, they decided to include a scene about the suffering of the international students at the university due to the difference of cultural values and traditions. Additionally, they created another scene about Bedouins, the native inhabitants of Sinai and a minority that has its own conservative culture. However, they discovered that they knew little about the Bedouins' culture, traditions, or even language. So, they decided to visit a Bedouin Village, and use the skills learned in another course, the sociolinguistics course, to gather the required information. They also asked Bedouin students at the university to help them. The second two scenes dealt with the drawbacks of modern cultural globalization. The students believed that their youth community suffers from the transformation and dissemination of some cultures that undermine Egyptian society. They specified two problems: brand obsession and influencer mania in social media. Although the instructor did not include the term cultural globalization in the curriculum, the students were able to classify and analyze these two social problems and prescribe their reasons from an intercultural perspective.

During the pre-performance stage, the students went innovative, engaging the top of the higher-order thinking skills while crafting scenes and fictional characters, and writing a script that would comically tackle the issues. They learned how to work in a team, as they wrote a full play script in cooperation with students in level three who were enrolled in a writing course, to solve the problems they faced, and to resolve their differences and disagreements. The students showed a deep understanding of the course content while trying to weave a script that reflected intercultural awareness. The educators were also busy reviewing scripts, helping with casting, and guiding the students in the right direction. Students successfully came up with a play named “Viola and the Jinn”.

The play was acted in the fifteenth week of the semester and performed at the university theatre in front of the parents, professors, and students’ friends. The storyline revolved around Viola, an Italian university student who had Egyptian origin. Viola was passionate about the Egyptian society and culture. So, she decided to live and study in Egypt. However, she was afraid of that decision since she had no friends in Egypt and knew little about their culture. Concurrently, a jinni named “Afritta” was required to help a human to fulfill his/her dreams of graduating from high school. "Afritta" had chosen Viola to accomplish her goal since helping her make friends would be an easy task that ensure her success and graduation from high school. Afritta and Viola made a deal in which Afritta offered Viola four trials that would make Viola’s life better so that she could sign Afritta’s graduation certificate. Throughout the play, Viola joined different groups of university students and went through various perspectives and ideas. Some of these perspectives were completely affected by culture or cultural stereotypes and other ideas related to improper behavior in the youth society because of different cultural backgrounds. By the end of each scene and the entire performance, a moral is stated directly to raise awareness of cultural differences or highlight a particular issue in youth life.

After the performance, students spotlighted the elements of success and the drawbacks of the experience. They discussed the points of strength and the opportunities that can be enhanced to ensure better performance next time. Many students acknowledged how the whole experience helped change their character, thoughts, and skills. For example, self-awareness and self-confidence were two major aspects of the student’s character that were commonly shared

among them. In short, they critically evaluated their work and they felt proud of what they had learned.

4.2.3. Survey

By the end of the semester and after the student's final exam, a survey was conducted to measure the students' satisfaction and perceptions of the role of Service Learning in studying an Intercultural course. The survey was anonymous to encourage students to express their true feelings about the course. The questions tried to cover the courses ILOs and the aspects of Service Learning to check whether they were accomplished or not. The survey was a five-point Likert scale with the following distribution: 1. strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Undecided 4. Agree, and 5. Strongly agree. It included nineteen statements that were designed to collect the students' feedback in light of the course's Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). The nineteen statements were categorized into seven main categories ranging from 'a' to 'g'. Categories 'a' & 'b' were meant to measure the students' sense of responsibility and commitment to society as well as their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. While category 'c' covered the first four ILOs, category 'd' covers the remaining ILOs except for the final one which is covered by category 'e', and category 'f' generally measures all the course's ILOs. Statements in the final category 'g' monitored any additional skills acquired through the learning experience such as punctuality, teamwork, and public speaking skills. The survey results are displayed in the table below. In the survey, the statements were shuffled into an order that is different from the one in the table below so that each statement may look like a standalone one, however, it validated the respondent's answers to the other related statements.

Table 1
Survey Results

| Statements Category | Statements of the survey | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|--|---|---|------|-------|-------|
| a. Social responsibility and civic duty | 1. I feel good about giving back to my society. | | | 6.7% | 26.7% | 66.7% |
| | 2. This learning experience bolstered civic duty and a sense of social responsibility. | | | | 26.7% | 73.3% |
| b. Live experience in my society to straighten it up | 3. This learning experience provided me a chance to | | | | 13.3% | 86.7% |

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| | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | go through a live experience. | | | | | |
| | 4. The course helps me understand the issues of my society and work on solving them. | | 6.7% | | 20% | 73.3% |
| | 5. I think that the theatrical performance and workshop will correct the wrongs of my society. | | | | 13.3% | 86.7% |
| c. Cultural diversity and different perspectives (Knowledge) | 6. This learning experience helped me recognize the different cultures and their impact on people's behavior. | | | | 6.7% | 93.3% |
| | 7. Such a learning experience increased my awareness of the cultural diversity in my society | | | | 6.7% | 93.3% |
| | 8. Preparing for the theatrical performance helps me to accept different cultural perspectives. | | | 6.7% | 6.7% | 86.7% |
| | 9. After this learning experience, I can objectively compare between different perspectives. | | | 6.7% | 13.3% | 80% |
| | 10. After this learning experience, I recognize the impact of cultural and social circumstances on personal behavior. | | | | 26.7% | 73.3% |
| d. Cultural diversity and different perspectives (Application) | 11. After this learning experience, I can assess self-awareness and other awareness. | | | | 13.3% | 86.7% |
| | 12. After this learning experience, I can objectively form my viewpoints. | | | | 6.7% | 93.3% |
| | 13. After this learning experience I can better adapt to the other's differences. | | | | 6.7% | 93.3% |
| e. Interpersonal and communication skills | 14. The two projects (theatrical performance and workshops) developed my interpersonal communication skills. | | | | 26.7% | 73.3% |
| | 15. This learning experience enhanced my communication skills. | | | | 6.7% | 93.3% |
| f. Cultural diversity and communication skills (groups c, d & e) | 16. This learning experience familiarized me better with the concepts of intercultural and interpersonal communication. | | | | 6.7% | 93.3% |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|--|------|------|-------|
| g. Additional skills | 17. I believe that the theatrical performance and the two workshops improve my public speaking skills. | | | | 6.7% | 93.3% |
| | 18. Preparing for the two projects helped me to work in groups. | | | | 6.7% | 93.3% |
| | 19. During the two projects, I learned how to manage time to meet the deadlines announced by the instructor | | | 6.7% | 6.7% | 86.7% |

All the students enrolled in the course responded to the survey. In table (1), all the students' responses are dispersed between the fourth and fifth points of the Likert scale which indicates that the students agree with the statements. In all the questions almost more than 80 % or 90 % of the students go for the fifth point on the scale (strongly agree). Any neutral responses, the third point on the scale, are excluded. Hence, in terms of categories 'a' & 'b' in the survey, the students' feedback indicated that they strongly believe that this experience augmented their sense of responsibility and strengthened their critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they managed to recognize their society's flaws and find solutions. The students' responses in categories 'c', 'd', 'e', and 'f' underscored the fact that they have a deep understanding of cultural diversity and perspective. In addition, they developed some practical skills such as the objectivity of viewpoint and the adaptability to different cultures and perspectives. Moreover, they developed strong communication and interpersonal skills. Finally, questions in category 'g' showed that the majority of the students acquired some vocational skills such as public speaking, teamwork, and punctuality. The student's choice of the highest end of the scale substantiated their confidence and certainty about the knowledge and skills they gained during the course.

5. Results and Discussion

The results revealed that integrating Kolb's experiential learning cycle and Service Learning into the Intercultural Communication course can boost students' comprehension of cultural diversity and intercultural awareness. The first three stages of Kolb's cycle, Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, and Abstract Conceptualization assisted students' ability to re-interpret, re-analyze, re-evaluate, and re-conceptualize their real-life experiences concerning intercultural issues. Meanwhile, asking questions and joining in group discussions reinforced students' cognitive skills; they helped students to

broaden their viewpoints, see other perspectives, and consequently, change their mindsets. They also improved students' self-awareness and other awareness as they were able to evaluate their behavior and others. Hence, students reached a better understanding of their society.

The fourth stage, Active Experimentation, wherein the two civic action activities took place, was the most significant one in which students acted as participatory citizens and turned the abstract concepts of the course into direct contact with concrete real experience. It strengthened the student's consciousness of cultural differences and misunderstandings. It also augmented their cultural perception while detecting all these social scourges, and motivated the students since they feel that they are dealing with their real-life close community and calling to correct the wrongs of their society as part of their community service activities. The first civic action project- the outreach awareness campaign- built an effective social bond between students and community needs and engaged the students at a deeper level of learning and practice. Additionally, it sharpened students' higher-order thinking skills such as communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving; which was evident in their choice of the topic they encounter in their society. The students felt a deeper understanding by presenting the topics to other students and answering their questions. In addition, they acquired teamwork skills through that project as they exchanged experiences and knowledge to ensure a successful presentation. The improvement of students' higher-order thinking was obviously noted when they adapted the presentation content to suit the different audiences whether they were university students or grade school students. The results were important for instructors since they show how Service Learning, specifically citizen action projects, can promote students' ability to build their knowledge in real-world situations, fill in the gap between academic theories and real-world practice, and influence communities.

The second civic action project was a theatrical performance "Viola and the Jin". Students selected the themes they encountered in their community. They could identify and prescribe the problems of their community that result in the misperception of different cultures. During the activity, student's social perceptions were augmented by determining all these social scourges. Moreover, they became highly engaged since they felt that they were dealing with their real-life close community and were helping to correct the wrongs of

the surrounding society. Students also wrote a play script in cooperation with students in level three who are enrolled in a writing class. Such cooperation bolstered the students' interpersonal and communication skills since they had to collaborate with students from different levels to produce successful work. At this point, students had gone creative writing a script, creating scenes, and assigning roles. In other words, they engaged the top of the higher-order thinking skills to construct such material and to find innovative solutions to the issues they face. After the performance, they discussed their points of strength and weakness. The students critically assessed their performance, and they felt content about what their learning gains. In a nutshell, the active experimentation stage allowed the students to go through a live experience. In other words, they didn't learn about it, but they lived it.

Additionally, the instructor observed the varying degrees of students' ability to grasp the course content during the whole experience. Although by the end of the course, all the students proved excellent comprehension, not all students had the same degree of improvement. It was noticed that the students, who had dual nationalities, joined the course with a solid background of intercultural communication than their colleagues, the international and the Egyptian students. From the beginning of the course, they were fully aware of the concepts of culture, stereotypes, biases, etc. due to their upbringing in two different cultures. Educators believed that the existence of dual nationalities students accelerated the other students' understanding of the content.

Based on the results mentioned above and the survey, most students strongly confirmed that the course objectives were successfully attained and built a lifelong learning experience. Furthermore, the study introduced systematic steps to teach intercultural communication courses through the interdependence of Kolb's learning cycle and Service Learning. It also provides an empirical experience on how to bridge the gap between academic material and real life.

6. Recommendation

According to the study's results, the following recommendations were suggested: (1) Kolb's model should be integrated into teaching intercultural courses, 2. Instructors should be trained on how to adopt civic action projects to

teach intercultural concepts. 3. Instructors should be aware of the recent problems in their society related to intercultural communication.

The limitation of the study is represented in the small group of students; it was a little bit distracting for students to be involved in all the above details. Thus, the educators encourage other educators to implement the framework presented through the study in larger groups in other geographical areas in Egypt. They also suggest dividing students into groups and each group accomplishes a specific task. The researchers also recommend applying the whole experience to universities in other Egyptian cities to raise awareness of cultural variations and enhance the development of intercultural communication skills.

7. Conclusion

This paper aims to present an authentic experience of teaching the Intercultural Communication course. The course and its nature require a deep engagement in a multi-cultural society with a real concrete experience. The educators interweaved both Service Learning and Kolb's (1984, 2015) experiential learning cycle in intercultural courses to bridge the distance between classroom and society and to ensure a better learning experience. Results of this teaching experience indicated that the students were engaged at a deeper level, using higher-order thinking skills. Also, their awareness of some ideas like social perception, cultural diversity, different perspectives, and self-awareness was amplified. The students confirmed that their interpersonal and communication skills as well as their self-confidence are enhanced. In short, they figured out a meaningful application for the topics covered in the intercultural course as they did not just learn about them, but they lived them.

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