



Promoting EFL Students' Intercultural Awareness through Reading Literary Texts

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Abstract

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The present article argues for the use of literary works as a valuable pedagogical tool to promote English foreign language (EFL) students' intercultural awareness. It aims to examine how reading literary texts can provide opportunities for promoting intercultural teaching/learning in an Algerian university context. To this purpose, the present paper first presents theoretical conceptions of intercultural teaching that inform this study, namely Byram's and Kramsch's models, and then discusses the role of literature in intercultural teaching/learning. This theoretical framework will then be used to develop some suggestions for teaching methodologies for enhancing EFL learners' intercultural understanding through literature. The approach proposed here is an aesthetic interactive reader-oriented approach which is complemented by the use of Hanauer's method focus-on-cultural understanding (2001a), as an efferent reading experience. A practical example of how to foster EFL students' intercultural learning through reading Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken", in an EFL teaching setting is provided. Insights gained from this teaching experience confirmed the potential of literature to raise EFL students' awareness of the influence of their cultural views on their interpretations. It enabled them to explore and come to terms with otherness and to engage in critical cross-cultural understanding.

Keywords: Intercultural learning, literature in EFL teaching, interactive reader-oriented approach, focus-on-cultural understanding, aesthetic/efferent reading.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, the aim of teaching a foreign language (FL) was limited to linguistic competence and language proficiency. For instance, The Audio-Lingual Method, to give but one example, aims to develop listening and speaking skills through intensive oral drills that would help

learners become competent in producing pre-practiced language patterns; its primary focus is on linguistic accuracy (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Likewise, The Direct Method, to give another example, emphasizes language use; it focuses on oral communication by engaging learners in speaking and listening to context-based language material to help them infer rules from such exposure (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In contrast, today, the need for skills for intercultural communication is of utmost importance throughout the world because of international and intercultural cooperation. In accordance with this, FL teaching should aim at developing the FL learner's intercultural competence, for language expresses and embodies cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998). In this respect, Mitchell and Myles (2004, p. 235) argue that "language and culture are not separate, but are acquired together with each providing support for the development of the other".

In spite of this interconnectedness of language and culture, previous research (see, e.g., Castro et al., 2004; Driscoll et al., 2013; Kohler, 2015, as cited in East et al., 2022, p.12) has underscored the uncertainty among teachers about how to incorporate the intercultural dimension in language teaching. In the same vein, East et al. (2022) maintain that "many teachers still persist in separatist practices that demonstrate limited (or perhaps non-existent) understanding of intercultural integration, even when they may demonstrate a level of openness to the concept." (p.13). Along similar lines, Peiser (2015) claim that the integration of intercultural aspects in language teaching has proven challenging to implement in practice. Likewise, Rauschert and Byram (2018) identify different challenges faced by teachers who attempt to implement the intercultural dimension in language teaching. Chief among them are expertise, curriculum design, and methodology. It follows that a recurring theme in existing literature is that the integration of intercultural learning in language education is no easy enterprise. This suggests a clear need for further research to explore effective strategies for integrating intercultural elements into language education. The present study aims to contribute to the ongoing debates about how to promote intercultural teaching in EFL classrooms.

In response to this significance ascribed to intercultural learning, a major concern for EFL teachers is to find meaningful teaching materials that would successfully foster the EFL learner's intercultural awareness. Thus, the present paper advocates the use of literature to pursue this goal. For, literary works represent an especially valuable pedagogical tool to the language classroom (Gonçalves Matos, 2005; Hall, 2005). While the use of literary texts for intercultural teaching is recognized as beneficial, there is still a need for in-depth research to identify effective teaching practices for successful intercultural teaching through literature. Indeed, this pedagogic claim has yet to put forward coherent teaching methodologies; for, the development of intercultural learning in EFL classes is far from being straightforward. Perry and Southwell (2011, as cited in East et al., 2022) point to the need for more research into how the intercultural dimension can be developed among students. More recently Dervin et al. (2020, as cited in East et al., 2022) remark that intercultural competence (IC) "has been with us for decades" and that "today it feels like everything has been said and written about IC". (p. 3) Yet, According to him, "the diverse and uneven pathways which educators have taken" (Dervin et al., 2020, as cited in East et al., 2022, p. 3) attest that its development in

language classes is fraught with challenges. This calls for further research to develop our understanding of how intercultural learning can be developed among students in language education settings. In this regard, the present research, from an Algerian tertiary education setting, seeks to add to current knowledge of how EFL teachers can promote intercultural teaching through literature to enable EFL students to establish a dialogue that ultimately will lead them to an understanding of otherness.

The paper will first present current theoretical models of intercultural teaching. Here, the discussion is limited to those approaches that influence the pedagogic choices made in this paper: Byram's intercultural communicative model and Kramersch's text-based intercultural model. In the next section, the role of literature in intercultural teaching/learning in EFL classes is discussed. This theoretical framework will then be used to develop some suggestions for teaching methodologies for enhancing EFL learners' intercultural understanding through literature. The approach proposed here is an aesthetic interactive reader-oriented approach which is complemented by an efferent reading mode through the implementation of Hanauer's method (2001a), focus-on-cultural understanding. The goal of the present paper is to further contribute to the arguments for using literary texts to develop EFL students' intercultural learning and to provide educators with a foundation for designing classroom practices that foster intercultural awareness through literature.

It should be noted that much of the literature on intercultural teaching through literature is extensively theory-oriented and lacks evidence-based research. In this regard Sawyer and Mato Gonçalves (2015, p. 57) remark that "current empirical research scarcely reflects the presence and influence of literary works in actual FL teaching practice" although "... the theoretical work has begun to draw more attention to the potential that literary texts offer to the L2 classroom" (Sawyer & Mato Gonçalves, 2015, p. 57). In fact, little literature exists on evidence-based actual classroom pedagogical practice that integrates culture / language teaching with literature teaching in EFL education. The intercultural dimension through literature in classes remains an underdeveloped area of empirical research. This research gap highlights the need for more studies that delve into the practical implementation and outcome of such integrated pedagogical approaches. To contribute to this paucity of empirical research, this study aims to gain new empirical insight into this subject from an Algerian EFL university context by addressing the following research questions:

- How does the integration of literary text in the EFL class through the present proposed teaching methodology contribute to the development of Algerian EFL students' intercultural learning?
- How do EFL students' cultural backgrounds influence their engagement with and understanding of the literary text under study?

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Background

2.1 Intercultural Teaching/Learning in Language Education

The question of addressing culture in language teaching has been a subject of a hot debate. The integration of the intercultural dimension into language education started to emerge during the 1980s and was discussed as an expansion of the concept of communicative competence (Byram, 2019). These early days of culture teaching under communicative language teaching paradigm were characterized by an isolationist approach to culture that reduces the teaching of culture to “a series of selected facts, customs and traditions learners need to understand and appreciate in order to become culturally competent” (Flinders Humanities Research Centre, 2005, as cited in East et al., 2022, p. 8). Such traditional static views behold culture as static and present it to the learner as a set of facts to be learnt. Byram (2021) warns against this view that he describes as “the worst teaching scenario” for it presents culture “as if it were unchanging over time or as if there were only one set of beliefs, meanings and behaviours in any given country” (p. 51). In opposition, with intercultural teaching, culture is perceived as a dynamic concept constantly changing through interactions and communication. With this view, the focus is put on the inseparability of language and culture and the pedagogic goal of empowering learners with “[...] the skills of analysis, evaluation and interpretation of cultural meanings, beliefs and values” as Piatkowska (2015, as cited in East et al., 2022, p. 11) puts it. Central to this pedagogic enterprise is the concept of intercultural competence which has proved difficult to define (Dervin et al., 2020); there is no agreed upon definition. The present study aligns with a multi-faceted description of the concept offered by Gupta (2002, as cited in Sercu, 2005):

The willingness to engage with foreign culture, self-awareness and the ability to look upon oneself from the outside, the ability to see the world through the others' eyes, the ability to cope with uncertainty, the ability to act as a cultural mediator, the ability to evaluate others' point of view, the ability to consciously use culture learning skills and to read the cultural context, and the understanding that individuals cannot be reduced to their collective identities. (p. 2)

Consistently with these theoretical orientations, the present study is grounded in the following principles:

- Language and culture are interdependent and should be taught in an integrated manner.
- Learners need to gain insight into both their own culture and the foreign one and how culture shapes people's worldviews.
- The need to develop student' analytic, reflective and interpretive skills of cultural phenomena instead of a mere focus on factual knowledge
- Encouraging explicit comparisons and connections between languages and cultures to help learners become more understanding of themselves and of others.

Conceptualized in this way, the emphasis with intercultural learning here lies on “on attitudes and skills in the first place and knowledge in the second” (Piatkowska, 2015, as cited in East et al., 2022, p. 11). In essence, these principles eventually seek to empower the EFL learners to explore and reflect on how cultural practices may be similar and different across both the learners’ own cultures and the target language ones. Bearing these principles in mind, the framework of this study builds on Byram’s model, and Kramsch’s model which will be discussed in turn.

2.1.1 Byram’s Intercultural Communicative Model

Byram’s influential concept, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has refocused the goal of language education by integrating culture into language study. By doing so, Byram has taken language teaching beyond the purposes of communicative language teaching and has advocated a wider pedagogy that encompasses language and culture teaching. Intercultural communicative competence is perceived as the “ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities and the ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (Byram et al., 2002, p. 5).

A key concept at the heart of his model is the notion of “the intercultural speaker” who is defined as “someone who has the ability to interact with ‘others’, to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives, to be conscious of their evaluations of difference” (Byram et al., 2001, p. 5). It follows from this definition that the intercultural speaker needs to reflect both on their own culture and the other’s culture and to establish relationships between their own and the EFL culture through understanding and mediation. This reflection takes place, according to Byram, by focusing on and comparing information about one’s own culture and the target language speakers’ culture. To help EFL students grow into competent intercultural speakers, Byram (1997) highlights a range of skills and knowledge, which he called the five “savoirs” (p. 34). This French term, it is worth noting, is a catch-all term that captures three significations in English: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These “savoirs” should be acted upon in any FL education to foster intercultural competence. These are:

- *Savoir*: Knowledge of self and other, and social interaction
- *Savoir être*: attitudes of curiosity and openness, relativizing self and valuing others
- *Savoir comprendre*: skills of interpreting and relating
- *Savoir apprendre / faire*: skills of discovering and interacting
- *Savoir s’engager*: critical cultural awareness

With this range of *savoirs*, learners are required to acquire knowledge about the FL culture, relate it to their own cultural experiences, and examine relationships between different cultures. Added to that, they should attempt to relativize their cultural views and try to see things from the other’s perspective. Besides, Byram requires the learners to become

aware of their cultural assumptions and to reflect on how they influence their interpretations of what one says or writes.

It follows that Byram's model goes beyond linguistic and behavioral appropriateness and perceive ICC in terms of the speaker's attitudes and positions towards their interlocutors together with their knowledge of how individuals and societies function and the implication this might have for interactions with others. In defining the aim of intercultural teaching Byram et al. (2001, p. 7) maintain that "it is not the purpose of teaching to try to change learners' values, but to make them explicit and conscious in any evaluative response to others". In line with Byram's model, the present study does not attempt to prescribe a specific set of values or norms on the learner or to change their existing values. Instead, the purpose is to help learners become aware of their own values and to critically evaluate how they influence their interactions with interlocutors with different perspectives, in our case with the literary text under study.

2.1.2 Kramersch's Text-based Intercultural Model

Kramersch (1993) reacts against instrumental language teaching pedagogy which has reduced the goal of language teaching to the sole concern of getting the students to talk and write the language and has kept such enterprise separated from content classes which are deemed highly intellectual. With such pragmatic goals of teaching, approaching culture has become problematic for it calls forth intellectual and critical faculties on the part of the FL student. In alignment with Kramersch's viewpoint, the current study seeks to go beyond the conventional emphasis on instrumental language learning objectives by advocating a holistic approach that targets both linguistic and intellectual faculties.

In opposition to this instrumental orientation, Kramersch's model combines two aims: fostering the students' abilities to use the foreign language and enhancing their developmental and intellectual abilities. This intellectual goal is fulfilled by getting the FL student to reflect on the interrelationship between text and context. Kramersch's pedagogic model emphasizes the interaction between linguistic and social structures. To put it differently, teachers should not teach either form or meaning, but rather the interaction between the two. The present research design adheres to Kramersch's pedagogic stance by applying in an EFL classroom an integrated approach which attempts to combine between language instruction and culture understanding through the use of literary texts.

Though Kramersch subscribes to context-based teaching, she nonetheless emphasizes a text-based approach to the study of culture; she attempts to develop an understanding of culture by analyzing texts, specifically literary texts. The encounter with such texts, Kramersch maintains, may enhance the EFL reader's understanding of the "complex, changing, and conflictual" (Kramersch, 2011, p. 359) nature of intercultural communication. This perspective forms a cornerstone of the present proposed pedagogy which employs literary texts in EFL classes to develop EFL students' insights into the target language cultural perceptions and nuances.

A fruitful relationship between the text and the reader can come about by encouraging the EFL reader to move away from their perspective and to attempt to get a fuller, more nuanced understanding. Kramersch refers to this as “a third culture” where the perceptions and knowledge of both The EFL students and the target language intermingle. Within this “third culture” or “third place”, Kramersch maintains that learners are neither bound by their cultural assumptions nor the target language ones but are rather made to engage in their personal meaning construction. They are made, as Phipps and Gonzalez (2004, p. 168) put it, “to be beyond the captivities of culture”. Such “third place” allows dialogue between the learner and the text which would give rise to ongoing discussions and interpretations in the language classroom. Our proposed model subscribes to Kramersch’s recommendation to build in the classroom opportunities for critical reflections, comparison and contrast between the learners’ cultural views and the target language ones.

In this study, the present proposed teaching model aims to cultivate such “third place” in the EFL class by creating a space that engages EFL students in negotiation and dialogue through student-student, student-teacher, or student-text interactions. Such dialogues would crystallize in different interpretations and appreciations in classroom discussions. The present study adopts Kramersch’s notion of the “third place” by attempting to foster in the EFL classroom interactive opportunities in which EFL learners can transcend binary apposite cultural views, self and other, and navigate between their own cultural background and the target culture. By incorporating this notion, the present study attempts to enable EFL students to critically reflect on their own world views in comparison to the target language culture to eventually develop a more nuanced intercultural understanding. The ultimate aim is to empower EFL learners to become capable of bridging cultural divides and building meaningful connections across cultures. Furthermore, through this concept, we attempt to encourage EFL learners to adopt an open-minded approach to cultural differences.

2.2 Intercultural Learning through Teaching Literature: Why and How?

2.2.1 Why Literature in EFL Intercultural Teaching?

Many researchers claim the need to include literary texts in the language/culture curriculum for culture can find its expression through the medium of literature. (Carroli, 2008; Cook, 1994; Hanauer, 2001b; Shanahan, 1997). The present study argues for the use of literature as a resource for intercultural teaching. It aims at promoting the teaching of EFL literature as an intercultural significant experience that seeks to engage EFL learners with otherness. Such pedagogic proposal is motivated by a number of reasons.

Firstly, one argument stems from what Littlewood (1976, as cited in Brumfit & Carter, 1986, p. 15) describes as “the fluid, dynamic reality” of the literary text which engages the learners in a very meaningful way by stimulating their imagination and their emotions. Concerning this quality, Narančić Kovač and Kaltenbacher (2006) maintain that literature proves to function at both a cognitive and emotional level, just like ICC itself. This characteristic contrasts with referential material which does not engage EFL learners with

dialogic interactions with the texts; instead, it allows learners to raise questions that test their comprehension without truly engaging them with meaningful interactions with the texts. This is due to what Littlewood (1976, as cited in Brumfit and Carter, 1986) described as “the possibly static and unquestionable reality of the informational text” (p. 15). Along similar lines, Hook et al (1970, pp. 39–40) remark, “Literature is not factual as an encyclopaedia article is factual...Literature is concerned with why things happen, on the motivations of man”. This meaning potential generates dialogic interactions between the reader and the text. To put it differently, literary texts can engage EFL learners in a negotiating dialogue with the worldviews embedded in the text.

Unlike other non-literary discourses such as referential or transactional texts, in which reading is associated with gathering or finding out particular information, the reading of literary texts is more subjective, much more elastic and thus allows different openings. They lend themselves to different interpretations as Hanauer (2001b) points out “One of the main reasons for using a literary text to teach cultural understanding is that it can be understood in a variety of ways.”(p. 395). This potential can be exploited to assist students in the development of their sense-making procedures (Widdowson, 1975) which are required for the interpretation of any discourse context or intercultural encounter.

Another argument is put forward by Birketveit and Williams (2013, p. 7) who advocate the use of literary texts in the classroom on the premise that “They open up imaginative perspectives, interrogate values and assumptions and lead to enhanced understanding of global cultures and differences.” This allows the reader to observe the world through different cultural perspectives and set them in comparison to theirs. Keeping with this, Bredella (2008) maintains that literature provides readers with perspectives on life that they may not encounter in their own realities. This is particularly relevant to the Algerian context where EFL Algerian students have little direct experiences of foreignness. For Algeria is not a touristic country and students have few opportunities to meet people from other countries. Thus they have little if any intercultural encounters with foreigners. To account for this, we recommend the use of literary texts which allow learners to experiment with unfamiliar protagonists' world views and perspectives and come to terms with otherness. Thus through literature, the learner can experience new meanings and alternative interpretations of the world that would lead them eventually to rediscover and reevaluate their ways of seeing the world that they take for granted.

Another reason that strengthens the view of literature as a valuable resource to promote intercultural learning is that it conveys genuine examples of language in use in a certain cultural context. Thus it can serve as a rich resource for learning authentic language discourses that display a correlation between culture and language. This joint learning of language and culture through literature can sharpen the learners' understanding of how language is used to express different assumptions, values, and beliefs. This emphasis on reading culturally authentic texts has become one of the central claims for curriculum reform in EFL teaching (Arens & Swaffar, 2000; Dupuy, 2000; Swaffar, 1999). Proponents of text-based teaching advocate a curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are integrated (Kramsch, 1993; Sawyer & Mato Gonçalves, 2015). Yet, for all its potential, literature on its

own can not magically enhance EFL students' intercultural awareness; it needs to be carefully implemented with effective teaching methodologies to achieve this educational objective. Thus, the following part aims at defining the underpinnings of the pedagogy proposed here.

2.2.2 Proposed Pedagogy: An Aesthetic Interactive Reader- oriented Approach

2.2.2.1 Reading as an Interactive Exploration of the Text

Scholars like, Vygotsky (1978) maintain that students learn through interaction and mediation with others. In this respect, literature may provide a valuable tool whereby students can carry out meaningful interactions and activities to learn both the target language and the target culture. Such insights into meaning and culture can be produced through adopting an interactive model of reading which suggests that meaning and interpretations emerge from a dialogue between the reader and the text. This dialogue between the reader, text, and their interaction is the central principle of reader-response theory, (Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1994). This theory supports the notion that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text and that knowledge is both socially and contextually constructed. According to Rosenblatt, this dialogue is an “experience shaped by the reader under the guidance of the text” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 12). This ongoing, non-linear process builds on the reader's past experiences and background, his/her cultural values, and the social dimensions that influence how the reader responds to the text. It follows that for meaningful interpretations to take place, EFL students have to draw upon their cultural backgrounds during the reading experience.

Viewed in this light, the reader engages in a dialogue with the text through questioning, relating (*savoir comprendre*) what is being read to their knowledge of the self and experiences (*savoir*). Thus, the act of reading becomes a give-and-take process of meaning-construction (*savoir comprendre*) in which the reader and the text interact in a dialectical relationship. Iser (1978) puts emphasis on the interaction between the text's horizons and that of the readers. Though Iser emphasizes the importance of the reader's knowledge of structure to analyze the text, he also highlights the importance of the reader's outside-text knowledge “which acts as a referential background against which the unfamiliar can be conceived and processed” (Iser, 1978, p. 38). Iser believes that the literary text enables readers to construct different possible perspectives rather than just accept the writer's view and therefore readers can reinterpret the text each time they re-read it or they can change or strengthen their perspectives as they read.

The proposed interactive reader-oriented model is based on the premise that every act of reading constitutes a unique set of situations and personal experiences (Gilroy-Scott, 1983) that come to bear on the students' interpretations of a given text. Keeping with this underlying premise, Rosenblatt (1994) justifiably argues that every reader's unique response to the literary text stems from what he/she already knows and his/her previous experiences together with his/her perceptions and assumptions. Thus, with an interactive reader-oriented model, the notion of reading and responding to literature shifts from “text-based meaning – meaning getting – to a conceptualization of reading as meaning-making” (Straw, 1990, p. 131).

In other words, making meaning becomes the core of reading and responding to literature. To construct meaning out of literary texts, readers are encouraged to conduct reading in a thoughtful process as proposed by Southgate et al. (1981). In such a process, students are getting involved in a questioning reading in which they project their own experiences and thoughts on what they are reading.

Central to the teaching pedagogy proposed here is to provide opportunities for interactions through discussion-based activities and questioning techniques such as “engaging, conceiving, connecting, explaining, interpreting, and judging” (Beach, 1993, p. 6). Through this questioning approach, EFL teachers can guide their EFL students’ negotiations of meaning out of the literary text under discussion and maintain a dynamic learning environment. The aim here is to get EFL students involved in thoughtful interrogative reading so that they can first impart their ways of seeing things and then explore other perspectives. To maintain this interactional environment, the present paper advocates the use of an aesthetic mode of reading, which will be discussed in the following section, as the starting point, which can be subsequently complemented by an efferent mode of reading.

2.2.2.2 Emphasizing the Aesthetic Reading Experience

Rosenblatt distinguishes between two modes of reading, efferent and aesthetic. The former, according to her, refers to reading to get information. This includes, as Rosenblatt explains “reading to acquire information, directions for action, or solutions to a problem” (Rosenblatt, 1993, p. 383). When reading from an efferent stance, the focus lies more on content than on form; the emphasis lies on the writer’s message rather than on how the message is derived. In efferent reading, the EFL student is supposed to gain cultural insight by gathering information about people’s perceptions, and way of life at a given place. Yet, such mode of reading may make EFL students feel incapable to grasp all the text’s content for their knowledge of the foreign culture is insufficient. With this regard, Kramersch (1993, p. 124) arguably claims that “Indeed, the frequent disappointment of intermediate language learner may stem from the fact that they are asked to read efferently as stories texts that yield their best when read aesthetically as discourses.” Taking cue from Kramersch, the present proposed pedagogy favours an aesthetic reading mode. With this reading stance, the emphasis lies on what the reader experiences when reading the text, i.e. “on what he is living through during the reading-event”, as Rosenblatt put it (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 38). Here, readers concentrate on their thoughts, images, feelings, and associations evoked during reading. According to Rosenblatt, reading the literary text from an aesthetic stance helps students to make connections between the text and their cultural context as well as consider the influence that the literary work can have on them.

Aesthetic reading requires the teacher to guide the students so that they can construct their interpretations and reflections according to their own experiences. So it is fundamental in aesthetic reading to maintain the active environment of interaction between students and teachers and to engage students in a collective creative experimentation with the literary text. Responding to the literary text from an aesthetic standpoint allows EFL students to

adopt the position of a cultural outsider through which they can voice their interpretations, which are accepted as valid, and then make them reflect on their cultural assumptions that affect those appreciations. Here the EFL students are made to consider the taken-for-granted interpretations that stem from their own ethnocentric world's views. This engagement endorses Byram's *savoir s'engager* and Kramsh's 'Third culture' (Kramsch, 1993).

An efferent mode of reading, on the other hand, allows the reader to come to terms with a cultural insider's perspective which entails that the EFL student should try to make sense of the text in relation to the wider cultural content that the literary text conveys. To put it differently, EFL students here should attempt to grasp what the text would mean for the target language readers. Adopting a culture insider's perspective, it must be warned, can not be fully achieved by the EFL students who are caught in their ethnocentricity. Therefore, it should be preceded by an outsider's position, as suggested earlier; for in the present proposed interactive reader-oriented approach, the students will unavoidably refer to their own experiences to explore the text's meanings. These EFL students' interpretations are then set against the literary work's reality. By doing so, the EFL student is made to consider others' cultural standpoints and to get engaged with otherness.

Drawing on Rosenblatt's (1985) claim that another text, or restatement or summary by another reader may serve for an efferent reading, we use in the present paper the target language readers' interpretations to pursue this mode of reading. The purpose here is to assist the EFL students in getting an understanding of the culture insider's perspective. A useful method to bring such cultural insights to light is Hanauer's method (2001a) Focus-on-Cultural Understanding which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.2.3 Focus-on-Cultural Understanding

As stated earlier, Hanauer argues for the use of literary texts in teaching cultural understanding due to their very nature which allows different interpretations. Hanauer (2001a) exploits this nature of literary texts and puts forward a method, Focus-on-Cultural Understanding, for the application of literary texts for the teaching of culture. This method "involves presenting the original literary text and then creating a situation in which the language learner's understanding of the text is considered in the light of cultural insiders' understanding(s) of the text" (Hanauer, 2001a, p. 401). In other words, firstly, EFL students are required to respond to literary texts and construct their interpretations. Here, the EFL teacher should aim at eliciting students' responses to the literary text under discussion. In this regard, Talif (1995) asserts that the reason behind it is to motivate and encourage students to read by making a connection between the themes of a text and their personal experiences. Such students' responses, Hirvela (1996) explains, are personal as they are concerned with their feelings and cultural background. Secondly, EFL students are exposed to the target speakers' interpretations to raise their awareness of "...the ways that specific individuals and communities understand these texts [and] can focus on the ...culturally specific interpretations of these texts" (Hanauer, 2001a, p. 395).

Getting the students to analyze these interpretations and compare them with their own can allow them to reflect on both their own culture and the target language. In this respect, Hanauer maintains that the aim here is “to help the language learner to focus on the way members of the target cultural group construct meaning [and] to gain an understanding of the culturally specific meaning-making process” (Hanauer, 2001a, p. 403). In other words, by setting the EFL students' interpretations, which result from their cultural perspectives, in comparison/contrast with the target speakers' interpretations, which stem from their cultural views, EFL students are helped to achieve a better understanding of their own culture and the other's.

We attempted to summarize diagrammatically the aforementioned teaching pedagogy in Figure 1.

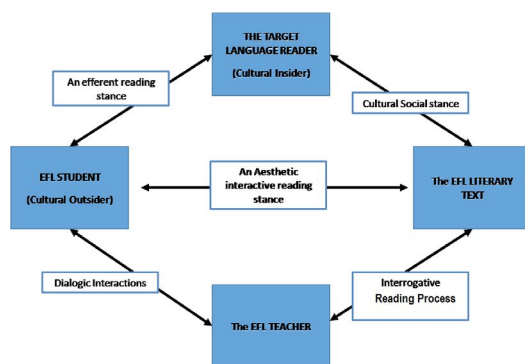


Figure 1. *An Aesthetic Interactive Reader-Oriented Model to the Teaching of EFL Literature for Intercultural Learning*

4. Method

4.1 The Teaching Setting: The Algerian Context

The teaching experimentation took place in a two-session reading class of 1st year EFL master students, at Chlef University. The choice of this university is merely motivated by our position as assistant teacher there enabling us to implement the current proposed teaching pedagogy in our classes.

English in Algeria has the status of a foreign language, not actively involved in any societal functions. It should be noted that the current educational policy of the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education aims to promote the use of English by introducing English in different curricula in different departments. The students involved in this pedagogic undertaking were taught English for the first time in 1st year middle school. Thus these students' exposure to English in educational settings covers seven years before university, four years at middle school, and three years at secondary school, and they have completed

three years of undergraduate studies of English as a major at the university. The sample of students involved in the present study includes 12 males and 18 females aged between 22 and 25 years.

4.2 Text Selection

The selection of Robert Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken* in the present study (see Appendix A) was governed by a number of criteria. Chief among them is the learners' level of English: the present text is taken to be linguistically accessible to 1st year EFL master students and thus does not go beyond their linguistic proficiency. Another criterion that motivates our choice is what the EFL learners have or are likely to have experienced in terms of the content of the text: the text's content is taken to be relevant to Algerian EFL students in the sense that it deals with the theme of decision-making that students would have probably gone through in any stage in their lives. Thus this poem has the potential to generate student-text or student-student or student-teacher interactions.

Besides, the choice of the present poem is based on the cultural issues it presents. It aligns with Mukundan's (2005) recommendation not to narrowly misconceive culture as extremely immoral expressions in life that inhibit the learner from benefiting from an enriching intercultural dialogue with the target language culture and from fostering a tolerance-based dialogic learning environment. In agreement with this, the present text selection avoided any cultural topic that the Algerian EFL learners would find immoral and thus would inhibit the intercultural dialogue the present paper aims at. This is not intended to advocate cultural neutrality; it rather aims to ensure that cultural discussions remain conducive of open exchange of ideas, rather than becoming confined to the realm of extremely immoral cultural manifestations. It attempts to avoid reducing culture to such topics and engage the learner with a rich cultural spectrum that they can critically engage with.

The present selected poem is also deemed to be suitable for the present study due to its symbolic nature which would give rise to multiple interpretations that would trigger dialogic analysis which is at the heart of the present proposed teaching method. Besides, its popularity among native speakers facilitates gathering a wide range of the target language speakers' interpretations (Orr, 2015).

4.3 Description of the Teaching Process

In tune with the present proposed model, the teaching process attempts to fulfill the following pedagogic objectives:

1. To encourage EFL students to act upon an essential dimension of "savoir", knowledge of the self, to voice their appreciations which are all valid; for students are usually intimidated to do so by the tendency to believe that they have to arrive at the author's intention which is beyond their grasp.

2. To promote EFL students' skills of discovering and interpreting the target language cultural perceptions and how they lead to different interpretations.
3. To cultivate EFL students' attitudes of curiosity and openness towards the target language cultural perceptions.
4. To foster EFL students critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*)

To translate these objectives into the reality of literature teaching in an EFL classroom, we attempted to apply the following process which consists of four distinct stages that progressively guide EFL students through a deep interactive exploration of the poem.

The starting point is the voice of the reader, Algerian EFL students. Thus, the first stage attempts to engage EFL students in the process of constructing meaning out of the poem through interactive activities that get them to connect with the selected literary text on a personal level. Drawing on Hanauer's method "Focus- on- cultural understanding, the second stage gets EFL students to explore the target language members' cultural perceptions and unravel how cultural backgrounds shape interpretations. This stage aligns with "Byram's *savoir apprendre*" which requires the learner to discover and interact with alternative cultural perspectives. Stage three aims to foster EFL students' ability to deeply understand and interpret the target language cultural perceptions and to unveil any preconceptions or biases that EFL students might hold about the target culture. Ultimately, Stage four attempts to put into practice Byram's "*savoir s'engager*" and Kramsch's "third place" through interactive discussions guided by thought-provoking questions that encourage EFL students to actively compare their cultural worldviews with that of others. This dual-pronged cross-cultural exploration aims to enable EFL students to critically analyze and reflect on different cultural viewpoints.

Stage1: Eliciting students' personal responses (Knowledge of the self)

EFL students were asked to read Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken*. They were encouraged to jot down their thoughts, emotions, and reflections on the poem all through their readings. This stage aligns directly with the first objective which aims to foster EFL students' self-awareness by prompting them to act upon their knowledge of the self to articulate their personal thoughts, emotions and reflections about the literary text under study. To do so, students were encouraged to respond to the text and to construct their initial personal interpretation of the poem's meaning from their own personal perspective. This negotiation of meaning was conducted in an interactive collective environment and guided by the following questions:

1. What is the underlying idea of the poem, *The Road Not Taken*?
2. How do you interpret the meaning of 'roads' in the poem?
3. How does the title of the poem affect you? What does the word 'not' in the title communicate? If you were the poet how would you formulate the title?

4. What symbolic meanings and interpretations does the line 'two roads diverged in a yellow wood' evoke to you?
5. How do the meanings conveyed in each stanza resonate with your feelings and experiences?
6. Discuss the lines and phrases that stood out to you.
7. What poet's tone do you capture? Does it remain the same throughout the poem?
8. What does the phrase "the less traveled by" suggest to you?
9. What does the phrase in the last stanza "and that has made all the difference" suggest to you?
10. Does the poem evoke any personal connections and feelings? Can you comment on situations in which you, or any close friend or family member, were faced with a decisive choice to make? What happened then?
11. In what ways do your cultural perspectives shape your understanding and interpretations of the poem?

Stage 2: Discovering cultural otherness (savoir apprendre)

In accordance with the aforementioned second objective, this stage seeks to encourage students to explore and discover cultural otherness and to delve into how different cultural perceptions can shape different interpretations. To do so as part of an efferent reading activity, students are exposed to alternative interpretations of the poem constructed by members of the target language community, American students. Those interpretations were sourced from Orr (2015) and from a cohort of fifteen American students aged between 22 and 26 years who concertedly sent us via email their appreciations and reflections on the poem by responding to the same questions outlined above in stage one. The choice of American students' interpretations is motivated by the fact that American culture is often associated with an emphasis on individualism which provides a distinct contrast to the collective cultural values of Algerian EFL students. This contrast facilitates a more pronounced exploration of different viewpoints and their implication on the students' interpretations of the selected literary text, making the comparison particularly compelling. The goal is to provide a focused comparison by juxtaposing two distinct points of view. It should be noted that this choice is not intended to exclude the insights of students from other cultures. We acknowledge that the broader context of literary interpretations from diverse cultures can certainly be used to cultivate intercultural dialogues and understanding.

In an attempt to make Algerian students explore these cultural insiders' interpretations, they are divided into groups, and are asked the following questions:

1. Read the following American students' interpretations of the poem, *The Road Not Taken*, reported by Orr (2015). Do you agree with them?

The poem is about individuality; it speaks about nonconformity, about walking to the beat of a different drummer. It is about refusing to succumb to social pressure.

The poem is a celebration of choosing the unconventional path even if it diverges from the conventional or popular one.

The poem explores the concept of individualism, the uniqueness of personal choices...It is an encouragement to follow one's path regardless of any societal norms or expectations.

2. Is the poem about the concept of choice and its consequences in life or the person's desire to express their individuality and nonconformity through their choice?
3. Can American students' interpretations be supported by the text of the poem?
4. Can you gather any evidence from the text that backs up those interpretations?
5. What effect does the repeated use of the pronoun 'I' create? How might the poem have been different if written from a collective perspective?
6. In light of American students' interpretations of the poem, what might the phrase 'the less traveled by' suggest to you?
7. Consider the speaker's description of choosing a path that "wanted wear" and "was grassy and wanted wear"; what does it suggest? Does it relate to individualistic pursuits?
8. Reconsider the speaker's acknowledgment that they will tell their story "with a sigh". What might the sigh imply in relation to American students' interpretations?
9. How do American students' cultural perspectives on making choices impact their appreciation of the poem's ending "And that has made all the difference"?

Stage 3: Reconsidering one's conceptions about the target language cultural perceptions

This stage aligns with the third objective, fostering EFL students' curiosity and openness towards the target cultural perceptions, by encouraging them to reassess their beliefs and knowledge about cultural aspects of the target language. At this point of this culture-oriented discussion, the EFL learners are engaged in an analysis of their own understanding of individualism to unveil any misconceptions. The discussion revolves around the following questions:

1. How familiar are you with the concept of American individualism? Can you share any experiences through which you have gained insight into how this perspective manifests in American culture?

2. How would you perceive the role of individualism in decision-making in your views?
3. What did the speaker of the poem consider in their decision-making process? Imagine yourself in the poet's place, what would you consider while making a choice?
4. Consider the following American proverbs (Mieder, 2021). What do they tell you about decision-making? Do they relate to the poem? Do you identify with any of them?

“Look before you leap”, “The devil is in the details”, “Two heads are better than one”, “Stand on your own feet”, “Everyone is a designer of their own fate”, “Follow your own bliss”, “Think outside the box”, “Our choices define us”, “Hoe your own row”, “You have to pull your own wagon”, “Be all that you can be”, “choose it or lose it”, “It costs nothing to dream”, “An ounce of decision is worth a pound of doubt”, “Bad decisions make good stories”

Stage 4: Critical cross-cultural understanding (savoir s'engager)

This stage directly contributes to achieve the aforementioned fourth objective by engaging students in a critical evaluation and questioning of their own cultural perspectives in comparison/contrast to the target language cultural assumptions. Ultimately, students are asked to reflect on their own taken-for-granted culturally specific ways of constructing meaning and to attempt to get a critical understanding, or “a third place”, through these questions:

1. How do you think American individualism compares to the decision-making approach in your cultural background? Can you identify instances in individualism that align with or challenge your personal beliefs?
2. Do you know any cultural stories, sayings, or proverbs, from your own culture that relate to the theme of choice and decision-making?
3. How do you perceive the balance between your own decision-making approach and individualism? Are there aspects of American individualism that you find compatible with your values?

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Activating Knowledge of the Self (Savoir)

In stage one, we found out that EFL students engaged and connected with the poem on a personal level. They actively participated in negotiations of meaning and constructed their

responses. EFL students' interpretations that resulted from these are exemplified in the class discussion excerpt below (see Appendix B, section 1 for full transcript).

Student 1 (male): The speaker in the poem is caught in a dilemma: which path to follow and seems to lack faith, for a person with a strong faith in God will seek his guidance in any decision-making through prayers, *Salat-al-Istikhara* - which translates to Prayer of Seeking Counsel, which is a prayer recited by Muslims who need guidance from God (Allah) when facing a decision in their life- and God will guide his/her path and will facilitate things for them. This hesitation that the speaker goes through is from Satan.

Student 2 (female): the speaker in the poem regrets choosing one path over another, and he wishes he could have taken both options. He seems to regret the choices he did not make, and this is a denial of the fact that one's destiny is traced and no one can go against it. A true believer should not have any feelings of regret about his/her choices, and should accept the Will of God, "al-Qada wa -al-Qadar" -Belief in Allah's destiny and Predestination, is one of the pillars of faith in Islam.

It follows from this discussion that EFL students responded to the underlying theme of the selected poem by connecting it to their worldviews. They drew many parallels between the speaker's human condition of facing a challenging choice between two distinct life paths and their cultural views of choice, as being bound by predestination and thus calling upon the person to pray God's guidance and not to fall prey to regret and doubtful hesitations. Here, EFL students conceived the speaker's process of decision-making in light of their cultural perceptions. They judged what the speaker in the poem did or failed to do by their cultural standards. To put it metaphorically, their worldviews served as a torch through which they navigated their way into the poem's words and world.

EFL students' appreciation of the poet's words and their symbolic meanings showed, again, how their interpretations are influenced by their cultural background. For instance, some students associated the two roads with life choices where each path signifies a different life direction; while others relate the term roads to *Sirat al-Mustaqim*, often translated as the Straight Path, the path of morality, and righteousness. They connected the poem's message of making choices to their Islamic teachings that humans are presented with the choice of following the straight path or straying onto other paths that lead away from virtues. (see Appendix B, section 1)

In response to the title of the poem, some EFL students maintained that the use of "not" is highly suggestive (see Appendix B, section 1). According to them, it highlights the road the speaker did not choose instead of the one he opted for. This suggests that the speaker was reflecting on the possibilities he left behind and the potential outcomes he would have realized if a different path had been taken. Thus, the speaker in the poem, according to many students, seems to be caught in a "what-if" or "if I had" scenario which, as they claim,

recalling the prophet's words, provides "an opening for the deed of the devil", which leads to regret, doubts, anxiety, and mourning over what one could have achieved.

It follows that EFL students' interpretations are in tune with their religion which advises against giving way to such feelings of regret and anxiety about one's past choices and recommends accepting God's Will and learning from one's experiences to move forward with a positive attitude and reliance on God's guidance. Following these views, some EFL students said that they would have dropped the word "not" from the title" and would reformulate it as: "Roads", "The Road Taken". "My Road", "What a Road!", "A Road Meant for Me", or "Take the Road".

While discussing the lines and phrases from the poem that stood out to them, EFL students made diverse responses that are exemplified below (see Appendix B, section 1 for further examples):

Student 1 (male): "And sorry that I could not travel both". I take this line to be a confession of weakness and humbleness toward Allah's divine knowledge. For the speaker can never explore the potential of the path he did not choose.

Student 2 (female): The most outstanding line in the poem is "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood". It is an image that summarizes what is life all about: crossroads of life paths through which people need to find their routes towards the Straight Path.

These responses highlighted in unequivocal terms the influence of EFL students' culture and Islamic teachings on their interpretations. As EFL students engage with interpreting the words of the poem, they seem to interpret the world they inhabit. Again in response to the lines, "I took the less traveled by" and "And that has made all the difference", students' interpretations resonate well with their cultural views which take that "the ultimate significance of one's actions can not be seen in the real world but in the Hereafter" as one of the student puts it (see Appendix B, section 1)

Insights that emerged throughout these activities in stage one highlighted the connections the students made between the poem and their cultural beliefs. Such practice enabled them to act upon their knowledge of the self, an important and often neglected component of "savoir" in interpretations of the literary texts in EFL classes. This practice successfully met our first objective and fulfilled the following pedagogic results:

- It allowed EFL students to formulate their personal responses by making meaningful connections between their worldviews and personal experiences and the selected literary text.
- It raised EFL Students' awareness of their sense-making processes and how these are deeply entrenched in their cultural values.

This self-awareness, under the present proposed pedagogy, is taken to be the point of departure of the present EFL students' intercultural journey.

5.2 Developing Students' Skills of Discovering and Interpreting Otherness: Savoir Apprendre

The efferent reading activity in stage two, through which EFL students (cultural outsiders) were asked to consider American students' (cultural insiders) interpretations of the poem, proved to be highly engaging. Initially, the students could not find any evidence within the text which supports those interpretations of the poem, as a celebration of individuality. Yet, when encouraged and guided to reread the poem and to re-examine some key lines by viewing them through the lens of American individualism, so deeply rooted in American ethos, EFL students were able to identify instances in the poem that lend themselves to such interpretations. It follows by grasping the profound reverence that American culture attributes to individual choice and distinctiveness; EFL students discerned previously unnoticed cultural nuances. Lines such as "I took the less traveled by". "And be one traveler long I stood", and "And that has made all the difference" when viewed through the prism of American values, serve as vivid illustrations of the poem's alignment of the ideals of individualism that are integral to American culture.

Getting EFL students to delve into various interpretations of the poem's content together with the symbolic associations of its diction from two different cultural views, led EFL students to realize that there is not one single correct way to understand it. The examination of textual evidence that supports American students' interpretations of the poem, engaged them in a thoughtful interactive comparative analysis of their own appreciations and that of American students which both stem from two distinct cultural views. The results of students' interpretations related to both cultural perceptions are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Comparison of EFL Students' Interpretations and American Students' Interpretations of the Road Not Taken

Element	EFL students' Interpretations shaped by religious views	American students' Interpretations shaped by individualism
The title	Emphasizes the road not taken instead of the chosen one Evokes regrets, missed opportunities, doubts A what-if scenario	Emphasizes the contrast between the road not taken and the chosen one. Contemplation on the consequences of choice
Two roads	Life paths and choices with a particular focus on the Straight Path	Life paths and choices with an emphasis on the contrast between conventional conformist paths versus unconventional non-conformist paths

Table 1 continued...

Sorry I could not take both	Regret and missed opportunities A recognition of limited human being power Recognition that some life options will remain unexplored and unknown	An expression of the speaker's thirst for varied experiences and an ardent desire to explore multiple avenues Recognition that decision-making inherently entails that some options will remain unexplored
With a sigh	Expresses sadness and regret over the path not chosen and the potential outcomes that the speaker could have realized	Expresses a sense of relief and satisfaction over the chosen unconventional path
The less traveled by	The speaker's self-justification of the path chosen The speaker pretends courage It reflects the need to make a morally upright choice and to strive for righteousness	A call to be unique and to embrace one's individuality The speaker celebrates their choice of an unconventional path and takes pride in having diverged from the norm A symbol of courage and autonomy
And that makes all the difference	The speaker's evaluation of the consequences of choice An implicit realization of a wrong path decision A reminder of the profound impact of one's choice in the real world and the Hereafter.	The speaker's celebration of their life path The speaker's unique decision to take the less conventional path has had a significant positive impact on him
The poet' tone	Regretful, doubtful, A tone of self-justification	Reflective, contemplative A tone of satisfaction and contentment
The speaker's Decision-making process	The speaker relies on his own faculties and observations He does not seek guidance from God nor consults others for advice	It is driven by: Self-reliance and reflections The pursuit of individual dreams and aspirations. challenging norms and conventions

The efferent reading activities showed the complex relationships between cultural backgrounds and interpretations. They revealed to EFL students that American students' interpretations resonate with American cultural values and their own beliefs in personal aspirations and unconventional paths. EFL students gained insight into the fact that the core of American students' interpretations stems from how American culture privileges the individual. The American students' responses seem consistent with an ideal of self-expression, an American celebration of individuality. Hence, their interpretations of the poem

fit well into who they are. EFL students were led to realize that by reading the words of the poem, readers explore and read their worlds. This attests Freire and Macedo (1987, p. 23) remark that: “reading the world always precedes reading the word and reading the word implies continually reading the world... [T] his movement from the word to the world is always present...”

In addition, guiding EFL students to explore the poem through the lens of American cultural values and encouraging them to re-examine their initial interpretations fostered an environment conducive to learning through cultural exploration. This process of linking literary interpretations to cultural context enabled EFL students to harness their encounter with American cultural views and refine their understanding of the poem accordingly. By doing so, it cultivated EFL students' skills of discovery, “savoir apprendre”, which requires the learner to actively engage with new cultural insights and perceive the intricate interplay between interpretations and the cultural dynamics that shape them.

5.3 Dismantling Stereotypes

Discussions about EFL students' understanding of American individualism, in stage three, revealed that they initially held stereotypical views about American individualistic pursuits as being equated with selfishness and egocentrism as the following student's response confirms: (see Appendix B, section 2 for further examples) “I think American people are egocentric and focus only on their goals. I once watched a movie in which an American character left home and abandoned his family in pursuit of his own dream without worrying about his family...”

To challenge these stereotypes, EFL students were guided to explore the speaker's decision-making process which hinges on the contemplation of two roads, careful consideration of the potential consequences of each, and careful observation. (See Appendix B, section 2). This practice made them realize that individual decisions can stem from thoughtful reflection rather than selfish pursuits. In addition, the practice of asking students to imagine themselves in the speaker's internal struggle faced with a difficult decision led students to reflect on the complexity of factors that would determine their choice. This contributed to fostering their empathy for the speaker's dilemma and avoiding prejudicial views of culture as being equated with selfishness and detachment from communal well-being.

Discussing diverse perspectives on choice which are illustrated through the selected American proverbs provided EFL students with nuanced perspectives that counter the one-dimensional stereotype. Through these proverbs, they gain a complex understanding of individualism, one that emphasizes self-reliance, personal growth, creative thinking, responsible decision-making, personal autonomy, and consideration of consequences. Engaging with these nuanced perspectives helped them to view individualism beyond their preconceived generalization, and to gain a more nuanced informed understanding of individualism as a dynamic interplay between personal aspirations, the pursuit of personal potential, and the consequences of actions. This discussion led them to recognize the richness of cultural expressions and appreciate the multifaceted nature of cultural values which can not be reduced to oversimplified generalizations.

The inquiry into EFL students' familiarity with American individualism led them to realize that their taken-for-granted views of American individualism are largely shaped by media and American movies and do not reflect the full spectrum of American culture and values. Such realization prompted them to see beyond superficial portrayals, critically assess the sources of their preconceived notions, and be aware of the complexities of cultural values beyond what is portrayed in media. This raised their awareness to avoid oversimplified generalizations about other cultural perceptions based only on media and characters portrayed in movies and to foster a more thoughtful approach to understanding other cultural values.

5.4 Fostering EFL Students' Critical Cultural Awareness (Savoir s'engager)

Cross-cultural discussions, in stage four, resulted in engaging EFL students in constructive dialogues about cultural differences and similarities between their perceptions and American ones (see Appendix B section 3). EFL students were made to reflect on the target culture and their own openly and directly in a comparative cross-cultural manner.

EFL students gained a profound understanding of the fact that Americans place a high value on individuals and personal freedom and view every person as a self-sufficient individual concerned with fulfilling themselves. Initially, EFL students maintained that their decision-making approach is in sharp contrast with American individualism which emphasizes the pursuit of individual aspirations and refuses to sacrifice one's freedom and personal goals; while EFL students' perspective involves family opinions, and the consideration of the collective impact of choices.

Yet, Engaging EFL students in dialogic probing questions led them to reconsider the merits and challenges of both their own perceptions and American ones (see Appendix C) and to navigate intersections between their communal cultural values and American individualism. For instance, they recognized that following one's passions and dreams empowers personal growth and fosters creativity and autonomy. Besides, EFL students were made to realize that certain aspects of American individualism align with their cultural values. Indeed, EFL students acknowledge human needs to pursue their aspirations. In this regard, Islam preserves the individual's rights and freedom and thus holds individuals accountable for their actions. Many EFL students adhered to the view that individuals should not be left up to their freedom to act without any boundaries and any respect for communal needs, but they should also consider the broader impact of their decisions to maintain collective harmonious relationships.

Cross-cultural comparison and critical reflections led EFL students to emphasize the importance of striking a balance between pursuing individual paths and maintaining connections with family and community. Comparison between EFL students' cultural perceptions and American individualism revealed intricate dynamics and provided a foundation for intercultural understanding. Insights gained from the aforementioned results confirmed that EFL students' critical cultural awareness of the nuances in decision-making and of the complexity of cultural values have deepened. Getting EFL students to critically discuss, "savoir s'engager", cultural compatibility and differences better prepares them to

engage respectfully in cross-cultural exchanges.

A summary of the major findings in relation to the present adopted theoretical framework and teaching methodology can be summarized in Table 2:

Table 2
EFL Students' Attainments in Intercultural Teaching through the Road Not Taken

Components of Intercultural Competence Being Emphasized	The Objective Being Targeted	EFL Students' Attainments
Savoir : knowledge of the self, of social groups and their products and practices	To enable students to act upon their knowledge of the self as a point of entrance to interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EFL students were able to connect with the literary text on a personal level. ▪ They constructed their interpretations of the literary text through their own cultural lenses. ▪ EFL students became aware of how their sense-making processes are shaped by their cultural views.
Byram's savoir apprendre: discover and interact with alternative cultural perspectives.	To promote EFL students' skills of discovering and interpreting the target language cultural perceptions and how they lead to different interpretations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EFL students were successfully made to explore the target language members' cultural perceptions and to unravel how different cultural backgrounds can give rise to different interpretations.
Savoir Etre: attitudes of curiosity and openness towards the target language culture, readiness to suspend disbelief about other culture	To foster EFL students' ability to deeply understand and interpret the target language cultural perceptions. To unveil any preconceptions or biases that EFL students might hold about the target culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EFL students were made to realize their preconceived assumptions about the target culture. ▪ They learnt to evaluate the sources of their preconceived notions. ▪ They became aware of the complexities of cultural values beyond oversimplified generalizations.
Critical cultural awareness: savoir s'engager, third place	To critically analyze and reflect on their own cultural views and the target language culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They were made to reconsider the merits and challenges of both their cultural perceptions and the target language ones. ▪ They were made to realize how both their own culture and the target language one differ and connect.

5.5 EFL Students' Feedback on the Teaching Process

To evaluate the effectiveness of our proposed teaching pedagogy, we conducted a focus group interview with the EFL students at the end of the sessions to gather in-depth feedback about their experiences with intercultural learning through the selected literary text. The focus group's size encompasses the 30 Algerian EFL students enrolled in the master class who actively participated in the teaching experiment utilizing the selected literary text for intercultural education. The choice of focus group interviews is motivated by the fact that they can potentially lead to interactions and reactions between students which could provide additional insight (Bagnoli & Clark 2010, as cited in East et al., 2022, p. 74). Students were required to voice their opinions as to whether the proposed teaching model manages to develop the aforementioned intended objectives. To this end, EFL participants were asked five questions, as outlined below, which address different dimensions of their intercultural learning journey.

1. Was the selected literary text culturally and linguistically appropriate?
2. Did the teaching activities raise your self-awareness and the impact of your cultural perceptions on your interpretations?
3. Did the target language members' interpretations of the poem broaden and sharpen your understanding of the target culture and its impact on their interpretations?
4. Would you be interested in learning more about American individualism and its significance?
5. Did the teaching experience encourage you to critically consider cultural viewpoints different from your own?

In response to the first question, most of the students found the poem conceptually and linguistically accessible. They appreciated the text's symbolic nature which lends itself to different interpretations and allowed them to engage thoughtfully with its themes and language nuances. In response to the second question, the majority of students stated that a great number of discussions involved them in direct interactions with the text and allowed them to connect to the poem from their personal and cultural backgrounds. According to them, this practice made them realize how their meaning-making processes were shaped by their worldviews. In response to the third question, most EFL students reported that the efferent discussion-based activities allowed them to widely explore the target language members' cultural perceptions and made them realize how different cultural views may lead to divergent interpretations of the same literary text. EFL students reported that this practice made them understand that their interpretations are not the only valid ones. Students reported to have found activities about language analysis and the poem's diction insightful. They said that these activities enabled them to delve into how different cultural views trigger different symbolic associations of the language of the poem. In the same vein, they reported that these activities made them reconsider the stereotypical images they initially held of the

target culture and warned them against reducing culture to oversimplified generalizations. In response to the fourth question, most students expressed their interest in knowing more about individualism and delving deeper into its underpinning. This question, however, requires a specific note for clarification to explicitly state its relevance to the students' evaluation of the teaching process; for it might not be immediately apparent. By seeking students' feedback on their interest in further exploration of individualism, we aim to evaluate whether the teaching process has been effective in challenging EFL students' initially held stereotypes and whether it has effectively cultivated their curiosity to delve deeper into the topic and to foster more nuanced understanding of this cultural concept beyond preconceived generalizations. Students' positive answer is a crucial indicator that the teaching process has managed to stimulate their willingness to see beyond their initial surface-level stereotypes suggesting a potential shift in perspective. EFL students' responses to the last question indicated that the classroom activities encouraged them to critically reflect on both their cultural perceptions and the target language members' ones. Along the same lines, they maintained that their understanding of both their cultural perspective of decision-making and that of the target language members had evolved from taken-for-granted perceptions to a more nuanced and balanced understanding.

Insights gained from EFL students' feedback on this teaching experience can be summarised as follows:

- The teaching methodology managed to cultivate among EFL learners a deep understanding of their own cultural identity, Byram's knowledge of the self, and an awareness of how it affects and shapes their appreciation.
- It promoted EFL students' skills of discovering, "savoir apprendre", other cultural worldviews, and how they similarly affect their sense-making processes out of the words of the same literary text.
- It managed to enable the learner to challenge stereotypes.
- It fulfilled the aim of fostering EFL students' attitudes of curiosity and openness about the cultural background of target language members
- Eventually, it helped the EFL students to establish genuine connections across cultures and to critically engage in negotiating dialogue with the values and worldviews inherent in the target language culture.

6. Limitations of the Study

While the findings of the study provide positive insight into the effectiveness of the proposed teaching pedagogy in promoting students' intercultural learning through the selected literary text, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that warrant further exploration in future research.

Though cross-cultural comparative analysis proved to be promising in prompting EFL students' intercultural learning, it is not without problems. It can potentially strengthen binary opposites: self versus other, i.e. Algerian EFL students' perspectives on the one hand as opposed to American, culture insiders, perspectives on the other hand. Such binary opposites may inadvertently lead to making oversimplified generalizations, perceiving each culture as a homogenous whole, and overlooking cultural complexity and diversity within each cultural group. To account for this, there is a need for further research to investigate how to help students dissect and deconstruct different cultural perceptions to eventually gain a more complex and nuanced understanding of cultural perceptions.

To address this ensuing potential risk of widening an already-existing gulf between cultural insiders' and cultural outsiders' perspectives rather than building connections between them, the present pedagogy assigns a significant role to EFL teachers. It positions them as facilitators, guiders and mediators who should assist EFL learners in mediating various culturally motivated literary interpretations to generate fruitful positive intercultural learning experiences in the EFL classroom. While the present study described the interactive teaching mode such teachers should adopt, it did not delve deeper into the specific responsibilities and competencies required of teachers to successfully fulfil this pivotal role. Consequently, a potential avenue for further research is to investigate the pedagogic profile of such teachers capable of assuming this complex and multifaceted role to inform efforts to support their effectiveness for better students' intercultural learning.

Still another limitation of the study is the restricted number of the cultural insiders' interpretations used. While leveraging the insights of those target language members to promote EFL students' intercultural learning effectively met our objectives, the validity of such interpretations may vary depending on factors such as the cultural backgrounds and the personal biases those cultural insiders might have about their own culture. This may inadvertently perpetuate biases about the target culture on the part of the EFL learner. Thus, educators must critically evaluate their reliability and supplement them with diverse range of sources to ensure a more comprehensive and more nuanced analysis of the cultural phenomenon and to allow EFL students to discern possible divergent perspectives and interpretations within the same cultural context.

Further, to create a more intercultural enriching experience and a well-rounded understanding, it is necessary to provide students with supplementary literary material that complements the themes explored in the poem. For, relying on one single poem cannot lead to a sophisticated intercultural understanding. The use of other literary material is needed to capture a broader range of cultural experiences and viewpoints. This would provide additional context and depth to intercultural discussions. In accordance with this, we intend to take advantage of the positive insights gained from the proposed pedagogic undertaking and to further experiment with intercultural teaching through other literary texts in future research.

7. Conclusion

The present paper advocates the use of literary texts as a valuable pedagogic tool for promoting EFL students' intercultural learning. The main objective here is to explore the possibilities of fostering EFL learners' intercultural learning through teaching literature through an aesthetic interactive reader-oriented model that draws on Byram's *savoirs* and Kramsch's third place.

This study provided evidence, from an Algerian university context, of the pedagogic potential of literary texts, through an aesthetic interactive reader-oriented model, to enhance the EFL students' intercultural awareness. The results of classroom discussion together with EFL students' positive feedback have offered valuable insight into the significance of using literary texts to foster EFL students' intercultural learning. It enabled them to connect their cultural values with the themes of the poem and to become aware of how their cultural perceptions shaped their interpretations of the poem. By the same token, it allowed them to explore the target language members' cultural perceptions and how they determine their interpretations of the poem. It also enabled students to see beyond their stereotypical generalizations and to critically examine their own taken-for-granted views. It allowed EFL students to engage in critical reflections about their own cultural perceptions and those values inherent in the target language culture.

It is essential to acknowledge that while this study has contributed to underscore the pedagogic potential of using literature to promote EFL students' intercultural learning and has yielded valuable insights, certain limitations warrant consideration. The use of a single literary text, while rich in content and providing a fertile ground for intercultural exploration, may not comprehensively cover the vast spectrum of intercultural dynamics. It is clear that this pedagogic journey of intercultural teaching through literature is a continuous one and needs to be supplemented with other literary works that offer different avenues for intercultural discussions. The interactive reader-oriented activities and discussions employed in the present study can serve as a foundation for future research seeking to weave literature and intercultural awareness together in EFL classrooms. However, it should be noted that the dynamics of every classroom are unique and demand that educators further tailor activities and literary selections to suit their specific context. The vast intricate complexities of intercultural dynamics prompt us to approach intercultural teaching with an attitude of continuous learning and call for further empirical research to define successful teaching pedagogies that can empower EFL students to transcend their cultural lenses and foster their skills to become culturally sensitive learners fully aware of who they are and capable of forging connections across boundaries.

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Appendix A

***The Road Not Taken*, by Robert Frost**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Appendix B

An Illustrative Account of Algerian EFL Students' Personal Interpretations of the Poem, "The Road Not Taken" in an EFL Class

Section1: EFL Students' Personal Responses	
Questions	Students' Responses
What is the underlying idea of the poem?	<p>Student 1: the poem is about the theme of choice and how difficult it is for anyone to make life decisions because one is always afraid of what consequences their decision might have on them.</p> <p>Student 2: The poem is about making decisions and how this is always challenging because we are never sure of how the life path we chose will turn out. It is beyond us, this knowledge is hidden, "AL-Ghaib". ((which is an Arabic expression used to convey that something is unknown, hidden, like future events; it refers to transcendental secrets.)</p> <p>Student 3: the poem's theme is making a difficult choice between two roads which symbolizes two different paths in life. For me, this image of two diverging roads stands for the Straight path; the path, that we have to struggle to adhere to, and the other misguided, misleading road that deviates from the path of righteousness.</p> <p>Student 4: The poem is about decision-making and the determination and strength it needs to be fulfilled; for making decisions entails assuming consequences; though the poet has gone through a lot of hesitations all along this process. The only way to overcome these hesitations is to have faith in God's guidance.</p> <p>Student 5: The poem revolves around regret and remorse about the path that the speaker took and its outcome compared to the path he did not choose and the potential opportunities that he missed. A true believer does not surrender to regret for he knows as a matter of fact that "By no means can anything befall us but what God has destined for us".</p> <p>Student 6: The poet is about decision making, and the confusion, the stress, the doubts the speaker of the poem went through, for he seems to live in an internal conflict and neither sought help from God nor consulted others for advice.</p> <p>Student 7 The poem centers on the theme of choice. The path that the speaker is walking on is splitting in two directions, and he is faced with a decision to make: to decide which way to go. While considering his options, the poet went through rough moments of hesitation: one moment, he thinks one way is better, and the next, both paths are about the same.</p>

Appendix B continued...

Section1: EFL Students' Personal Responses	
Questions	Students' Responses
How does the title of the poem affect you? What does the word 'not' in the title communicate? If you were the poet how would you formulate the title?	<p>Student 1 The word “not” in the title reflects the feeling of missed opportunities and regret of one’s choice; otherwise the speaker would not have bothered to think about a choice they did not make.</p> <p>Student 2: The title suggests that the speaker is more concerned with the path that he did not choose rather than concentrating on his chosen life path. This implies that he is not satisfied with his decision, he seems to regret it.</p> <p>Student 3: The title emphasizes the path that the speaker did not take. This shows us that the speaker is trying to self-justify his decision: I expect the poem before reading it to be about the whys that led the speaker in the poem not to take this road.</p> <p>Student 4: The title reflects a denial that our choices are within the boundaries set by Allah’s knowledge and wisdom and that one should place their trust in Allah’s divine decree which surpasses human knowledge. Knowledge about the outcome of the road not taken is beyond the speaker’s grasp; it falls within the realm of “AL-Ghaib”</p> <p>Student 5: By naming the poem the road not taken instead of the road taken suggests that the poet is reflecting on what if he has chosen the other path. Our prophet warns us against this by saying “ If anything afflicts you, do not say, if I had done such and such things, such and such would have happened; But say Allah decrees and what He will He does, for (the utterance) ‘if I had’ provides an opening for the deed of the devil”.</p>
What symbolic meanings and interpretations does the line ‘two roads diverged in a yellow wood’ evoke to you?	<p>Student 1: This line reminded me of human being destiny. God has a plan for us and the choices anyone makes are part of his divine Will. The yellow wood symbolizes the world he created with its diverse routes.</p> <p>Student 2: This line symbolizes the choices we face in life; each one will lead to different outcomes. One has to decide on which life journey to take based on their values and what matters most to them.</p> <p>Student 3: This line is a metaphor for our broader journey of life. Just like the speaker in the poem who is at the crossroads deciding on which path to take, we all go through such moments of lifelong decisions through which we face the challenge to stay truthful to our principles in the Straight Path and avoid succumbing to temptations.</p>

Appendix B continued...

Section1: EFL Students' Personal Responses	
Questions	Students' Responses
Discuss the lines and phrases that stood out to you.	<p>Student 1: “And sorry that I could not travel both”. I take this line to be a confession of weakness and humbleness toward Allah’s divine knowledge. For the speaker can never explore the potential of the path he did not choose.</p> <p>Student 2: The line that strikes me most is “And sorry I could not travel both” which summarizes the poet’s attitude of regret and feeling of missed opportunities, already touched upon in the title of the poem.</p> <p>Student 3 : I take this line ‘And sorry that I could not travel both’ to be crucial to the theme of the poem. It communicates the regret the speaker is trapped in. Had he been fully satisfied with the outcomes of his choice, he would never have thought about the choice he did not pick up.</p> <p>Student 4: The most outstanding line in the poem is “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood”. It is an image that summarizes what is life all about: crossroads of life paths through which people need to find their routes towards the Straight Path.</p> <p>Student 5: The line that catches my attention is “I shall be telling this with a sigh” which evoked for me a sigh that expresses sadness and regret over the path not chosen and the missed opportunities the poet seems to reflect upon all along the poem. This sentiment is aligned with the title of the poem and the poet’s regretful tone.</p> <p>Student 6: The line, “And sorry I could not travel both” communicates for me a feeling of regret and missed opportunities that the speaker seems to dwell on and that echoed back the title of the poem.</p> <p>Student 7 “And sorry I could not travel both” The speaker confesses the limitations of human power in decision-making and recognizes that some life paths will remain unexplored and unknown and fall within Allah’s knowledge.</p> <p>Student 8: The line “I could not travel both” reminds me that we have to choose according to our priorities and that in life we find ourselves sacrificing or missing out on things that we want. We should try our best to choose life paths that please God.</p>

Appendix B continued...

Section1: EFL Students' Personal Responses	
Questions	Students' Responses
What poet's tone do you capture? Does it remain the same throughout the poem?	<p>Student 1: The speaker in the poem seems to have a regretful tone; he/she seems to look back on their choice with regret and lament for the unknown outcomes of the path not chosen ignoring that the ultimate outcomes are in the hands of Allah.</p> <p>Student 2: The poet seems to convey a thoughtful or reflective tone, for he is carefully thinking about his options all along his decision-making journey.</p> <p>Student 3: I capture a tone of self-justification; for the speaker seems to convince himself when faced with two distinct paths, he made the right path choice: "the less traveled by"</p> <p>Student 4: I find the poet's tone ambivalent; for at some point he found the two roads all the same in line: then he said and at another he found it.</p>
What does the line "I took the less traveled by" and "And that has made all the difference" mean?	<p>Student 1: The line "I took the less traveled by" reflects the need to make a morally upright choice and strive for righteousness. This path, demands strength, courage, and determination to stand up for truth and justice.</p> <p>Student 2: The poet seems to convince himself that he was brave enough to choose the right path, but the regretful tone, together with the emphasis on the path not chosen, and the frustration of not being able to experience both paths undermine considerably his claim. This line sounds like a self-justification.</p> <p>Student 3: The line "and that has made all the difference is an evaluation of the consequences of the speaker's choice and a realization of a wrong path decision the speaker of the poem seems to implicitly admit.</p> <p>Student 4: The line "And that has made all the difference" is a reminder of the profound impact of one's choice on one's life. Every action, every path leads to consequences and carries significant impacts that bear upon the person's life. The speaker in this line seems to evaluate the impact of their choice in the real world and what difference it made. Yet, this is only one side of the coin; for the ultimate and most important significance of one's actions is to be experienced in the Hereafter, The Day of Judgement, and not merely in the real world.</p>

Appendix B continued...

Section 2: Reconsidering one's conceptions about the target language cultural perceptions	
Questions	EFL Student's Responses
<p>How familiar are you with the concept of American individualism?</p> <p>Can you share any experiences through which you have gained insight into how this perspective manifests in American culture?</p>	<p>Student 1: In decision-making, Americans prioritize their personal goals and ambitions at the expense of collective well-being. They are selfish.</p> <p>Student 2: In life decisions, Americans care only about themselves and lack concern for communal interest.</p> <p>Student 3: I think American people are egocentric and focus only on their goals. I once watched a movie in which an American character left home and abandoned his family in pursuit of his own dream without worrying about his family. I was at a loss to understand how he could leave his own family to achieve his personal dream of becoming a singer.</p> <p>Student 4: American individualism emphasizes the person's freedom. It is like everyone does what they please and desire without worrying about what other people around them think. This is quite different from our culture where we consider a lot of what family and society think about what we do.</p> <p>Student 5: I have noticed that in American media people speak their minds freely and focus on their personal success. I guess being so concerned about oneself will lead the person to be disconnected from the world around them. I remember a movie of a scientific man driven by his ambition to research sacrificed his family, and ended up divorced and lonely.</p> <p>Student 6: Americans overemphasize their personal goals; they are selfish and care only about themselves. Their life is characterized by ruthless competition between people. I have seen in a documentary about education in the US how kids are being asked to compete with each other; they are always under pressure to achieve high scores and stand out.</p> <p>Student 7: In individualism, personal success is the primary goal with no consideration for the well-being of those around the person. I watched different movies about characters who gave priority to their dreams above anything else.</p> <p>Student 8: In my view, American individualism is dangerous to society; for when every person is primarily focused on their own path, their own dreams, there will be no support among people, no unity, and no sense of belonging to the community.</p>

Appendix B continued...

Section2: EFL Students' Personal Responses	
Questions	Students' Responses
<p>What did the speaker of the poem consider in their decision-making process? Imagine yourself in the poet's place, what would you consider while making a choice?</p>	<p>Student 1: The speaker relies on himself and his own reflection. This is clearly seen in the line “And looked down one as far as I could”. In such decisive moments in life, one needs more than reflection, one needs God's guidance that the speaker did not seek. In his place, I would fervently pray to God for guidance and help.</p> <p>Student 2: The speaker was contemplating his road options on his own and considering their outcomes. In his place, I would have asked for advice from my parents or other people I trust. Such consultation will guide me and will help me see things better.</p> <p>Student 3: In considering which road to take, the speaker in the poem relied entirely on his own faculties. He said in the first stanza that he remained in his place for a considerable time, gazing downward as far as he could. This suggests a sense of reflection by the speaker. In his place, I will do the same; I will think twice about my choice, but I will discuss it with my parents and with my uncle who is an intellectual man with a huge experience in life.</p> <p>Student 4: In his decision-making journey, the poet seems to be a solitary traveler who stops for a long time to observe a path. This means that he is thoughtfully examining a path that he describes as “blending into the undergrowth” which suggests that the path is not entirely clear and obscure. In his place, I would not rely only on my own judgment and would definitely pray ‘Istikhara’ and ask for advice.</p> <p>Student 5: In the poem, there is no mention of the speaker referring to anything other than his reflection and observation of external details of the path. His choice seems to be entirely based on their personal assessment of the road. For me to contemplate one's options is necessary but should not be done alone, one should also consider the opinions of people around him.</p>

Appendix B continued...

Section 3: Cross-cultural Understanding	
Questions	Students' Responses
<p>Do you know any cultural stories, sayings, or proverbs, both from your own culture and American ones, that relate to the theme of choice or decision-making?</p>	<p>Student 1: In our culture, we often say “Trust in God, but tie your camel”. In making decisions, one should seek God’s guidance and at the same time take practical actions and measure the implications of their choice.</p> <p>Student 2: “If you are uncertain about a choice, ask for God’s guidance and proceed with a content heart”. When making challenging decisions about which we are doubtful or afraid, we should seek divine guidance through prayers (istikhara) and put our trust in God. Allah will help us choose what is best for us, no matter what the outcome of our choice is, even if the choices we make, will lead to unwanted results.</p> <p>Student 3: “ Good character leads to good decisions”</p> <p>Remaining sincere and faithful to our ethical principles will lead us to choose what is good for us and for others as well, as our family and community. I take good character to be fundamental in illuminating our journey in life and protecting us from going astray.</p> <p>Student 4: “ Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traveler” This saying reminds me that life is an ephemeral journey and urges me to think carefully about my decisions and to make sure, as much as I can that they respect the values of the Hereafter.</p> <p>Student 5: Our prophet says “The best among you are those who are best for their families” This prophet’s saying calls people to consider the impact of their actions and their choices on their families. We should act in a way that would generate beneficial outcomes for the family and not think only about ourselves.</p> <p>Student 7: “Consultation will never end in regret” In decision-making, it is highly important to seek the consolation of others (istishara). We should ask our family members, people whom we trust and respect, and experienced people about their opinions. Making decisions after careful consolation will clarify our thoughts and will enable us to see and make an informed choice that will not lead to regret.</p> <p>Student 8: “Do not be hasty in making decisions, consult with others”. When making decisions, we should avoid hasty decisions, We should rather take our time to discuss decisions with others; this will help us a lot and raise our attention to different matters that we probably have not thought about. The speaker in the poem did not seem to make a hasty decision because he was reflecting a lot all along. He did not mention anywhere in the poem that he sought opinions or assistance from other people.</p>

Appendix B continued...

Section 3: Cross-cultural Understanding	
Questions	Students' Responses
How do you think American individualism compares to the decision-making approach in your own cultural background? Can you identify any similarities or differences between them?	<p>Student 1: In our culture, the family is at the heart of decision-making. We give importance to the well-being of the family and not only our personal desires, unlike individualism which prioritizes personal dreams.</p> <p>Student 2: Individualism seems to encourage people to focus on themselves and their achievements, but from our cultural perspectives we have to consider what is best for our families and community and</p> <p>Student 3: Decisions are made through consultations with other people, especially our parents or the elders whose opinions are valuable to us; we also rely on our faith in God to guide us to the right path. Americans on the other hand highly value their own perspectives and aspirations over those of others.</p> <p>Student 4: In our culture, we should strive to remain true and faithful to our own religious principles in any action we take and seek advice from family members before making important decisions; Americans approach choices from their own personal views; they give more weight to personal opinions and make decisions independently.</p>

Appendix C

Algerian EFL Students' Comparison of their Own Cultural Perspective and American Individualism in Relation to Decision-making

EFL students' perspective: A religious and family-oriented decision-making approach		American Individualism: An individual and nonconformist decision-making approach	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	disadvantages
Generate communal well-being	A risk of limited personal growth	Personal autonomy and self-reliance	Limited communal support
Strong family and community support	A dilution of individual responsibility and accountability because of shared decisions	Personal accomplishment and achievement	The potential risk of isolation
Strong family ties and a sense of belonging	A potential risk of limited personal aspirations	Embracing change and innovation	Ruthless Competitive spirit
Inner peace and contentment	A potential risk of lack of individual initiative because of dependence on authoritative figures for guidance	A strong sense of personal responsibility and accountability	Possible neglect of shared interest
Release from anxiety and fear that often accompany uncertainty, thanks to reliance on God	Fatalistic beliefs can discourage individuals from seeking change or improvement		