EFL Students' Awareness of the Sufficiency of Received Inputs to Acquire Culture in the EFL Classrooms

Prepared by

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Abstract

Culture has been the focus of teachers and specialists in language learning environments in various contexts. This study examines Arab learners' views on the impact of culture on language learning. The study is qualitative in nature and used open-ended interviews with a sample of 25 participants from the Department of English and Translation at Qassim University. The interviews with the participants are recorded, transcribed, and classified under themes. The findings showed that students believe that the teaching materials, pedagogy, and teachers' developments are not sufficient to develop students communicating in the target language. Furthermore, the study showed that view opportunities can be exploited to expose to the target language culture in the classroom. They reported low awareness of the combination of learning both language and culture in language acquisition, it is not easy to absorb culture though. The study also shows that culture affects the communication skills of learners. The study urges language teachers to emphasize awareness of the target language culture in their classrooms. They should also introduce their learners to the differences between Arabic and English to avoid miscommunication and undue adoption of cultural traits.

Keywords: target language, cultural conflict, cultural background, impact of culture, interaction skills

Introduction

 Both language and culture are regarded as two sides of the same coin and are, therefore, seen as inseparable. This also means that language cannot exist in the isolation from cultural influence. A person cannot ignore the cultural context of the words they use if they want to communicate successfully in a foreign language. However, there is little debate regarding how important it is for a speaker or writer to have the ability to speak or write fluently in their native tongue! Understanding the cultural context of a language is critical to its comprehension. Many unpleasant and humiliating situations can be brought about by cultural differences heightened by improper use of a language.

 This remains one of those areas of research that need to be explored repeatedly throughout the course of time. There are various distinct aspects that make for an argument for and against the role of language use in a cultural context. Is the manner in which we express ourselves impacted by the manner in which we think? Is there a link between a person's native language and cultural background and upbringing? What is it about the ability to communicate through language that is universally recognized in humans? In actuality, this dispute is about the existence of languages and whether or not the capacity to communicate via language brings people together or divides them from one another. Essentially, this is the same kind of thinking at its core in the nature vs. culture argument and the anthropological conflicts over reductionist ideas. When it comes to disagreements between natural and social

scientists, the nature/culture divide appears to be the driving paradigm in many cases. All of the possible remedies for these disputes, in the end, fracture the framework, mitigating if not completely eliminating the dichotomy itself.

Behavioral scientists have addressed this issue, as noted by Whitehouse (2001), by acknowledging both the importance of social learning and the necessity of examining the mind's traits "in their context" (p. 209, emphasis in original). To put it another way, learning should be regarded as a continual process that takes place over an extended period of time. According to the neurologist Edelmann (1992), whom Whitehouse cited as an example, "there are no pre-existing modules in the human brain for classifying the world, learning grammatical patterns, or any other mental processes" (p. 213). A complex mass of potentialities (circuitry) within which patterns are produced and reinforced by experience is described. As a result, this formulation appears to fall on the culture side of the nature/culture split, according to Edelmann's neural group selection hypothesis.

Although culture is abstract from the perspective of the brain, it is experienced from the outside, which is why culture is not simply the sum of one's experiences, but rather a complex collection of capacities that may be changed via what Edelmann (1992) refers to as "neuronal group selection." (p. 213). Instead of a straightforward nature versus culture conflict, we now have a multidimensional model of interactions to replace the phrases used previously. If we substitute "the corporeal person" for "the mind," we get forms that are more representative of how individuals view the environment. Language and culture are now able to be brought into the conversation. When it comes to the development of culture and civilization, the capacity of people to communicate through language is frequently cited as a crucial, if not the most important, aspect. Due to the universality of this capacity, it is tempting to conceive of it as a system that contains the ability to recognize and replicate grammatical patterns rather than as generic learning ability. This was the opinion of Chomsky (1995), who revolutionized the field of Linguistics by treating language as a uniquely human, biologically based cognitive ability. Further, Everett's (2012) *Language, the Cultural Tool*, delves further into the issue of linguistic diversity. Are we talking about a cultural invention that was established to overcome communication issues that were crucial to the survival of human communities or something else? Or is it something that has existed in the human body since the time of its conception? Are the origins of this phenomenon in the natural world or in human culture? And if nature evolved in this manner, we would ask how it came to be that way.

Here, it can be argued that culture and language are inseparable, as well as teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) through culture may help students better grasp the complexities of the language. In addition to being a product of culture, language also serves as a reflection of it (Gleason, 1961). The purpose of language is to communicate one's thoughts and ideas to others. Our main objective when we begin to improve our language skills is to be able to communicate with people. Taking off from Halliday (1973), and Alyasery (2018) who point out that language functions may be split into seven categories:

1. Instrumental function: when language is employed to control the environment, to cause certain events to happen.

2. Regulatory function: when language controls events. The regulations may encounter the approval or disapproval of the listener.

3. Representational function: when language is employed to form statements, convey facts and knowledge, explain or report.

4. Interactive function: when language aids social maintenance, this means knowledge of slang, jargon, jokes, folklore, cultural patterns, politeness, and ritual expectations in social exchange.

5. Personal function: when language expresses feelings, emotions, and personality.

6. Heuristic function: when language is employed to amass knowledge and to be told.

7. Imaginative function: when language is employed to make tales, write poetry, tongue twisters, etc.

Literature Review

The role of culture in English language teaching & learning

In the past few decades, scholars have variously defined language as the following: (1) "Language is a system of arbitrary signs" (de Saussure, 2011); (2) "Language is primarily speech" (Bloomfield, 1994; (3) "Human language is fundamentally creative" (Chomsky, 1995, p.77); (4) "Language is a mirror of society" [Sociolinguists]; (5) "Language is a mirror of culture" [Anthropological ling] (Kadarisman, 2005).

The current study focuses on principle (5) for a number of reasons, the first of which is its importance. The fact that second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) instruction do not take place in a vacuum, makes it logical to keep culture in mind while planning for any language learning/teaching program. Arguments might develop when students' cultural backgrounds are different from those of the L2/FL instructors or other students in a class setting. Aside from that, it is well acknowledged that only a tiny number of L2/FL instructors have any prior understanding of the culture in which they are teaching. Students, on the other hand, must learn about the L2/FL way of life in order to comprehend linguistic behavior. Cultural sensitivity and awareness of others' opinions must be instilled in pupils by their teachers and reinforced in them by their peers. Another goal of L2/FL learning is for students to be able to construct communicative utterances that are not only grammatically correct, but also pragmatically, and socio-culturally acceptable, as well as to communicate effectively in their native language (Al-Qunayeer *et al.,* 2020; Grzega, 2021; Jafarova, 2021).

Saloomeh (2018), and Kramsch, (1993) argued that language can only be utilized correctly and responsibly in certain contexts. Culture provides a wide range of perspectives that can be used to enhance the dynamics of a class, especially among undergraduate students, who have already chosen a specific area of study and may show antipathy or apathy to a teacher's

ambitious lesson plan if they do not consider it relevant. Knowing how a teacher could avoid "teaching meaningless symbols or symbols that the learner attaches the wrong meaning to" is therefore crucial knowledge to have (Politzer, 1966). Culture education has been impacted by two distinct approaches, (Thanasoulas, 2001), and both have functioned as models for integrating it into language instruction. Highbrow information, such as exposure to literature and the fine arts i.e., factual information, such as statistics about the target civilization's institutions and other aspects, and lowbrow information, such as customs, habits, and folklore of daily life, are the three types of cultural information that can be transmitted.

An efferent reading provides just facts that cannot inspire critical thinking in the classroom, leaving instructors and students with only a knowledge of the culture of the nation from which the material is sourced. Students' perceptions of the culture of the nation where this material is produced may be as sterile as if it came from a printed tourist brochure since there is no other lead to direct them to contextualize it. Using cross-cultural psychology and anthropology, the alternative approach "has been to embed culture within an interpretative framework and construct linkages, specifically, points of reference or departure, between one's own and the target nation" (Council of Europe, 2001). In the opinion of the author, this technique can only provide learners with cultural information and leave it to them to combine it with the assumptions, attitudes, and mindsets of their own culture, which is a limitation in itself. However, here is where the teacher's role comes into play. Like an aesthetic reading, teachers must assist students in constructing their own interpretations and thoughts based on their own experiences by first analyzing and comparing the two cultures, and then allowing students to draw their conclusions from their own experiences.

But using this model in the ELT is a must. For example, new information must be linked to previously established knowledge, organizing principles must be used to reconcile seemingly disparate events, and critical thinking must be used in response to prior knowledge and experience. Keeping the lines of communication open between students and professors is essential, as Rosenblatt's perspective of aesthetic reading has previously established, so that cultural input may flow freely. This, in turn, keeps the creative experimental atmosphere alive and well. Culture matters a great deal in English language teaching because it may make the difference between students who are only able to talk and those who are able to grasp the deeper meaning of what they are saying and the world that they are helping to create (Connell, 2008).

Consequently, if a foreign language student has also been taught culture along with the language, they will encode their communication with an awareness of what they are saying, its meanings, and its history. More than just expressing their basic wants and thoughts, they'll be able to engage in the target language culture in a meaningful way, and they'll be better able to do so. Sociolinguists, communication theorists, and anthropologists have spent much time investigating the tight relationship between language use and cultural values.

The importance of culture in language learning

As a means of communication and as a means of transmitting cultural values, language has a unique dual nature. Human culture and language are inseparable, and it is impossible to

imagine a world without either one of them. A language is a reflection of a culture's values, meaning that language and culture are inseparable (Brown, 1994; Fleet, 2006; Wei, 2005). The two according to Jiang (2000) are 'intricately linked so that one cannot separate them without losing the relevance of either language or culture'. To put it another way, they are intertwined (Zu & Kong, 2009). In fact, language learning and cultural learning are so intertwined that one might assume that language teaching is also cultural teaching because of the interdependence of language learning and cultural learning. Gao (2006) goes on to say that teachers of foreign languages should be cognizant of the importance of cultural studies in the classroom and work to improve their students' cultural awareness and communication abilities. The same may be said of foreign language education as a whole. Similarly, Wang (2008), claims that "foreign language instructors are foreign culture teachers."

Besides hearing, speaking, reading, and writing, Tomalin (2008) shows the global and the worldwide importance of English language as the key reason to teach culture as a fifth language skill which focuses on learning how to adjust one's English to learn about, comprehend, and appreciate the concepts, methods, and distinctive characteristics of different cultures. In addition, it requires a grasp of how language may be used to embrace change, to be flexible and tolerant of methods of doing things that differ from one's own. It is a shift in mindset that is communicated through language, Tomalin (2008) goes on to say that cultural education in ELT should include teaching cultural knowledge (the big C), cultural values (the country's "psyche"), cultural behavior (the little c), and cultural skills (the knowledge of daily routines and behavior), ensuring the development of intercultural sensitivity and awareness by means of English language as the tool of interaction.

Cultural influence on the vocabulary

Knowing a word's pronunciation and spelling are taken for granted by most language users. Vocabulary instruction, according to a majority of educators, consists only of making connections between word sounds and their intended meanings. In contrast, "a word in the Lang5 [the knowledge in an individual's mind] sense of knowledge is more than its meaning" (Cook, 2008, p. 50).

As a result, mastering a new word involves more than merely memorizing its translation. Acquiring a word necessitates familiarity with not just its phonetic and orthographic structure, but also, its syntactic structure, as well as its general and specific meaning and context (Chomsky, 1995).

Teaching vocabulary is all about making the meaning clear to students. Educators use a variety of methods for implementing this strategy. Instead of using translation, audio-visual lessons employ pictures to help students develop this understanding. Teachers in task-based and communicative language instruction present students with a variety of interactional situations to help them understand the material. However, learning a word entails more than simply memorizing its definition; it also entails understanding all the additional information that it contains (Cook, 2008). As previously noted, the question of whether speakers utilize the same concepts but use different words to convey them, or whether meanings also change in various cultures, is an essential one to consider when evaluating vocabulary development. People's

perceptions of color, position (front/back, left/right vs. north/south, east/west), and terms for uncles are just a few examples of how this differs from culture to culture.

Vocabulary is the building block of language, serving as a conduit for the transmission of ideas and concepts. The explanation of terminology will also reflect changes in national or cultural change, as will the language itself. In Yemen, the color white is associated with virtue, piety, and purity, hence a bride-to-be wears white on the day of her wedding celebration as a sign of her virtue, chastity, and loyalty. Contrary to popular belief, the color white is reserved solely for funerals in Chinese culture, where it is considered entirely inappropriate to wear any other color. This is also at odds with Arabic tradition, which dictates that mourners dress in black. No one at an Arabian restaurant will understand if an American man asks for a hot dog, and they might even laugh at him. It is not enough to learn the rules of grammar and the denotative meanings of words in order to learn a language; one must also learn about the culture, way of life, customs, cuisine, and other customs as well as the history and everything else that is part of the culture in order to truly master a language. In a nutshell, culture is a complex collection of several factors, and each one may be expressed in words. An important part of learning vocabulary is to pay attention to cultural differences. Otherwise, mocking and irony are likely outcomes.

Cultural influence on listening

It is simpler to understand and absorb the meaning of something you are already familiar with, but if you are listening to something you have never heard of or something you are unfamiliar with, you will not be able to understand it. Our assimilation will be hindered, on the other hand, when the content we're hearing has a strong connection to our own cultural background knowledge. Hayati (2009) found that Iranian students got improved their listening whenever they focused on culture. For instance, if there consider this utterance: *Mohammed is still suffering from Alnakheleen day*. This province's name alone won't give the impression that Mohammed was injured in a car accident in Alnaqkheleen if one is not aware that Alnakheleen is the name of a notoriously hazardous mountain road where numerous accidents have occurred. In light of the preceding image, we can clearly understand how important culture is to our listening abilities. One of the many ties that bind the two is cultural. It might impede our ability to listen, but it can also help us do so. The presence of culture should be noted and exploited, especially teachers should consider designing appropriate curricula and materials.

Cultural influence on speaking

As an illustration, consider the perspective of a newbie interpreter: There is a young interpreter who has a consistent and natural way of pronouncing the language. First and foremost, he did all in his power to demonstrate his qualities of enthusiasm, kindness, consideration, and competence to the people he was tasked with accompanying. To keep himself aware, he said, "You're coming this way"; "Sit down"; "Do not speed up"; "Stay with me"; "It is imperative that you arrive on time". The next day, he is astonished to learn that the foreigner had decided not to accompany him because the young interpreter had been deemed impolite by the foreigner. The interpreter, in the perspective of the foreigner, is not assisting him but chastising him like a parent chastising a child. The interpreter's English is flawless, but his lack of cultural

awareness prevents him from being a good fit for this position.

That's why one needs to be aware of the cultural context in which a person comes from, as well as what you can and cannot say in a language if you don't know how to use it in a real-world context.

Cultural Influence on Translating

Translating is often believed to be heavily influenced by the cultural context in which it is performed (Brown 1990; Geng, 2013). The target and source languages must be well studied in order to successfully translate. The difficulty in translating is usually due to a lack of understanding of cultural context. There are many dimensions to cultural background knowledge, including art, history, geography, philosophy, and science. As we all know, every culture has its own set of idioms and proverbs, and trying to translate them into English or Arabic without understanding the underlying cultural context can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Here are some cultural idioms in English that may be difficult for English as a Foreign Language learners to translate:

- Rob Peter to pay Paul
- Walk down the aisle
- Any/every Tom, Dick, and Harry
- In one's Sunday best
- You're barking up the wrong tree
- Like a square peg in a round hole
- Burn the midnight oil

Visuals and cultural learning in EFL

Byram (1989) affirmed that amongst the beneficent tools for both instructors and learners in language learning is the use of visual aids. Moreover, for ensuring a good understanding of the message whether spoken or written, a language user requires to be aware of both skills and cultural insights. Otherwise, if a message is interpreted mistakenly, it will be communicated wrongly. Learning language and culture go side by side.

In the same context, the process of teaching/learning culture for EFL students is clarified by Kiss and Weninger (2017). They found that introducing students to EFL culture, make them aware to the cultural differences, and enhanced their intercultural competence.

Keeping in mind the significance of culture in language learning/teaching, the inclusion of culture in the EFL syllabus as well as the techniques required to teach culture to EFL learners are foggy and unspecified. To move the stagnant waters, some studies have been conducted on the impact of visual aids on teaching/training culture in EFL classrooms (Dai, 2011; Kiss & Weninger, 2017; Tran, 2010; Wen-Cheng et al., 2011).

To begin with the study of Tran (2010), the study confirmed the importance of teaching culture in the EFL context. The study figured out that EFL students may share different beliefs, thoughts, and even cultural backgrounds. Therefore, teaching English to such heterogeneous students may lead to the interference of such cultures in the learning/teaching of English. Cultural facades, like cultural shock, cross-cultural awareness, and enculturation have been the topic of several empirical research. They sometimes been compared and other time been contrasted. The study discussed the proximity of blood between language learning and cultural transmission. Finally, the study brought some critical points of view regarding the teaching of Cultural to EFL students.

Furthermore, Kiss and Weninger, (2017) claimed that obtaining visual tools boosted the comprehension of EFL learners to culture forecasts which lead to improve their learning outcomes alike. The reason behind that improvement belonged to the learners' high motivation and interest in the way language and cultural content was conveyed visually in the English classroom. Furthermore, visualizations as a language teaching aid contextualizes the target language with many ample explanations used in real life situations. The visual aids also bring practical and simple clarifications to abstract language elements.

Still on the impact of visual tools on teaching culture, Dai (2011) reported that students' capacity to learn English increased due to the integration of visuals in the learning process. Such development in the learning ability to learn leads to interest and enjoyment in the language learning. To explain Dai' s (2011) view, various learners participate in successful classroom discussions due to the learning capacity they acquired. Henceforth, Dai's study confirmed the importance of selecting appropriate methods while teaching/training culture to EFL learners which assured the achievement of the prescribed learning outcomes. Accordingly, as viewed by Dia's (2011) findings, the more teaching methods used visuals, the more success that learning outcomes achieved. The study finally showed that exposing EFL students to various cultural background makes them aware of cultural difference and the importance to respect other cultural as you respect your own which leads to reducing the impact of miscommunication happened by cultural differences.

The types of textbooks were discussed by Wen-Cheng et al., (2011) and Mitsikopoulou (2015). Wen-Cheng et al., (2011) signified the importance of selecting the suitable textbooks to EFL students. However, they explained the various types of textbooks, they confirmed the necessity to select textbooks which contained visuals like puzzles and images to be introduced to EFL learners. Furthermore, Wen-Cheng et al., (2011) that using visual approach to teaching EFL has the ability to leave positive impact on learners to the role of culture in learning English.

Similarly, Mitsikopoulou (2015) clarified the today tendency of EFL teachers to use colorful textbooks for ELT in various contexts. Such attractive textbooks according to Mitsikopoulou (2015) have extra visual resources like CDs hyperlinked with webpages. According to the study, introducing such visual resources in the English classroom supports the process of integrating culture to EFL and makes the cultural difference to students trustworthy. Critically, the study ends by explaining the usualness of selecting appropriate textbooks to teaching English in various contexts.

Nevertheless, Krcelic and Matijevic (2015) visualized the elements of culture to be introduced in the EFL students. Giving great focus on the visual globe, the study pointed out the valuable benefits that students can get from introducing culture to their classroom. The visual aids are taken to be techniques responsible for simplifying the learning process and acquision of EFL culture and accelerated the learning ability of the students to both language learning and culture acquainting. Likely, visual aids according to Krcelic and Matijevic's (2015) study interplayed and centralized the link between language learning and multicultural awareness.

To end by Herrera and Leonardo's (2017) study on the impact of virtual learning in introducing cultural aspects to EFL students. Such learning environment increases the positive effects on students to language learning. Likely, accelerating the interest of learners to learn the English language which motives them to study harder and harder and practice the language more and more. Moreover, according to the study findings, some students and due to the lack of learning resources feel insecure to learn English virtually.

Research questions

In the light of the preceding discussion, this study answers the following questions:

1. How far does the EFL course prepare the participants in this study to communicate in English?

2. What is the level of EFL learners' awareness on the necessity of integrating the target language culture in the classroom?

Methods

Research design

The design of this study is qualitative with personal interviews being used to collect the data. It interviewed 25 participants randomly chosen via Zoom.

Participants

The study participants were 25 EFL students at a state university in Saudi Arabia. All the 25 students in this study were enrolled at the Faculty of Language and Translation and admission eligibility required them to be at least intermediate language learners. The sample was selected randomly by generating a list of roll numbers using the Random Number Generator freely available on the internet. Thereafter each of these selected participants were contacted via email obtained from the university, to seek consent and fix the date and time for an interview. However, seven of the selected candidates excused themselves from participation, following which another set of numbers was generated to fill the shortfall. At the same time, it was ensured that only those candidates were retained who fulfilled the inclusion criteria: 1. Enrolled for an English major course at the university; 2. Was an Arabic speaker; 3. Was aged between 19-21 years; 4. Had the requisite physical setting for a Zoom interview; 5. Wanted to pursue a career that needed communication skills. Once the list of participants was finalized along with

mutually agreed date and time for the interviews, the researcher requested written consent from each individual on a proforma. It was ensured that the ethical considerations were preserved, and students felt free to speak their views

Instrument

This study obtained online interview via Zoom to gather information from the participants. The interviews were semi-structured with the questions being centered around the learners' cultural awareness of the target language (English), their satisfaction with the proficiency they gained while taking the EFL course; their views on what was needed to improve the quality of cultural education in EFL. Individual interviews were performed. Students were presented a series of cultural questions and then given the opportunity to respond orally. They were asked two open questions about the possibility to become familiar with the English language culture and how culture impact their listening, speaking and translation abilities. The interviews were allowed to be open ended beyond this point with questions being asked as ideas and thoughts developed. Sentences were the unit of analysis used.

The interviews were conducted over a period of two weeks, and each session was recorded. This was followed by transcription of these by the researcher. The data so obtained were in Arabic as all the participants expressed greater ease of expression in Arabic. Gender was not one of the variables of selection, resulting in 9 of the 25 participants being females. Cultural practices were duly observed in interviewing the female candidates.

Data analysis

As mentioned, the results gathered are qualitative. The researcher followed a thematic analysis to classify the participants' ideas. Moreover, frequencies were used to show the occurrence of each of the ten themes. A rubric was used to tabulate actual excerpts from the interviews. Table 1 below summarizes the repeated themes in the interviews with the frequency of occurrence. It may be noted that the total time of the recordings was 1120 minutes, including the time taken by the researcher in framing the questions by asking leading questions:

Results

Ten reoccurring themes emerged from students' answers to the interview questions. Such themes were also presented along with the percentages and frequency of occurring. Table 1 shows that four items were presented to answer the query associated with the sufficiency of the input they receive during the English course on culture. As Table 1 exhibits that the majority of the students (86%) believed that the course should have sufficient scope for training students on the target language culture. Likely, 19 out of 25 of the students (76%) pointed the necessity to indulge in visual tools for enhancing their exposure to the target language culture. Furthermore, 62% of the students viewed the need for the updating of both material and pedagogy for a good presentation of culture in the classroom. Finally, 60% of the participants believed that their teacher is adequately aware of the target language culture.

Table 1. Students' perceptions on the input they received on English culture

No.	Theme	Frequency	Percentage
1	The course should have adequate scope for training in the target language culture	21.5	86
2	Utilizing visual target language tools might enhance understanding the culture as well as communication	19	76
3	Materials and pedagogy need boosting to accommodate the cultural element in the target language	15.5	62
4	Teacher is adequately aware of the target language culture	4.5	18

Table 2. presents the EFL students' level of awareness regarding the importance of integrating of culture in the Saudi classroom. The great majority of them (87.33%) believed that it is not an easy process to learn the culture of the target language. In the same vein, 58% of the students perceived the importance of cultural knowledge in effective communication. However, a little bit of contradiction is shown in items 6, 7, 8, and 9 in which more than half of the participants negatively perceived the importance of culture in students' English. Just half of the participants (50.66%) perceived it is difficult to acquire the target language culture. Likely, 47.33% of the participants reported the combination of culture and language. Furthermore, 42% of them viewed that language learning is meaningless without learning culture. Finally, about one-third (36%) of the students reported the axiality of opportunity in the classroom to expose to the target language.

Table 2. Students' awareness of the importance of culture in EFL classroom

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
3. Cultural knowledge is a critical component of effective communication and engagement	14.5	58
4. The idea of culture is a difficult one to grasp	12.6	50.66
5. Culture and language go hand in hand	11.8	47.33
6. Language learning is meaningless without cultural exposure	10.5	42
7. Opportunity for exposure to target culture in the classroom	9	36
8. The process of learning a new language's culture is not an easy one	21.8	87.33

Discussion

Generally, this study assessed the effectiveness as well as the impact of culture among Saudi learners studying English language as their major. The following research questions were explored: How far does the EFL course prepare the participants in this study to communicate in English? And what is the level of EFL learners' awareness on the necessity of integrating the target language culture in the classroom?

The study found that the EFL course used was not sufficient to prepare students for communication in English. Students suggested that the course should include scopes for training the target language culture; likely students saw it necessary to use visual tools in the English classroom and they also saw of importance to update the teaching materials and pedagogy for teaching English in the Saudi context. The findings also showed that teachers are in need for updating to better teaching the language to the students. These findings are supported by the claim of Gao (2006) that teachers should be cognizant of the foreign language culture. Similarly, Wang (2008), reported that instructors of foreign language are teachers of culture of the foreign language. EFL learners need to be familiarized with a target language's cultural context in order to understand what it means to be an EFL student, and this needs a great deal of effort and clarity. Kiss and Weninger, (2017) claimed that obtaining visual tools boosted the comprehension, Dai (2011) reported that students' capacity to learn English increased due to the integration of visuals in the learning process. Such development in the learning ability to learn leads to interest and enjoyment in the language learning.

Furthermore, the study reported contradictory levels of awareness. Students showed the difficulty of grasping the culture of the target language and the importance of being aware of the target language culture while communicating in the target language. On the other hand, less than half of them were aware of the necessity of learning both culture and language in the process of language learning. According to the current findings, culture has a significant impact on communication skills like listening, speaking, and translation because it helps us avoid embarrassing misunderstandings. This result is reinforced by Tomalin (2008), who identifies globalization and the global significance of the English language as the primary reasons for teaching culture as a fifth language ability. Whatever has been said, it is genuine to absorb some basis and fundamentals of the foreign language culture to get an understanding of the language transmitted in different situations. Teachers should emphasize to their students that to know the culture of a foreign language does not mean that they should believe or take them as a model. One should be aware of the cultural difference too and yet respect them. Thus, difficulties in comprehending content due to a lack of adequate cultural background of the target language. The training system needs to be kept in line with those changes where these changes have resulted in many different styles, modes of education, and problems, such as abundance of information, an increased number of students, the lack of skilled teachers, and a distance, which may result from this technological explosion.

Conclusion

The study aimed to reach a clear understanding of the impact of EFL learners on the importance of culture when learning English. It also explored the effect of culture on listening,

speaking, and translation of learners. The study found that culture is something difficult to acquire. This study reported the fact that many EFL learners faced difficulties in communication due to their lack of the foreign language culture in addition to the huge differences between Arab and English culture. Therefore, teachers of ELT should take into consideration the importance of integrating culture in their language classroom.

Teaching second and foreign languages may be made more effective when we understand the link between cultural context and language use. Language and culture are intertwined and should be taught that way, as the two processes are mutually reinforcing. Teachers should strive to make their language training as engaging and relevant as possible, as motivation is extremely important while learning a second or foreign language. For effective cross-cultural communication in today's globalized world, students need to develop their intercultural competence in ELT courses based on cultural context.

Recommendations

Several studies observed raising students' cultural awareness while studying ELT (Cakir, 2006; Jin-feng, 2007; Vrbová, 2006). There are a variety of ideas on how to help students gain an understanding of other cultures in the classroom. Cakir (2006) affirmed the importance of exposing students to cultural differences so they can develop cultural awareness while developing their skills in the foreign language. It has been observed that literature and theater can help students become more aware of other people's points of view. Devices such as role play can be used for students to express themselves creatively and imaginatively in their language use. Authentic aids from English-speaking nations are always appreciated in role plays since they are based on real-life events. Drama may also be used to engage pupils in cultural misperceptions firsthand. In order for students to fully grasp the differences and similarities between the target language and their native tongue, a discussion of popular proverbs might be beneficial.

Limitations

The study was carried out with a small number of participants, and this is the limitation that needs to be considered in future studies. The other limitation is the non-consideration of gender as a variable in this study.

Availability of data and materials

 All data and information recorded or analyzed throughout this study are included in this paper.

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no relevant financial or non-financial interests to declare.

Funding

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval were not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements.

Consent statement

Written informed consent from the [patients/ participants OR patients/participants'

legal guardian/next of kin] was not required to participate in this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

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