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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL  
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN SAUDI EFL EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: Teachers' Perceptions of the Importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Saudi EFL Education

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In this study, the researcher qualitatively investigates the perceptions of six Saudi EFL teachers on the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in the Saudi EFL educational context. The study's participants were male Ph.D. students in an English Department at a university based on the United States. The focus was to explore the factors that may have contributed to the absence of classroom instruction and materials that aim to develop students' ICC in Saudi EFL education even though the current Saudi TEFL policy encourages teachers to develop their students' competence in that regard. The researcher collected data in three major stages conducted consecutively, namely written reflections, individual interviews, and focus group interview.

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter One introduces the conceptual frame of the study by providing a conceptualization of the matter being investigated and by articulating the study's focus and settings. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on concepts and dimensions relevant to the teaching of the EFL target culture, EFL intercultural communication skills, and how they are addressed in Saudi education. Chapter Three sets the theoretical and procedural framework underlying this study's approach, methods, and researcher's paradigm. It also describes the context and the tools utilized in data collection, analysis, representation, and

discussion. Chapter Four presents a detailed analysis of the data for each participant in three separate sections, each followed by a brief summary.

Chapter Five presents data in the form of emerging themes and sub-themes that are discussed in the light of relevant literature and the Perceptual Control Theory. The study concludes that the Saudi EFL teachers relatively envision the development of ICC as crucial in foreign language education for developing cross-cultural communication and attitudes towards target cultures. However, issues, such as ineffectiveness of available classroom materials and the society's probable negative attitude towards teaching about EFL target culture may harden any teacher's task in designing classroom instruction and materials that aim to develop students' ICC. The chapter, then, provides pedagogical, institutional, and sociocultural implications that data interpretation and discussion have mirrored as they relate to the Saudi EFL educational milieu.