INTERCULTURATION AND INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAJOR CONCEPTS FOR A BETTER MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL OTHERNESS

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore the relationship between intercultural sensitivity, namely, the ability to apprehend cultural difference, and interculturation. Specifically, this study investigated the effect of nationality (French, Brazilian, Bolivian, Sri Lankan) and individual characteristics (e.g., number of spoken foreign languages, socioeconomic status, age and gender) on intercultural sensitivity and interculturation. An intercultural sensitivity scale and demographic questions about individual characteristics were administered to a sample of 434 participants. The results showed that intercultural sensitivity depends on the number of spoken foreign languages, which is a strong asset for a better understanding of cultural otherness. Nationality, socioeconomic status and gender had significant effects on ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism aspects of intercultural sensitivity.

Key words: Cultural otherness, Foreign languages spoken, Intercultural sensitivity, Interculturation

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study[1] was to shed light on the psychological consequences of the contact between individuals or groups of individuals from different cultures and, particularly, on the variation of the intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986b) according to different individual differences factors. Specifically, this article focuses on the association between interculturation (Denoux, 1994), intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986b; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003) and specific individual characteristics such as gender, number of spoken foreign languages, age, profession, and nationality.

Following Denoux (1994), interculturation is conceptualized as a process taking place between "individuals and groups belonging to two or several cultural units - claiming to be from different cultures or being potentially linked to them by others" [...] "The interculturation process, inside the interactions it develops, involves implicitly or explicitly the cultural difference individuals tend to metabolize" (Denoux, 1994, p. 72). In that sense, the interculturation process is assumed to create new cultural elements by transforming those pre-existing in different physical and virtual sources. Intercultural sensitivity, which reflects the way individuals confronted with cultural differences react, is a way to operationalise the interculturation process. The number of foreign languages spoken by a person along with other personal characteristics such as gender, age, profession and nationality were investigated as potential sources of individual differences in intercultural sensitivity.

The research questions posed in the present study were the following: To what extent effective interculturation is linked with the development of intercultural sensitivity? Does multilingualism play a role in getting a better understanding of cultural otherness? Is nationality a factor impacting an individual's level of intercultural sensitivity? Are age, gender or occupation factors that may affect the level of intercultural sensitivity? In what follows, we firstly introduce the concept of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986b) and the interculturation process. The effects of individual characteristics (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status, number of spoken foreign languages and nationality) are critically elaborated to formulate the study hypotheses. The empirical study is then presented, and the findings discussed.

[1.] This article is based on one part of the Ph.D. thesis of El Sayed (2018) that investigated the epistemology of intercultural psychology, meaning the psychology of cultural contact.

Intercultural sensitivity

Intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986a) refers to an individual's ability to manage intercultural differences. More precisely, "the key to develop the sensitivity and skills needed for intercultural communication is, first of all, the perception that each person has cultural differences" (Bennett, 1986a, p. 179). It is an essential feature of intercultural competence (Bennett, 1986a, 1986b). Intercultural competence has multiple conceptualizations in the literature, well summed up by Bartel-Radic (2009). However, in this article, the focus is on intercultural sensitivity as an indicator of ethnocentric tendencies –i.e., the individual is mainly focused on own culture of reference– as contrasted to an ethno-relativistic attitude, in which the individual is more open towards a foreign culture (Bennett, 1986b). According to Bennett (1986b), there are six levels of intercultural sensitivity: Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. These levels can be perceived as a continuum, but according to Bourjolly et al. (2005), individuals can function at a certain level at a specific point in time and attain an entirely different level, lower or higher, in the course of their life.

To illustrate the various levels of intercultural sensitivity let us assume that an individual coming from culture A meets members of culture B in their village. What will the reaction of the individual from culture A towards the group members from culture B be? At the *Denial* level, the individual A denies the existence of cultural elements that can be different from his own (Gillert, 2001), to the extent that the "other" is considered as subhuman (for relevant research see Sakalaki, Richardson, & Fousiani, 2016, 2017). For instance, the individual A would like to run away from members of group B and avoid any interaction and contact with them because he considers them as a "shame" for humankind, nothing more than animals. At the *Defense* level, the individual A recognizes that a different from one's own cultural system may exist, but he is cautious about it, especially when he considers it as inferior to his own cultural reference (Hammer, 2012). For instance, the individual A would tend to perceive the members of group B as a potential threat against him, so he would discriminate them by saying that his own values are better than those of group B, and he would feel a kind of superiority towards them. At the *Minimization* level, the individual A is more open towards culturally different people, but she still focuses mainly on her own cultural references to compare with the others and goes on to "trivialize the difference" (Bayard, 2016). For instance, the individual A would seek to put the differences that potentially exist between her and the members of group B aside, she will see them only through a universalist prism (Bennett & Castiglioni, 2004) but based on her cultural anchorage. At the *Acceptance* level, the individual A

has a more dynamic perspective and perceives the differences operating in other cultural systems (Bennett, 1986b) but also recognizes limitations. For instance, the individual A would understand that in group B's culture people eat some plates that he considers as disgusting, and he would not be able to adapt his behavior to this kind of situation because it's too hard for him from an emotional point of view. At the *Adaptation* level, the individual A tends to not only have cultural empathy but also adapt himself to the culture of the "other", both from an intellectual and a behavioral point of view (Centre of Intercultural Learning, n.d.). For instance, the individual A, in addition to comprehending the culture of group B, overcomes his emotional difficulties and adapts his behavior by, e.g., taking off his shoes like members of group B do prior to entering a house or a mosque. Finally, the *Integration* level depicts, for example, an individual who has succeeded to recompose her identity to create unique intercultural elements that come from diverse cultural sources (Plivard, 2014). For instance, the individual A would mix elements from her own and group B's culture to create new cultural elements that represent both her own culture and this from group B at the same time. Following the above, the position taken in this study is that intercultural sensitivity depicts the individual as moving "progressively to adopt an other-centered attitude, meaning mixed, which implies that the individual no longer perceives the otherness only through his "basic cultural references", but through the prism of her interculturation" (Teyssier, El Sayed, & Denoux, 2019, p. 211).

The interculturation process

Interculturation refers to a new identity metabolization through the internalization of distinct cultural elements coming from different cultures and creating original intercultural features (Denoux, 1994). According to Denoux (1994), there are three characteristics that determine an effective interculturation process (positive or negative)[2]: "the duration and extension of the effects of the commitment to cultural difference, the implication of the redefinition of each partner's self and, finally, the emergence of new cultural elements" (p. 79). Furthermore, interculturation may take place at several levels: intra-psychic, inter-personal and inter-group, as well as at the organisational-culture level. However, the interculturation process is different from acculturation which is a more temporary process, but also situated in an additional or subtractive perspective of previous cultural elements (Teyssier & Denoux, 2013). In addition, although there are similarities with the "integration" strategy of Berry's acculturation model (1997),

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[2.] According to Denoux (2013), an effective interculturation process can lead to "positive consequences" (e.g., find a new form of balance, positive interculturation) or "negative consequences" (e.g., violence, negative interculturation).

interculturation theory does not adopt the dominant/dominated perspective for the different cultures involved (Guerraoui, 2009). Interculturation captures the "cultural gap", which includes the naturally existing cultural differences that individuals need to metabolize into something unique, allowing them in this way to form a new ontological unit. This would be the culmination of a long process of interculturation that would begin with a particularly destabilizing psychological pressure. This would trigger a cultural shock (Cohen Emerique, 1984), potentially resulting in transitory psychological reactions[3] (Teyssier & Denoux, 2013) that the person exhibits and organizes in order to restore "the unity of the self", that was deconstructed by the cultural shock.

It is also important to point out similarities and differences between the interculturation process and other related concepts. Firstly, interculturation should be differentiated from interculturalism, which is primarily an ideology, whereas interculturation is a process (Denoux, 2016). According to Morris, Chiu, and Liu (2015), interculturalism, being linked to the poly-culturalism paradigm[4], refers to the belief that "cultural influence is partial and plural and cultural interactions interreact and change each other" (p. 634) to produce cultural elements that did not exist before. This intrinsic link between paradigm and ideology allows "positive attitudes toward people from different cultures as well as an openness to change one's own culture" (Cho, Tadmor, & Morris, 2018, p. 1379) (see also: Rosenthal & Levy, 2010). The interculturation process, in its turn, operationalises the ideology of interculturalism, and promotes the ability to respond effectively to an intercultural situation. On the other hand, the ideologies of multiculturalism and colour-blindness propose, respectively, "preserving separate cultural traditions" (communities remain on their own) and "disregarding cultural differences", that is, trivialization or even ignorance of cultural differences in favour of a common predetermined base (Cho et al., 2018, p. 1376). Multiculturalism is assumed to be a factor that helps social cohesion between different cultural groups; however, it also encourages the different cultural communities to be static and to "lock themselves in boxes" (Bernardo et al., 2016), while colour-blindness would encourage a "withdrawal" (Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007).

Unlike multiculturalism, the interculturation process leads to new cultural elements that can pave the way to positive interculturation, which is nurturing to the individual, or negative interculturation, which is harmful to the individual, effects. However, if an individual does not achieve an effective interculturation, one will be

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[3.] The transitory psychological reactions (TPR) correspond to the process "which allows the transition from rupture to harmony, while preserving the fiction of the unity of self" (Teyssier & Denoux, 2013, p. 258).

[4.] The polyculturalism paradigm refers to a certain vision of the world. The ideology of interculturalism is a way to set up actions in order to apply this vision of the world.

at a zero level of interculturation (El Sayed, 2018). The process of interculturation that leads to intercultural sensitivity, at its highest level (Integration), would be a manifestation of positive interculturation.

Individual characteristics and sensitivity to cultural otherness

Speaking foreign languages. One factor that presumably affects the level of intercultural sensitivity one achieves is learning foreign languages. Speaking a foreign language entails "not only the acquisition of linguistic skills but also new ways of thinking and new behaviors" (Nguyen & Kellogg, 2010, p. 56). Hence, the acquisition of a new language would be a source of creation of, and an opening to, other forms of cultural realities, possibly generating a better understanding of the culturally different "other" (Li & Zhu, 2013; Yanaprasart, 2018). As Grin and Faniko (2012) found, the higher the individual's mastery of a foreign language is, according to the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), the more the individual tends to be "open-minded", show "cultural empathy", or develop "social initiative".

Age. Besides an individual's grasp of foreign languages, one's age can also impact intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986b). Indeed, according to Glen, the older an individual is, the more "engaged in a compartmental pattern reproduction (habits), and the less he would be exposed to stimulating changes or fascinating challenges" (1974, cited in Schwartz, 2006, p. 950). This suggests that an older person would tend more than a younger one to be ethnocentric because of the desire to stay on their gains and avoid change. The study of Segura-Robles and Parra-Gonzales (2019) showed that the level of the dimensions of intercultural sensitivity (i.e., "respect of cultural differences" or "interactions engagement") of participants under the age of 30 were higher than those of participants over the age of 30. In addition, previous research demonstrated that among five age categories, those 51 years old or older had a lower level of intercultural sensitivity compared to younger age groups (Ruiz-Bernardo, Ferrández-Berrueco, & Sales-Ciges, 2012).

Gender. Other individual differences factors such as gender and socioeconomic status are also related to intercultural sensitivity. Specifically, it has been found that women, in general, have better skills to apprehend cultural otherness (Holm, Nokelainen, & Tirri, 2009; Vilà, 2006). Lin and Rancer (2003) confirmed this trend by focusing on ethnocentrism; they found that men tend to be inclined towards their reference culture (ethnocentrism) more than women do.

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is related to one's educational level (Galobardes, Morabia, & Bernstein, 2000). Presumably, it affects the individual's level of intercultural sensitivity and could play a crucial role in the perception of the

culturally different "other". According to Spitzman and Waugh (2018), the socioeconomic status of native people as compared to this of the foreigners coming into the country, influences the natives' perceptions of the "other" and, thus, their capacity to understand cultural difference in general.

Nationality. When studying cultural differences between countries, which is instrumental to the study of intercultural sensitivity, the term "nationality" is often selected if the researcher wants an objective fact to realize cross-cultural comparisons (see Hofstede, 1994; Triandis, 1995; Denoux, 2004). The question is what does really happen in a cross-cultural and transversal[5] way between different nationalities that are geographically and culturally distinct? More specifically, in the present study we examined the potential effect of nationality on intercultural sensitivity. Being of French, Brazilian, Bolivian, or Sri Lankan nationality[6] impacts the intercultural sensitivity level? Two groups emerge when considering the recent history of these four countries. On the one side, Bolivian and Sri Lankan people presumably belong to a "communitarian" perspective according to Hofstede (1994), that is, they are more focused on the collective interest and interdependent on each other. This aspect of mutual assistance and strong solidarity suggests a confrontation with otherness (from a historical point of view). Due to various wars, Bolivia was led to the dismantling of its territory by its border neighbours (Lavaud et al., n.d.) but it also painfully experienced the colonization of the country. The civil war in Sri Lanka had similar effects on the people (Meyer, Madavan, Bopearachchi, & Parlier-Renauld, n. d.). So, in these two countries the individual would be in a better position to make a community retreat when faced with cultural difference, especially if one does not comprehend the culturally different other. On the contrary, countries such as France and Brazil, are considered as "individualists" (Hofstede, 1994), emphasizing the success of oneself, taking up challenges and social initiative. Specifically, since the Brazilian identity is essentially a "mix of Indians, Europeans and Africans" (Droulers & Broggio, 2017, p. 12), this might have encouraged the willingness to come into contact with the "other" (i.e., foreigner). From the point of cultural mixing, France is no exception. The large number of mixed marriages and the increasing rate of immigration during the second half of the 20th century is inevitably a reality. Indeed, the «mixed marriages» according to INSEE[7] in France were up to 25% of the total number of marriages in the country in 2015. As a result, there would exist a certain level of cultural contacts in these two countries. On the other hand, cross-breeding with respect to successive immigration by different waves of people who immigrate in these two countries (Droulers & Broggio,

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[5.] "Transversal" means that the sample of the compared countries is considered as a whole in the analyses.
[6.] See below the methodology part explaining why these nationalities were chosen.
[7.] INSEE stands for Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques in France.

2017; Lignon-Darmaillac & Ducom, n.d.) may encourage the individual to be more curious or open to the other in the face of cultural difference. Indeed, the extension of cultural contact linked to the interculturation process leads the individual to be more involved in cultural difference and more accepting of it (Denoux, 1994; Teyssier & Denoux, 2013). Thus, people from these two countries who tend to be more in contact with different cultures and engaging in it (e.g., share one's life with a foreigner), the latter would be more likely to be in ethnorelativism (Bennett, 1986b), indicating high level of intercultural sensitivity.

To sum up, intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986b) is central to the evaluation of intercultural competence, that is, understanding of cultural difference. The interculturation process can be positive, that is, leading to new cultural identity elements, or negative, being focused only on one's own culture. This entails that positive interculturation would be associated with the highest levels of intercultural sensitivity (i.e., ethnorelativism) whereas negative interculturation would be associated with ethnocentricity. In light of previous research (Hofstede, 1994; Li & Zhu, 2013; Ruiz -Bernardo et al., 2012; Spitzman & Waugh, 2018; Vilà, 2006), intercultural sensitivity would be related to individual characteristics such as age, sex, socioeconomic status, number of foreign languages spoken, but also to one's nationality, that encodes the cultural "history" of a country and the conditions that promote or hinder intercultural communication.

The present study

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between the interculturation process and intercultural sensitivity across two dimensions, the cognitive and affective ones. Also, to examine whether the level of intercultural sensitivity is associated with individual difference characteristics such as gender, age, number of foreign languages spoken, and socioeconomic status (profession), as well as nationality. Five hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1 - French and Brazilians will have higher intercultural sensitivity than Bolivians and Sri Lankans.

Hypothesis 2 - The more foreign languages an individual masters, the stronger the intercultural sensitivity (ethnorelativism) will be.

Hypothesis 3 - The higher the participant's age is, the higher the intercultural sensitivity level will be.

Hypothesis 4 – The higher the socioeconomic status (e.g., having high standing profession or being university student vs. being retired or unemployed) the higher the level of intercultural sensitivity will be.

Hypothesis 5 – Men will have lower intercultural sensitivity than women.

METHOD

Design and Participants

The constitution of the sample (N = 434) is given in Table 1. Participants lived in and had the nationality of France, Brazil, Bolivia, and Sri Lanka. These countries were selected in order to carry out cultural comparisons between four distinct cultural areas in terms of geography, ethnic composition, and type of cultural policy pursued. Potential differences between countries of the same sub-continent, sharing the same border (e.g., Brazil and Bolivia) were also tested. The term "nationality" was chosen to label participants living in a country, although it is noted that some participants may have had ethnic backgrounds different from those of their nationality. Nevertheless, most of the participants belonged to the majority group in their respective country. Four hundred twenty nine of the 434 participants spoke only one native language (the country's official language) and only five of them spoke two or more native languages.

Socioeconomic status was defined according to the classification of the French official Institute INSEE (2003)[8]. The participants were categorized in four different groups by reducing the eight to four socioeconomic status classes for the needs of the present research.

Table 1. The constitution of the sample

	Nationality				
	French	**Brazilian**	**Bolivian**	**Sri Lankan**	**Total**
N	133	134	90	77	434
Mean age	42.06	25.55	29.59	30.90	32.40
(*SD*)(years)	(16.80)	(8.13)	(13.37)	(14.02)	(14.93)
Gender					
Male	40	40	43	38	161
Female	93	94	47	29	273
SES					
Student	35	75	48	28	186
HSP	20	47	21	13	101
MLSP	47	10	19	26	102
R&U	31	2	2	10	45
FLS					
None	36	46	23	9	114
One	50	64	54	43	211
Two	35	22	11	22	90
Three or more	12	2	2	3	19

Note: The abbreviations SES, HSP, MLSP, R&U and FLS stand for Socioeconomic Status, High Standing Profession, Middle and Low Standing Profession, Retired and Unemployed, and Foreign Languages Spoken, respectively.

[8.] «Professions et catégories socioprofessionnelles PCS» from the Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (INSEE) (2003).

Measures

Demographic information

The following demographic information was collected:
Gender (man or woman); Age (in years); Number of foreign languages spoken (none, only one, two, three or more); Socioeconomic status (students, professions corresponding to a high standing, professions corresponding to a lower standing, and, finally, retired and unemployed); Nationality (France, Brazil, Bolivia, or Sri Lanka).

Intercultural sensitivity

An Intercultural Sensitivity scale (El Sayed, 2018) was used. This scale was inspired by the work of Bennett (1986b) and Hammer et al. (2003). It comprises 18 items, 12 tapping cognitive and six affective intercultural sensitivity. The 18 items represented the six intercultural sensitivity levels. Three items tapped each level, two cognitive and one affective. Specifically, Denial - "*It is not wrong to think that most foreigners don't have desires, needs or aspirations in life*"[9]; Defence - "*In general, people of different cultures from mine are potentially a risk for my culture*"; Minimization - "*After all, cultural differences are secondary, at bottom line we are all the same*"; Acceptance - "*Generally, I understand cultural differences concerning food, the most important is, for example, to be able to understand that you can eat dog in China*"[10]; Adaptation - "*With people from different culture, you have to change your behaviour*"; Integration – "*I could easily link up with people from different cultures by mixing their cultural features with mine*". Responses were on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Total disagreement, 2 = Disagreement, 3 = Agreement, and 4 = Total agreement.

The scale includes positively and negatively worded items. For the latter, the response scale was reversed. The intercultural sensitivity score was computed as the sum of responses on all the items of the scale. The lower the sum score, the more the ethnocentric intercultural sensitivity. On the contrary, the higher the sum score, the higher the tendency for ethno-relativistic intercultural sensitivity. Cronbach's alpha of the intercultural sensitivity scale was .55 for the whole sample (N = 434), which is not satisfactory. The Cronbach's alpha obtained was very different among the four countries. It was .58 for France; .37 for Brazil; .46 for Bolivia and .15 for Sri Lanka.

[9.] Example of cognitive item.
[10.] Example of affective item.

In all cases except France it was unacceptable. This might be due to the translation of the questionnaire in the other languages or to the different cultural contexts.

The questionnaire was constructed in French. It was initially administered to eight persons of different ethnic background but living in France to test face validity (Dermitzaki, Bonoti, & Kriekouki, 2016). The aim was to identify potentially problematic items in the construction of the scale (Sales-Willemin, 2006). Face validity testing is useful, especially when the scale "is developed in one country and will be administrated to other ones" (Touzani, 2006, p. 115). After this initial testing, some corrections were applied to various items before finalizing them. The questionnaire was then translated by a bilingual native speaker in each country: French-Spanish for Bolivia, French-English-Sinhalese for Sri Lanka, French-Portuguese for Brazil. One or two persons fluent in the target language did a last proofreading to check if there were important semantic problems or not before to definitively administrate the translated questionnaire.

Procedure

The questionnaire and demographic questions were administered in paper form or online. The participants were contacted by email, social networks or phone so that we could recruit different age groups (18 years old and older), gender, socioeconomic status, and nationality (French, Brazilian, Bolivian, or Sri Lankan). Informed consent was given by all participants. All participants were informed that the questionnaire would be anonymous.

RESULTS

The effect of nationality

To test Hypothesis 1, that regarded the general level of intercultural sensitivity according to nationality, a one-way ANOVA was carried out, $F(3, 430) = 56.325$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .282$. Two nationalities clearly stood out in intercultural sensitivity (France, $M = 52.35$, $SD = 5.14$; Brazil, $M = 52.63$, $SD = 4.29$; Bolivia, $M = 47.06$, $SD = 7.38$; Sri Lanka, $M = 45.17$, $SD = 5.47$). Post hoc Tukey paired contrasts showed significant differences of intercultural sensitivity between France and Bolivia ($p < .001$) and France and Sri Lanka ($p < .001$) but also between Brazil and Bolivia ($p < .001$) and Brazil and Sri Lanka ($p < .001$). There was no significant difference between France and Brazil and between Bolivia and Sri Lanka. Therefore, two

intercultural sensitivity level groups were found: France and Brazil with a high level and Bolivia and Sri Lanka with a lower level. These findings confirmed Hypothesis 1.

The effect of foreign languages spoken

Concerning the effect of other person characteristics, Hypothesis 2 regarded the number of foreign languages spoken. There were four levels of foreign languages spoken (see Table 1). The respective ANOVA showed a significant main effect, $F(3, 430) = 2.684$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .018$. However, the effect size was low. Participants speaking three languages or more had higher mean intercultural sensitivity, $M = 53.16$, $SD = 6.67$, compared to the ones who mastered only two foreign languages, $M = 50.70$, $SD = 5.43$, one other language, $M = 49.88$, $SD = 6.11$, or no foreign languages at all, $M = 49.39$, $SD = 5.56$. However, the post hoc paired contrasts with the Tukey test showed only one significant difference, that is, between individuals who did not speak any foreign languages and individuals who spoke three or more languages ($p < .05$). This implies that for intercultural sensitivity it is critical to speak many foreign languages. Hypothesis 2 was confirmed.

The effect of age

To test Hypothesis 3 regarding the association of age with intercultural sensitivity, Pearson's correlation was applied (see Table 2). There was no statistically significant association between age and intercultural sensitivity in the combined sample of all nationalities, $r = -.063$. Similarly, there was no significant association when the analysis was performed on the data of each nationality separately except for Bolivia: France, $r = -.098$; Brazil, $r = -.153$; Sri Lanka, $r = -.187$, and Bolivia, $r = -.218$, $p < .05$. It should be noted, however, that the association was negative in all countries, even though non-significant. This means that at least for Bolivia, the older the person is, the lower the level of intercultural sensitivity is. These findings suggest that there is no strong association between age and intercultural sensitivity. Hypothesis 3 was not confirmed.

The effect of socioeconomic status

Hypothesis 4 regarded the effect of socioeconomic status on intercultural sensitivity. The one-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect, $F(3, 430) = 6.579$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .044$. Students, $M = 50.88$, $SD = 5.33$, and participants with high-standing professions, $M = 51.02$, $SD = 5.28$, had higher intercultural sensitivity than those

with low-standing professions, $M = 48.08$, $SD = 6.66$, and the retired or the unemployed participants, $M = 49.08$, $SD = 6.48$. The post hoc paired contrasts with the Tukey test showed significant differences of intercultural sensitivity only between the low-standing professions group compared to the high-standing professions ($p < .01$) and the students ($p < .01$). Hypothesis 4 was partially confirmed.

Table 2. Means (SD) of intercultural sensitivity and Pearson correlations with age in the four nationality groups

Intercultural sensitivity/group	M (SD)	Pearson's r
General	50.07 (4.28)	-.063
France	52.35 (5.40)	-.098
Brazil	52.63 (4.29)	-.153
Bolivia	47.06 (5.38)	-.218*
Sri Lanka	45.17 (5.47)	-.187

Note: *$p < .05$

The effect of gender

Hypothesis 5 regarded gender effects on intercultural sensitivity. The one-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect, $F(1, 432) = 5.37$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .012$, although with very low effect size. More precisely, women had higher intercultural sensitivity, $M = 50.70$, $SD = 5.60$, than men, $M = 49.22$, $SD = 6.28$. Hypothesis 5 was confirmed.

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the effects of individual differences factors on intercultural sensitivity and interculturation. The results were in the predicted direction although with some important differentiations. These findings are discussed below.

The role of nationality

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, the individual's nationality proved to be a critical variable affecting intercultural sensitivity. The differences observed between, on one side, France and Brazil, and on the other side, Bolivia and Sri Lanka, could be attributed to the difficulty of the latter countries to face the consequences of globalization but also the foreign influences inside a country. France and Brazil are characterized by a higher openness likely due to the dynamics of their large cities (e.g., Paris, Toulouse, Lyon;

Recife, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro), the country's economic, political and institutional systems but also people's attitudes as shaped by historical factors. Brazil is a country built on a base of consecutive immigrations, leading to the fact that "Brazilians favour what expresses a mix" (Droulers & Broggio, 2017, p. 13) and an individualist perspective (Hofstede, 1994). Concerning France, with a history as a migrant receiving country during the 20th century (Lignon-Darmaillac & Ducom, n.d.), it has become an attractive center with an international appeal (e.g., tourism, science, culture) favouring in this way intercultural contacts and sometimes even mixed marriages. According to the INSEE, in 2015 25% of marriages were mixed. So, individuals coming from these two countries, having a regular contact with foreign people, are more likely to develop an intercultural sensitivity heading for ethnorelativism, even more in big conurbations. On the contrary, Bolivia and Sri Lanka are two more protectionist countries with a stronger ethnocentrism than France and Brazil. This can be explained by their respective national histories. Bolivia has gone through several wars with neighbouring countries and lost a large part of its original territory. Some internal threats also took place because of a separatist desire, particularly in the country's west part, for example in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Lavaud et al., n.d). This further strengthened ethnocentrism. Concerning Sri Lanka, the impact of the colonial past is still obvious in the country. The country has established significant links with the world since approximately ten years after the end of civil war in 2009 (Meyer et al., n.d.). These internal and external threats have likely fed fears about cultural difference, leading to a culturally elaborated «social representation of the risk» (Kmiec & Roland-Levy, 2014), and encouraging in that way a withdrawal to one's culture of reference, that accentuate the communitarianism effect of countries already considered more in communitarianism perspective (Hofstede, 1994).

Individual differences effects

Besides nationality, person characteristics such as number of foreign languages spoken by a person, age, socioeconomic status and gender were tested for their effects on intercultural sensitivity.

In so far as age is concerned, it was found that it did not have a significant impact on the intercultural sensitivity level. This finding is in line with studies done in Hong Kong (Yuen, 2010) or in Texas, United States (Bayles, 2009). However, the finding that Bolivia differed from the other countries suggests a potential cultural particularity with an ethnocentric tendency linked to older age. This has been pointed out in other studies (Segura-Robles & Parra-Gonzales, 2019; Ruiz-Bernardo et al., 2012). They showed that growing old makes the person more assertive in defining who one is

(Glen, 1974), but also more inspired by values that are culturally anchored. This makes older adults more difficult to adopt a foreigner's perspective in order to allow the encounter with the "other". These contradictory findings about age effects might be attributed to other factors like cultural specificities or different dimensions of intercultural sensitivity evaluated (Segura-Robles & Parra-Gonzales, 2019). Therefore, further research on age effects on intercultural sensitivity are warranted.

Contrary to age, openness to other cultures is affected by one's profession or educational level. Indeed, people with high-standing professions and university students were more likely to confront themselves with cultural otherness compared to people with lower professions. This trend has already been observed in another study (Ruiz-Bernardo et al., 2012), in which participants with unstable employment or who had not completed higher education had more difficulty to understand cultural differences likely because of lack of information or experience with other cultures compared to people with more qualifications in their jobs and students who get confronted with cultural otherness more regularly.

Hence, from the point of view of openness to other cultures versus withdrawal to one's own reference culture, our findings confirmed previous research (Holm et al., 2009; Vilà, 2006). As regards gender, we found a small but significant effect on intercultural sensitivity. Women seem to have more affective empathy, to be more open to cultural otherness than men. In fact, Schwartz (2006) pointed out that women have a higher level in values reflecting "universalism" or "benevolence". This might explain this greater sensitivity to the culturally different "other".

Speaking foreign languages is another factor that seems to play an additional and potentially important role in intercultural sensitivity (Ruiz-Bernardo et al., 2012; Grin & Faniko, 2012). According to Li and Zhu (2013), "multilingualism plays an essential role in the interchanges between individuals of different origins and makes it possible for people who may not share cultural assumptions or values to (re)negotiate their relations and identities" (p. 518). Yet, the findings of this study suggest that it is only speaking more than two foreign languages that makes a difference. This is associated with higher educational level and high professional status, often linked to international networks and closer contact with other cultures. This paves the way for renegotiation of identities, or re-metabolization of the self, that constitutes the definition of the highest intercultural sensitivity level (*integration*). More specifically, the integration stage (Bennett, 1986a) depicts the state in which one is being both one's self and the "other", and at the same time none of them by creating original features like new cultural elements (Adler, 1977; Guerraoui, 2011; Plivard, 2014), that reflect an effective interculturation process (Denoux, 1994). In this sense, the interculturation process would be underlying a good ability to articulate culturally

different and distinct ways of thinking (Nguyen & Kellogg, 2010), as represented by the different languages mastered by the individual. This ability to master more and more foreign languages and to succeed in metabolizing them by interculturation would result in an intercultural sensitivity tending towards ethnorelativism. Overall, learning languages, considered as a skill here (429 out of 434 of the participants spoke only one native language, so they had learnt the foreign languages as a new skill), is a considerable advantage, a "good proxy" (Grin & Faniko, 2012) to have the proper response when the individual has to face cultural otherness.

To sum up, this study showed that in an era of globalization, high educational level and speaking many foreign languages is associated with greater intercultural sensitivity, linked to a potential effective interculturation process. Indeed, it exposes people to different from their own cultural features and makes it often necessary to understand these features in order to be able to communicate with people in other countries and cultural contexts. However, our findings are compromised by some important limitations of this study.

Limitations of the study and future directions

There are two major limitations of this study. The first has to do with the sampling of the study and the lack of sufficient number of participants who spoke many foreign languages (three or more) in countries other than France. Also, the small number of retired and unemployed participants in samples other than the French.

The second limitation has to do with the lack of reliability of the intercultural sensitivity scale (Demeuse & Henry, 2004). The research group is already working on it (El Sayed, Simou, Teyssier, & Denoux, 2020) to try it in another international sample to get a better Cronbach's alpha in general but especially by country. From this point of view, the findings of the study can only be considered tentative. However, they are indicative of potential trends that deserve further investigation.

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