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**Challenges Facing EFL Students in Comprehending the Content
Of the Module of Culture of the Language**

A Case Study of First Year LMD Students of English At
Mohamed Khider University - Biskra

**A Thesis Submitted as a Partial Requirement for the Fulfillment Master's Degree in
Sciences of Language**

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Dedication

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

I dedicate this modest work to my dear parents

My father who's love and blessings means the world to me. To the man who raised me to be the woman I am today, I would like to let him know that my love for him is unconditional, he taught me to be responsible, caring and especially sincere and honest.

My dad you are the man of principles and morals I would like to salute you for that.

I pray to Allah to heal you and protect you for me.

To my Mom (I honestly cannot find the words but I will try)

She embraced me and the whole family with such kindness and love.

To her genuine spirit, to her loving soul, to her beautiful heart.

Mother your essence is hard to find in this fake world thank you for being who you are.

I pray to Allah to protect you for me

I would like to thank my milestones my two brothers Djaber & Zaha

The love I have for you is granted.

To all members of Tabbi Aneni family & my dear aunts (Benzira)

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Abstract

Culture of the language is an important module when it comes to foreign language learning, and there are various challenges that face students when they deal with this module. This research is an attempt to investigate the main challenges that face students in understanding the module of culture of the language on first year LMD students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. This research used two research tools, a questionnaire administered to students and a questionnaire administered to teachers. The findings of this research suggested that the challenges faced by students when dealing with foreign language culture are mainly derived from their lack of background information, the complexity of the module itself, lack of vocabulary, the large amount of information during the session, and their poor memorization capacity. In addition to that, classroom procedures can also be challenging to students, particularly overcrowded classes, the teachers' explaining methods, and the timing of the courses. The outcomes of this research suggest various strategies that both teachers and students can rely on in order to enhance students' cultural competency and reduce the challenges faced by them while dealing with such module.

List of Abbreviations

FCA : Foreign cultural approach

MA : Multicultural approach

FL: Foreign Language

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

TV: Television

OHP: Overhead Projector

LMD: License Master Doctorate

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General Introduction

Foreign language researchers always emphasized on the importance of culture in foreign language classes. In addition they have been debating to illustrate its role as a major factor interrelated to the four skills of the language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

The process of teaching and learning foreign language cannot be separated from teaching culture. In other words, one element entails the other. Furthermore, there is a major importance of learning culture of the target language on developing EFL learners' cultural awareness. However, the intention of this research is to find out the challenges facing EFL students in enhancing their cultural competency at the division of English of Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, and to examine to which extent these challenges reflects in their cultural competency.

The process of teaching and learning foreign languages cannot be separated from teaching culture. In other words, one element entails the other. Thus, many scholars emphasize on the importance of learning the culture of the target language and developing the EFL learners' awareness of its culture. However, in the process of learning the module of culture, both teachers and learners face many challenges. This study is an attempt to determine the difficulties that hinder the process of learning culture.

1. Statement of the problem

The need of mastering English language created a huge demand for the improvement on the teaching of the module culture of language. However, those improvements face many challenges, EFL learners especially the case of first year students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra experience difficulties in comprehending the module of culture of the language. Most of the students believe that learning English has nothing to do with

learning its culture. Many scholars investigated the relationship between learning English and knowing about its literature and history but our research will focus on revealing the reasons why students fail to understand this module.

2. Significance of the study

Our research contributes to promote first year students of English at Mohamed Khider Biskra University to be culturally aware of the target language, And all so it helps to decode the variety of uses concerning the comprehension of the module of culture of the language.

Finely our research will shed light on the essentiality of the target culture in acquiring the language.

3. Aim of the study

This study aims to:

- Determine the difficulties that first year students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra experience in learning cultural issues of English.
- Under seek the problems that teachers of culture face during presenting the module.
- Enabling first year students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra to overcome the obstacles that hinder their perception of the module.

4. Research Question

- Why do first year students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra get poor scores in the module of culture of the language?
- What are the problems that EFL students face in comprehending the information taught in the module of culture among first year classes?

5. Hypotheses

We hypothesize that

- If first year students of the English division are unable to respond positively to the content of the module of the Culture, this may be due to the challenges they face in their learning process.

6. Methodology

This research will be conducted through a questionnaire that will be administered to a sample selected randomly, composed of twenty five first year LMD students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. Another an interview will be also administered to two teachers who will be of great benefit for our research due to their great experience dealing with the module of culture of the language.

7. Limitation of the study

This study will be concerned only with foreign language anxiety. In addition, our study is limited to the first year students at the division of English language at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra

8. Structure of dissertation

Chapter one:

Teaching culture

Chapter two:

Discussion analysis

Chapter One : Teaching culture

Introduction

Culture is considered as a complex concept to deal with especially in EFL Learning; lately scholars introduced the issue of teaching foreign languages with their cultures. This chapter is focusing on the challenges faced by students as well as teachers in teaching the course of culture; this study investigates the several problems and constrains hindering the understanding of the content presented in the course of culture of the language. First the chapter presented an overview about the concept of culture its definition and characteristics, to help raise the students' awareness and demonstrate the importance of having a cultural knowledge in language learning.

1. The Concept of Culture

The answer to the question “what is culture?” cannot be brief or concise; due to the large topics and the huge amount of ideas that come to mind. Culture is not neither a scientific measurable object, nor a mathematic equation that could be proved or denied. It is so much more than that, it is “a moral understanding and the essence that makes life generates and pushes people to function” or as Kim Ann Zimmermann stated” Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts». Generally speaking culture shapes the society, The Center for Advance Research on Language Acquisition defines culture as “shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization, thus, it can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group. Culture in general may be divided into two main groups: material culture that includes all the concrete things that were created by man, such as houses, clothes, instruments etc. and non-material culture which is the quality concerning human mind,

concepts, philosophy, religion etc”. Damen, L. (1987) “Culture: learned and shared human patterns or models for living; day- to-day living patterns, these patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction, culture is mankind's primary adaptive mechanism” (p. 367). Culture is very related to the community; it gives a sense to everyday’ activities and habits.

1 .1 The Anthropological Definition of Culture

The nature of culture is complicated that is why it cannot be defined easily. Thus, scholars gave various definitions from different perspectives. Rymond Williams (1976:87, cited in Thanasoulas, 2001) claims that “Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in English language”. Anthropologists as: Kroeber and Kluckholm (1963), presume that; “Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in English language”. In anthropology there is a divergence of opinions about how culture is perceived. Yet; this diversification does not mean that there is a one valid definition, because each scholar views it from a different angle. Geertz (1973:89) defines culture as “a historical transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life”. Moreover; ethnographers view culture as a communicative aspect where individuals convey messages by respecting a set of rules that are common to a given speech community these rules must be recognized to avoid breakdown of communication and maintain nice rapport in the same society. According to Hymes (1974:51) “culture is understood as the speech community: a group sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech”. In other words, we cannot

say that there is a specific definition of culture because there are many fields of enquiry and each one of those fields has its own view when it comes to the aspect of culture, such as human societies, systems, groups, activities and behaviors. Authors conceive that culture is a means of expressing an idea in a variety of ways.

1.2 The Socio-cultural View of Culture

According to sociologists, culture is a social pattern which is learned and shared within a given society, and it is socially transmitted from one generation to another. Thus; culture is perceived as a social heritage that individuals are exposed to from their social group. According to Harton & Hunt (1984:545) “culture is a system of behaviors shared by members of society”. This citation refers to culture as a set of behaviors that members of one society accumulate from the surrounding environment. In another definition, Taylor (1871:1) states that “culture...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”, in other words, culture is considered complex in its nature and it has different components which are: knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, custom, habits, history and folklore.

Another definition which is stated by Durnati (1997), consider culture as something both learned and transmitted, which means that culture is transmitted from one generation to another through human action, basically in the form of face to face interaction and linguistic communication. In a similar view, Bennett (1968) defines culture as the mirror that reflects the social behavior. That means, it is the reflection of the institutions, works of art,

architecture, music and literature of a certain particular society. So, we can say that this view of Bennet is based on the assumption that culture is the ability to communicate successfully and correctly using the rules that the individuals of a group must know to achieve and maintain relationships with people of their society.

1.3. Definition of Culture in Foreign Language Teaching

In recent years, teaching a foreign language requires teaching its culture. As Brown (2007) states “the acquisition of a second language...is also the acquisition of a second culture”, he also stated that the majority of students in foreign language learn the foreign language without being exposed at least with its cultural norms and patterns of that speech community (Brown 2007). So, a foreign language cannot be taught without paying importance in teaching its cultural aspects also, because there is an interrelated relationship between language and culture.

2. Aspects of Culture

The cultural aspects box appears and it is varied in everyday life; it has two main categories: abstract and concrete. According to *The National Standards* for FLL (cited in Thu, 2011) culture is usually seen as behaviors, philosophical perspectives, and both tangible and intangible products of society. The interaction between them can be clarified according to the following figure; which consists of a triangulation of three pillars. In which practices and products are considered as concrete aspects, and perspectives are categorized as abstract aspects.

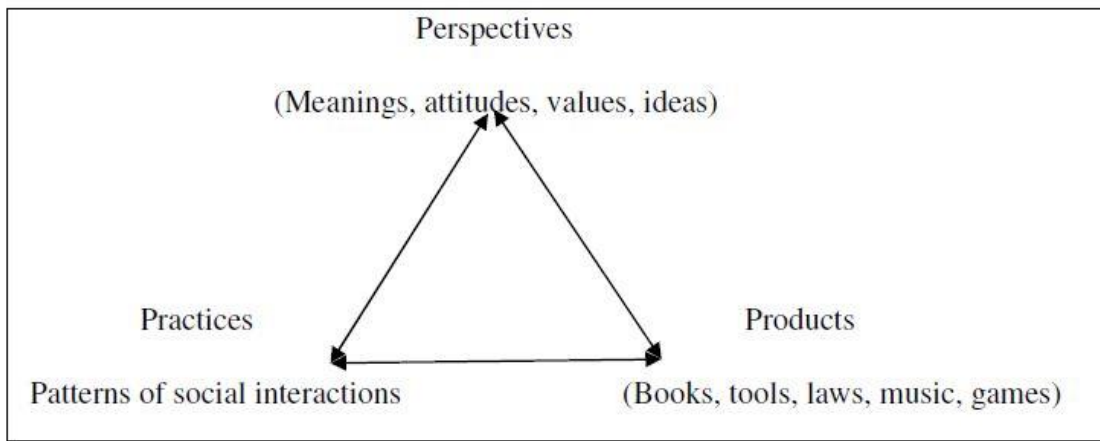


Figure 1.1. What culture constitutes? “Adapted from National Standard for FLL” by H.T. Thu, 2011, Teaching Culture in EFL/ESL Classrooms, Retrieved from ERIC database.

2.1. Material Aspects

The material aspects of culture are broadly used, and they are unfavorable for their concrete sense. Some of those aspects are universal but they vary from one community to another such as music and traditions. They were defined by Kendall (2010, p.43) as “Material aspects consist of physical tangible creations that members of a society make, use and share”. Therefore, we conclude that material aspects are created by humans.

2.2. Non-Material Aspects

Differently from the material aspects of culture, the non-material ones are defined by Dictionary.com as “The aggregated of values, mores, norms, etc., of a society; the ideational of a structure that provides values and meanings by which it functions”. Hence, we understand that those abstract aspects are viewed by the behavior of a specific community: these abstract aspects outline the human way of dealing, behaving, thinking and so on.

In the same context, another definition by Kendall (2010, p.43) states that “Non-material culture consists of the abstract or intangible human creations of society that influence people’ behavior”. Consequently, non-material aspects of culture do not have a similarity with

the material ones. Somewhat, they are not universal but they depend on the nationality, the race, or the religion of the speech community. Therefore, to set a standard definition of culture is impossible, because of the richness of the aspects of culture which tackles the humanistic way of life.

3. The Relationship between Language and Culture:

The attention of many scholars has been attracted by the relationship between language and culture in various domains like anthropology, psychology, sociology, etc. Their main interest was in questioning whether and how the cultural factors influence language and communication. Edward Sapir (1920) stated that “language can be seen as a way to describe and represent human experience and understanding of the world”, according to this statement, he conducted that language and culture of the speech community cannot be analyzed in isolation. A similar definition was given by Kluckhonn (1944) “human culture without human language is unthinkable”. In other words; language is a mean for culture transmission from one generation to another in order to preserve their constructions and achievements. The development of such kind of relation was built due to the variety of many research studies; and furthermore, it has led to form new improved theories upon such relation.

4. The History of Teaching Culture

The matter of teaching culture stems around the first two decades of the twentieth century. The British Council modern studies was the first to highlight the need for teaching culture and draw attention to the need to be aware about the cultural knowledge of specific

country and its community. Before that, many teachers stressed on teaching aspects like history, art, literature of the target culture, and emphasized on changing from studying anthropology to the study of culture. The importance of including cultural components as a module into EFL curriculum has been the matter of discussion by many researchers and scholars, this idea was supported by Allen (1985) who states that: "...prior to the 1960s, the connection between languages and culture were carefully drawn". In addition, one of the biggest steps was done by Nelson Brooks (1960), he stressed on the importance of teaching culture in parallel with teaching target language. He argues that culture is more representative, typical, and central than any other language element. He also stated that culture and language are inseparable; because the aspects of language are interrelated with the elements of culture; in other words language serves as a carrier of culture. In another context; Byram et al (1994) added that language is a tool which is used in social situations and exchanges; thus, there are cultural factors that affect how learners interpret and respond to the input of the foreign language which they are exposed to, as well as their attitudes, feelings and motivation towards that foreign language.

5. Approaches of Teaching Culture

According to Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt in the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2010), the most familiar approaches for teaching culture are six:

5.1. The Foreign Cultural Approach

The focus of this approach is on the culture of the country or countries where the target language is spoken, it is based on the concept of a single culture and focuses more on the target culture. That is to say, Foreign Cultural Approach (FCA) does not deal neither with the learners' own country nor the relation between the target language's countries and the learners' country. In this approach the target language is taught only as if it were the first language for the population. The aim here is to develop the cultural and communicative competence of the learners in order to master that target language. This approach was dominant until the 80's and it was criticized because it has not taken comparison between cultures in consideration.

5.2. The Intercultural Approach

The focus of this approach is on the idea that the best way to learn culture is when comparing between the target language and the learners' own culture. The aim of this approach is to develop intercultural and communicative competence, a competence that permits the learner to function as a mediator between the two cultures. Since the 80's the intercultural perspective greatly influenced the language teaching, because it focuses on the learners understanding of their culture.

5.3. The Multicultural Approach

The focus of this approach is based on the idea that many cultures may co-exist within the same society, thus this approach takes the cultural and linguistic diversity of the target country or countries under higher consideration, as well as the relation between the target countries and learners own. Similarly to the intercultural approach, the aim in this approach is also to develop the learners' mediation competence, but this time in a moderately different level. It is a competence which enables learner's ability to use the target language as a lingua franca, to speak with people who are from a society in which the target language is spoken, but also they belong to another culture (Risager 1998:247). The Multicultural Approach (MA) popularity is increasing.

5.4. Trans Cultural Approach

In order to understand this approach, first we must recognize that cultures nowadays are interwoven by virtue because of widespread migration and tourism, communication systems, globalization...etc. it is also reflected by the fact that many people speak foreign languages as lingua franca. The trans cultural approach; therefore, consider the foreign language as an international language. The aim of this approach is different from the previous approaches; it aims to teach learners to use the foreign language for international communication. Consequently, the argument in this case is that it is not a necessity to link any specific culture with a foreign language.

5.5.The Cognitive Approach

This approach, expects the language learner to acquire competence with the awareness in important way as a necessary requirement to the acquisition of performance skills (Long-Fu, 2001). The cultural orientation of language teaching reflected by the cognitive approach, though, is not as apparent as in the prior approaches; though, it is apparent that the cognitive psychologists in the late 60's, sited great importance on meaningfulness and organization of background knowledge in the learning process (Omaggio, 1983).

5.6.The Communicative Approach

The main idea which this approach is based on is that: in order to learn a language successfully the learner must experience real meaning communications, The involvement of learners in real communications will enhance the use of their natural language acquisition strategies, and this will permit them to learn to use the language. The teaching of the communicative approach also enhance their competence to use foreign language in real-life situations that necessitate communication, the teachers' mission here is to simulate situations that students are likely will encounter in real life situations.

6. Integrating Culture in EFL Classrooms

Teaching or learning a second language does not mean that focusing only on the linguistic code, but also it requires being aware and knowledgeable about the culture of the target language. Hence, Hinkle (1999) stated that " work on culture learning and teaching has been more interested in attitudinal issues relating to learners' development of tolerance and understanding of other cultures as well as in the degree to which the study of other cultures

enhances cultural self- awareness" (p.28). Therefore, in the process of teaching culture, there were different strategies used in order to integrate and impart the knowledge of the target language's culture in EFL classrooms.

6.1.The Use of Authentic Materials

As far as the technological revolution has been developed, the progress of education has been evolved as well. Recently, the authentic materials have been considered as standard universal in classrooms as has been argued by Harmer (2007) " If you talk into some classrooms around the world, you will see a fixed data projectors, white boards (IWBs), built in the speakers for audio material that is delivered directly from a computer hard disk" (p.175). Thus, with the different learning styles that authentic materials provide, learners cope the demands and vary in their learning styles from being visual, audio-visual, and tactile learners.

Moreover, the need of using the authentic materials should not be restricted inside the classrooms, but rather outside it. Accordingly, Harmer (2007) presented a materials' hierarchy that should be found in any natural ordinary learning process which includes: language laboratories, computers, videos, power point; OHP's, casete records; and a photocopier; and at least pen, paper, and black-board. In addition, Yuganthar (2014) stated that teachers should expose their students to authentic materials in order to master FL by encouraging them to cable and satellite TV radio, and some available books and magazines in the process of teaching.

6.2. The Use of Cultural Materials

Yang (2006) stated that Wallas "Identifies the function of literature which provides enjoyment, a way of thinking, imagination, and vicarious learning" (p.970). Thus, implicitly, in teaching-learning process, the teaching of culture paves the way to teach the cultural

materials as one of its representatives; as a matter of fact, the cultural materials must be well exploited in the classrooms in order to increase student's interest and motivation to learn the target language effectively.

6.3. The Use of Folklore

According to Cholson and Sumph (2005) folklore is considered as a component of literature which facilitates the task of learning by involving students' voice, personal culture, and their knowledge of the culture in the process of teaching when it is required. Therefore, it provides an enjoyable lecture for the students; it boosts their morale, and motivates them by having fun.

6.4. Role-play

As long as learning strategies has been shifted to learner-centered approaches, it has been preferable to involve students in the task of performing the lessons for enhancing their critical thinking rather than being just spoon feeders. According to Lee (1979) "Role playing is an aspect of stimulation. A whole situation is stimulated in the classroom, and the participants adopt roles which belong to it" (p.147). Hence, role playing helps students in living the experience as native speakers use their language according to different contexts, different beliefs, and different norms.

Integrating culture in EFL classrooms is an important aspect in learning the target language. In order to convey a comprehensible input, the teaching methods vary depending on the different topics being tackled inside the classrooms. So that, the authentic materials are used in various fields of study, but the task of teaching culture in EFL classrooms is a completely different task.

7. The Importance of Culture in EFL Learning:

Language and culture are inseparable; therefore, teaching a foreign language culture is as much important as teaching the foreign language itself. Because teaching a foreign

language without teaching its culture is considered as an incomplete process. Peck (1998: 1) states that “without the study of culture, foreign language instruction is inaccurate and incomplete”, in addition (Bennett, Bennett and Allen, 2003: 237) stated that “The person who learns a language without learning its culture risks becoming a fluent fool”.

Similarly, Politzer (1959, cited in Brooks, 1960:85-86) points out:

As a language teachers we must be interested in the study of culture and because we necessarily want to teach the culture of other country, but because we have to teach it. If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches to the wrong meaning ; for unless he is warned, unless receives cultural instructions, he will associate American concepts or objects with the foreign symbols.

As a result, teaching culture is a tool to enable learners to increase their knowledge about the target culture, people’s way of life, beliefs, and habits. In other words, foreign language teachers should be foreigners too, in order to enrich learners’ cultural competence. Kramsch (1993, p.01) asserts that:

Culture in language learning is not an expandable fifth skill, take on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-own communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them.

Therefore, learning a foreign language is not necessarily learning its four skills only, but also covering and learning its culture. That is because culture is an essential element to have successful communication in foreign context. As a result, learning culture increases learners’ communicative competence in that foreign language.

8. The Challenges Faced By Teachers in Teaching the Module of Culture of the Language

Flanegin and Rudd (2000) argue that the English language is required on an international level, and it is practically necessary for all professions. Considering that English is a lingua franca and its popularity is increasing these last decades due to economical and political reasons, the teaching process of English also emerged. Flanegin and Rudd (2000) believe that EFL Learners must know about the target culture to better their communicative skills, and place themselves in the world. They also pointed out that the process of teaching and learning English is not easy as it seems, it happens that teachers face several challenges among EFL classes especially when dealing with cultural contents. Maribel Blasco, and Mette Zolner (2009) state “Teaching cultural skills explores several challenges depending on the context in which the teaching takes place such as, the globalization of labor markets and trade; immigration, which has led to increased awareness of the need for cultural skills; and the internationalization of higher education, which has made classrooms more multicultural than ever before”. Another challenge faces EFL’s is their thoughts about cultural contents, they believe that they cannot master all concepts of the target culture. Zolner added also another challenge which is the amount of exposure to the target culture; he believes that the cultural input transmitted to EFL Learners inside classroom is not enough for them to achieve full mastery over the target culture. He added also that students must make more efforts outside the classroom in order to construct an overall idea about target culture and show interest in learning it. Piage (1993, P.3) wrote:

The inclusion of culture in language teaching remains an unresolved issue for the following reasons; first of all, culture is complex and illusive incorporating as it does elements such as attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, perceptions, ways of thinking, and values. These elements cannot be included in language programs in the linear and objective instructional formats that have traditionally been employed. Second, many teachers say that culture is not language. So, why should we have to deal with its complexities, it takes away from the needed focus of language and communication. And third, any discussion of cultural differences could cause learners to change their own ways of thinking and behaving, in other words; culture takes the learning experience far beyond the realm of comfort.

8.1. Writing Difficulties

Students often face difficulties when it comes to producing written pieces. Writing is an important skill in language learning especially in the academic context, where students have to write assignments, essays and reports. Steinman (2009, p.80) claims that “it is a challenge for non-native speakers to write in English for academic purposes as not only must they deal with the obvious linguistic and technical issues such as syntax, vocabulary, and format, but they must also become familiar with Western notions of academic rhetoric”. It is evident that EFL Learners consider that writing is the hardest task in foreign languages; it is full of obstacles and challenges for example: run on sentences, mother tongue interference and punctuation in addition to many other kinds of difficulties such as grammar, vocabulary and mother tongue interference. Mason, Graham & Harris (2011) believe that Students with writing difficulties often struggle when using different skills. Scholars believe that the most difficult part about writing is grammar, Howard Sargeant (2007, P.4) wrote “Learning grammar is like learning to drive, one can learn all of the theory, rules and regulations, but they will not be good at it unless they practice it, and it starts to become second nature to them. Grammar is extremely important, so incorrect use of grammar can confuse the person spoken to and even change the meaning of what is being communicated”. Grammar is

difficult to learn and student with poor grammar knowledge suffer a lot in the written assignments.

8.2. Cultural Differences

Cultures differ from nation to another across the world. People may have such an understanding and acceptance of other's culture as well as they may reject certain habits or traits about cultural components of foreigners, and that leads to conflicts in the relations between these two culturally different people. Krumsch (1993) indicated that the study of cross cultural differences, scholars do not look at individuals but they look at a comparison of one ethnic group against others. Hence, they look for the differences among people. It is the smallest details of the daily life that create such diversifications between cultures, for example greetings, apologizing, starting a conversation with a stranger and so on.

Scholars consider these differences as a hinder for EFL Learners when they face such peculiarities, it may become an obstacle for them to adopt these differences.

Conclusion

This chapter serves as a cultural awareness to EFL Learners. It discussed different aspects such as the multiple definitions of the term culture, and how it is perceived by different scholars and in different disciplines. Furthermore; the chapter discussed many titles about teaching culture such as the concept of culture in the discipline of anthropology also in sociology, as well as the definition of culture in second language learning/teaching. The chapter contains also the importance of teaching culture, and the different approaches to teaching culture as well as some of the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English along with its culture among EFL classes. The main aim of this chapter is to raise EFL cultural knowledge, besides emphasizing on the importance of knowing about the Target Culture when learning a foreign language.

Chapter two: Discussion analysis

Introduction

This chapter attempts to investigate the challenges that EFL students face in comprehending the module of Culture. The research instruments used to proof the earlier stated hypothesis are: the questionnaire for first year LMD students and an Interview for the teachers of the English language Division at Mohamed Khider University Biskra. Participant's opinions are relevant and of a great help to the investigation. The purpose of students' questionnaire is to know their attitude toward the module of culture and what are the challenges that make the process of learning the module difficult. Teachers' interview intendeds to discover their opinion about challenges that EFL students face while studying the English culture module, what are the procedures and solutions that help to overcome those difficulties.

This chapter will cover two parts which are "Students' questionnaires" and "Teachers' interview".

Description of Research Tools

Part one: Students' Questionnaire is concerned with (first piloting the questionnaire and administration of questionnaire/second data analysis).

First: Piloting the questionnaire is where the researcher tests the validity of the questions presented by a random group of the chosen sample, and that happens before submitting the final draft to the case study.

The administration of the questionnaire involves a description of the questionnaire and its types, in addition to more details and explanation concerning the analysis of the results.

Second: a full description of the analysis of the results obtained.

Part two: Teachers' interview which contains the following elements.

- Type of the interview.
- Aim of the interview.
- Description of the interview.
- Analysis of the interview (analysis of teachers' responses).

3.1- Methodology

3.1.1 Approach

The methodology used in this dissertation is the descriptive approach. Since it is considered as a suitable method for human sciences researches, the description and results of the collected data will be valid. This research is qualitative and Quantitative all so because it is the most appropriate to describe the two research tools that are used in our study.

In addition we will use the questionnaire and the interviews to cater for both theoretical and applied research.

3.1.2 Population and Sampling

3.1.2.1 Population

The case study of this dissertation is first year LMD students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. There are (554) students as the total number of the population from which the sample was chosen randomly. The main reason for choosing this population is that students of first year are supposed to know the challenges that hinder their process of learning the culture module.

Sample: In this study we have dealt with two samples (students' sample and teachers' sample).

3.1.2.2 Students' Sample

This sample is selected randomly; it is the case of First Year LMD Students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. We chose only twenty five (25) students from the total number of the population. The choice of the sample was random mainly because we want to have different opinions and perspectives from the case study.

3.1.2.3 Teachers' Sample

The sample of the teachers consisted of two teachers who have dealt with the course of culture of the language. Due to the long experience of these honoured teachers, their information and suggestions will be of a high value.

3.1.2.4 Teachers' Interview

The teachers' interview is designed to collect deeper insights from the specialized teachers on the subject that is under investigation. This interview is a structured interview; it was handed to two teachers from the department of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. It contained two parts (background information and seven other questions concerning the subject matter). The first three questions are related to personal information. They were about the teachers' gender, educational level, and how many years they have been teaching English. The other seven questions were related to our subject under investigation. In Q4 the teachers were asked about how can students be culturally competent. In Q5 they were asked about the skills that learners need to master to be culturally competent. In Q6 the teachers were kindly asked whether the time allocated for teaching culture is sufficient to cover most of the cultural aspects. Q7 was about the most important topics that should be included in the syllabus of culture. In Q8 teachers were asked about the challenges they face while teaching the culture and Q9 was about what are those challenges. Finally, in Q10

teachers according to their experience, they were asked to suggest solution to overcome the challenges.

3.1.2.5 Students' Questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather data for this research and to have an idea about students' perceptions about the subject. The questionnaire is semi-structured (both closed ended and open-ended questions), it contained two sections:

Section One: Students' Background Information

The task of student in this section is to specify their gender (Q1), their age (Q2), their choice of studying English (Q3), their level in English (Q4), and whether they enjoy studying English (Q5).

Section Two: Teaching Culture

In this part of the questionnaire students were asked to answer a series of questions about the module of culture. (Q1) is whether they find studying the culture module motivating,(Q2) is whether they think that studying the module is important or not,(Q3-Q4) their opinion about the cultural diversity and whether it motivates them to learn more or improves their level,(Q5) the most effective method to study culture,(Q6) the topics they like to be included (Q7) the way they acquire cultural knowledge,(Q8) the reason of their classroom participation (Q9) learning the culture helps them in what exactly,(Q10) whether the teachers' teaching methods sufficient to learn about the module and justifying the answer. Finally, (Q11) the problems they face in studying the module.

3.1.3 Data Analysis procedures

3.2.1 Students' Questionnaire Data Analysis

Section One: General Information

Q1: Gender

Gender	Respondent	Percentage
Female	20	80%
Male	05	20%
Total	25	100%

Table 01 : Students' gender

From the previous chart, one conclude that the majority of the sample are females with percentage of 80% ;whereas males respondents represent 20%.The result proves that females like to study English more than males.

Q2: Age

Age	Respondents	Percentage
19-21	15	60%
22-24	7	28%
25-27	3	12%
Total	25	100%

Table 02: Students' age

The table shows that most of the sample respondents are in the age of 19 to 21 with percentage of 60%.Then 28% of the students are between 23 to 25.The smallest percentage of the sample 12% went to the students who are 25 to 27.

Q3: Choice of studying English

Choice	Respondents	Percentage
Personal	25	100%
Imposed	0	00%
Total	25	100%

Table 3: Students' choice of studying English

For this question the results indicate that 100% of students opted for personal choice.

This means that they were sure about their choices, also they like English.

Q4: Student's level of English

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Good	12	48%
Average	13	52%
Bad	00	00%
Total	25	100%

Table 4: Students' level of English

The table above shows that the majority of students have an average level of English with percentage of 52%, the rest of the sample 48% said that their level is good. No one of the respondents said that their level is bad.

Q5: Do you enjoy studying English?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	25	100%
No	0	0%
Total	25	100%

Table.5: Students' attitude towards studying English.

According to the results in the figure and with the percentage of 100% all students said that they enjoy studying English module, which makes them motivated more and helps in improving themselves.

Section Two: Culture

Q1: Is studying the English culture motivating?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	17	68%
No	08	32%
Total	25	100%

Table06: Students' attitude toward studying English Culture

The results in the table show that the majority of students have a positive attitude toward studying English culture with percentage of 68%.The rest (32%) of students think said that they do not like studying the English culture module.

Q2: How do you find learning Culture when learning English?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Very Important	09	36%
Important	13	52%
Not important	00	00%
I have no idea	03	12%
Total	25	100%

Table 07: Students' attitude toward learning culture when learning English

Results in the table above reveal that, 52% of students find learning culture module when learning English is important. Then 36% of the respondents said that it's very important, 12% said they have no idea; whereas no one said that learning culture is not important.

Q3: Does the diversity of cultural topics motivate you?

Choice	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	19	76%
No	06	24%
Total	25	100%

Table8: Diversity of cultural topics

Most of the students believe that the diversity of cultural topics in English language motivates them to learn more with percentage of 76%.Whereas, 24% were against the idea.

Q4: Does knowing foreign cultures improve your English?

Choice	Respondents	Percentage
Agree	20	80%
Disagree	05	20%
Total	25	100%

Table09: Knowing foreign cultures improves your English

The figure above indicates that the majority of students (80%) say that knowing foreign cultures improves their English learning, and 20% of the respondents do not agree with the idea.

Q5: The most effective method to study culture

Choices	Respondents	Percentage
Handouts lectures	3	12%
Discussing cultural similarities and differences	1	4%
Making research about cultural issues	6	24%
Role plays	4	16%
Videotaping and recordings of native speakers	3	12%
Dealing with literature and cultural authentic products	8	32%
Total	25	100%

Table 10: The most Effective method to study culture

This table indicates that most of the sample respondents think that dealing with literature and cultural authentic problems is the most effective method to study culture module, their second choice is making research about cultural issues with 24%, then role plays come in third place with percentage of 16%.Videotaping and recordings of native speakers and handouts lectures have got the same results (12%).Finally, comes discussing cultural similarities and differences with the lowest percentage with only 3 %.

Q6.Cultural Topics you like to be included?

Choices	Respondents	Percentage
Attitudes, beliefs, thoughts and religion of the target country	5	20%
History and civilization	5	20%
Social Life	8	32%
Daily routines and etiquette	1	4%
Traditions ,Customs and festivals	6	24%
Total	25	100%

Table 11: Cultural topics students like to be included

As it appears in the table below 32% of the respondents think that the important topic that should be included in their programme is Social life with percentage of 32%, the second percentage (24%) is for traditions and customs. Attitudes and beliefs get 20% as well as history and civilization. The daily routines take the lowest percentage with only 4%.

Q8.How do you acquire your cultural knowledge?

Choices	Respondents	Percentage
Taking cultural courses	11	44%
Internet and social Media	14	56%
Others	00	0%
Total	25	100%

Table 12: How students acquire cultural knowledge

The above table shows that the increased proportion went to the option of internet and social media with percentage of 56%, and 44% said they acquire their cultural knowledge through taking cultural courses.

Q8: what is the reason of your classroom participation?

Choices	Respondents	Percentage
Interested about the topic	10	40%
Have previous knowledge of the topic	15	60%
Total	25	100%

Table13: Students’ reason of classroom participation

Result in the table shows that 44 % of students’ reason of participation is because they are interested about the module, and 66% of them participate because they have previous knowledge about the topic.

Q09: Knowing the English culture helps in what?

Choices	Respondents	Percentage
Studies	8	32%
Social life	10	40%
Work and travel	7	28%
Total	25	100%

Table14: How knowing the English culture helps students

Results in the table above reveal that 40% of students say that knowing the English culture helps them in their social life, 32% of them say it helps them in their studies, and 28% went for those who say that it is useful for their work or traveling.

Q10: Are the teaching method sufficient to learn about the module? Why?

Choices	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	56%
NO	11	44%
Total	25	100%

Table 15: Student’s attitude about the teaching Methods

The figure above shows a result where the increased percentage 56% went for yes choice, which means that students find the methods used by teachers useful and sufficient, and 44% say the opposite and they gave many reasons.

Why?

Students justified their answer “NO” with many reasons such us the need for more information about the topics, and there are a lot of information but time is not sufficient, also they cannot understand the teacher and his explanation, In addition to that, students said that it is difficult to know about the culture of the foreign language. Moreover, the students said that they need for more videos and audios; finally, they stated that the information in handouts are difficult to understand and teachers’ method is not effective.

Q11.What are the problems that you face in studying the culture module?

Students’ answers about this questions were various, some of them said that there are a lot of information and details (dates, events....) so they cannot memorize everything, others said that they have no background or information about the foreign culture and the culture module is complicated and has a lot of information. Also, they stated that teachers use difficult vocabulary in the handouts and time delivered to the module is not sufficient. In addition, they claimed that it is difficult to understand and memorize and that exam questions

are really difficult so they cannot get good marks. Because of the methods used by teachers, students face lack of comprehension, and they find many difficulties.

3.2.1 Teachers' Interview Data Analysis

Analysis of the interview

Topics	Interviewee A	Interviewee B	Notes
1- The interviewees gender	Male	Male	The majority of teachers which handles the module of culture of the language to 1 st year LMD students at the university of Biskra are males
2- Interviewees' degree	I have a PHD degree	I have a Magister degree	We notice that both teachers have different degrees
3- The interviewees experience in teaching English	I have been teaching English for 22 years	I have been teaching English for 6 years	The question is about teachers' experience in teaching English. Both teacher
4- Interviewees' suggestions on how students can be culturally competent	By following some steps: reading authentic materials (AM); by diversifying reading (AM); by listening and watching movies, news , songs , etc, by emailing , chatting and writing to native speakers .	First, by mastering the target language and then introduce basic cultural concepts including civilization.	We notice that that both teachers are familiar with some strategies which can develop students' cultural competence
5- Interviewees' suggestions on what skills are most needed in order to be culturally competent	The four skills are required: culture is listened, read, spoken, watched and written	I think all of them, because studying culture needs different sources like books, documentaries and web content	Both teachers emphasize on the importance of the four skills in order to enhance students' cultural competence, without neglecting any skill

<p>6- Interviewees' opinion about the sufficiency of hours given to the culture of the language module</p>	<p>No, but culture is implicitly taught in other modules (civilization, writing, literary and texts)</p>	<p>Relatively yes, even we need more time for more exposure to cultural content and give the students opportunities to be in touch with the target language and its culture included</p>	<p>Teachers agreed on the insufficiency of time. Consequently, they agreed on the fact that culture can be taught in other modules, and in everyday life.</p>
<p>7- Interviewees' suggestions about which topics should be included in the syllabus of the module of culture of the language</p>	<p>Religious , literature, media-related authentic materials , history, law folklore(mythology)</p>	<p>Everything, mostly basic concepts like elements of culture, events and cultural varieties</p>	<p>Both of them pointed out to the importance of all topics. Hence, we should not neglect any topic which has something to do with culture.</p>
<p>8- Challenges faced by the interviewees while teaching the module of culture of the language</p>	<p>Students' are not interested in knowledge. Students seem to be interested in marks rather in knowledge</p>	<p>Mainly, problems with language comprehension and the lectures' timing.</p>	<p>Both teachers gave various reasons, mainly students' lack of interest, lack of vocabulary, comprehension problems, and the timing of the lectures.</p>
<p>9- Interviewees' thoughts about the factors that hinder students' learning process</p>	<p>Shyness, anxiety, lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence ,lack of commitment, lack of discipline and lack of training</p>	<p>I can say some points: 1- lack of motivation 2- over crowded classes 3- lack of ICT course integration</p>	<p>Different answers were given by teachers when it comes to the factors that hinder students' learning process, such as: psychological factors (shyness, anxiety, lack of self-confidence... etc), lack of materials, and classrooms' atmosphere.</p>

10- Interviewees' suggestions to overcome the previous factors	To brainwash students, to help students change their attitudes and to help them build their self-confidence	The teacher needs to take the lead and try to improvise whenever it is necessary, personally I try to do my best to overcome learning issues by tutoring students and motivate them. Also providing different materials needed for the course	Teachers suggested some strategies such as: build students' self-confidence, motivating students, and try to explain in different ways and emphasize the course to students.
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Table 16: Teachers' answers on the interview

Conclusion

As a conclusion for this chapter, we assume that we have applied the appropriate methodology that is used by most researchers in similar cases of study. We started the chapter by describing the aim and the population of the research. Next; we presented a description of the data collection method and tools. In the second part of this chapter, we have discussed the results obtained from the collected data used in this study. Through the analysis of the data we conducted that; the majority of students chose to study the English language in their own will. More over they are agreed on the fact that culture is a key factor in order to develop their language mastery and their language skills. Consequently, they face many challenges which enhance their ability to clearly comprehend the module of culture of the language, such as: lack of vocabulary, amount of information by session, teachers' explaining methods, and problem in memorizing (dates, events, and names...). Finally through all of these analyses the results indicate that if first year students of the English division are unable to respond positively to the content of the module of the Culture, this may be due to the challenges they face in their learning process. So, the hypothesis of our study is confirmed.

General Conclusion

Our research is based on investigating the challenges which hinder EFL students from comprehending the module of culture of the language. The purpose of this research is to investigate the challenges faced by students as well as the different methods and strategies in teaching culture in an attempt to facilitate and make the module easily taught by teachers and well comprehended by students. In order to confirm our hypotheses, we administered two questionnaires to both first year LMD English students and teachers at the department of English at Biskra University.

We divided our research into two main parts theoretical and practical parts. The first part dealt with culture as a concept and culture in English teaching. We provided an overview about culture by giving various definitions from various fields of knowledge. Then we discussed its aspects, views, the relationship between culture and language, historical overview, and approaches of teaching the module of culture. In addition we mentioned some challenges facing students when dealing with the module of culture of the language.

The second part dealt with the analysis and discussion of the research tools, students' questionnaire and teachers' interview, administered to first year LMD students and teachers at the department of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra.

The current study reveals various outcomes concerning challenges which hinder EFL students from comprehending the module of culture of the language. These challenges can be derived from students' lack of vocabulary, amount of information by session, teachers' explaining methods, problem in memorizing, and over crowd classes. These challenges can be decreased using different methods and techniques; we can suggest some of them as follow: build students' self-confidence, motivating students, try to explain in different

ways and emphasize the course to students, and provide different materials needed for the course.

To conclude, we cannot neglect the huge importance of culture on the development of students' English competency, both students and teachers admit the key role that culture plays in order to enhance students' skills. Therefore, teachers should give higher interest to that matter, and implement numerous methods to teach the module of culture of the language, since the results obtained demonstrate that students are significantly attracted in learning the English language and they are aware of the importance of the culture when it comes to the improvement of their language proficiency. Consequently, we can say that this research succeeded to answer our research questions and confirmed our hypothesis.

Recommendations

To conclude this study which highlights the topic of challenges facing EFL students while dealing with the module culture of language, we state some suggestions and recommendation that will hopefully be useful and helpful for both teachers and students on a long term:

1. Teachers should make students aware on the effect of culture on developing their foreign language competency.
2. Teachers should make their lessons more interesting by choosing attractive topics with easier information, techniques and strategies.
3. Teachers should explain to students that it is beneficial to them to know different cultures.
4. Teachers should also employ visuals in the classroom to encourage students to express themselves and share their opinion in order to promote class collaboration.
5. Students should be aware of the importance of the module of culture of the language and show full commitment.
6. Students should inform teachers about their needs and interests, and difficulties while dealing with the module of culture of the language.
7. Students should not rely only on the knowledge provided by their teachers, but also be autonomous learners and seek for knowledge by themselves.
8. Students should be aware of the purpose of the module of culture of the language in shaping their language competency.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of High Education and Scientific Research

University of Mohamed Khieder Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of Foreign Languages

English Division



STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE :

Dear Students,

This questionnaire is a tool to gather data required for the fulfillment of a master dissertation. Its main objective is to investigate the challenges that EFL students face in comprehending the module of Culture. You are kindly invited to answer the questions below ,please follow the instructions , use a tick (✓) to show your selected answer, and justify the answers where is needed.

Thank you in advance for your corporation

Section One: Background Information:

1- Gender:

a- Male

b- Female

2- Age:

3- Your choice to study English was?

a- Personal

b- Imposed

4- How would you evaluate your level of English?

b- Good

c- Average

d- Bad

5- Do you enjoy learning English?

a- Yes

b- No

Section Two: Culture

1. What is your attitude when facing cultural differences?

a- You accept

b- You respect

c- You reject

2. Do you find studying English culture module motivating?

a- Yes

b- No

3. According to you, learning target culture when learning a foreign language is:

a- Very important

b- Important

c- Not important

d- I have no idea

4. Do you think that the diversity of cultural topics encourages you to learn more?

a- Yes

b- No

5. The knowledge of different foreign cultures improves my English learning:

a- Agree

b- Disagree

6. The most effective method to study Culture is (Classify them from the most important

to the least important) :

a- Handouts Lectures

b- Discussing cultural similarities and differences

c- Making research about cultural issues

d- Role plays

e- Videotaping and recordings of native speakers

f- Dealing with literature and cultural authentic products

7. What topics of the culture programme you would like to be included?

a-Attitudes, beliefs ,thoughts and religion

b- History and civilization of England and America

c- Social Life

d- Daily routines and etiquette

e- Traditions, Customs and festivals

8. How do you acquire your cultural knowledge?

a-Taking cultural courses

b-Through internet and social Media

c-Others

(please, mention them)

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.....

9. Your classroom participation is because you:

a- Are interested about the module

b- Have previous knowledge of the topic

10. Knowing the English culture helps me in:

a-Studies

b-Social life

c-Work and Travel

11. Are the teaching methods used by the teacher sufficient to learn about the module?

a-Yes

b-No

please, say why?

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.....

12. What are the problems that you face in studying the culture module?

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.....
.....

Thank You

Appendix 2

The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of High Education and Scientific Research

University of Mohamed Khieder Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of Foreign Languages

English Division



Teacher's Interview

Dear teachers,

This interview is a part of a research work on the challenges that EFL students face while studying the English culture module, your contribution will be of a great help, you are kindly invited to answer the questions.

Thank you for your time and corporation.

Section One: Background Information

1. Gender:

a-Male

b-Female

2. Age

3. For how many years have you been teaching English?

4. Have you ever been teaching culture module?

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Section Two: Culture Module

1. How can students be culturally competent?

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2. What skills do learners need to master to be culturally competent?

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3. According to you, is the time allocated for teaching culture sufficient to cover most of the cultural aspects?

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4. What are the most important topics that should be included in the programme of culture ?

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5. What are the challenges that you face while teaching the module?

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6. What are the challenges that hinder the learning process of EFL students?

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7. According to your experience, what do you suggest to overcome those challenges?

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Thank you

The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of High Education and Scientific Research

University of Mohamed Khieder Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of Foreign Languages

English Division



Teacher's Interview

Dear teachers,

This interview is a part of a research work on the challenges that EFL students face while studying the English culture module, your contribution will be of a great help, you are kindly invited to answer the questions.

Thank you for your time and corporation.

Section One: Background Information

1. Gender:

a-Male

b-Femle

2. Age

3. For how many years have you been teaching English?

4. Have you ever been teaching culture module?

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Section Two: Culture Module

1. How can students be culturally competent?

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2. What skills do learners need to master to be culturally competent?

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3. According to you, is the time allocated for teaching culture sufficient to cover most of the cultural aspects?

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4.What are the most important topics that should be included in the programme of culture ?

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5. What are the challenges that you face while teaching the module?

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6.What are the challenges that hinder the learning process of EFL students?

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7. According to your experience, what do you suggest to overcome those challenges?

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Thank you

ملخص

إن وحدة ثقافة اللغة الأجنبية المستهدفة تعد محورا هاما في مجال تعلم اللغات. يواجه الطلاب الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تحديات كثيرة في استيعاب المحتوى المطروح في وحدة ثقافة اللغة. هذه الدراسة تعتبر تحقيق لمعرفة أهم الأسباب خلف التحديات التي يواجهها طلاب السنة الأولى ليسانس في قسم الإنجليزية لجامعة محمد خيضر . و لذلك لقد تم استعمال أداتين لجمع المعلومات حول الموضوع المطروح للنقاش ألا و هما :

*استبيان تم توزيعه على طلاب السنة الأولى

*مقابلات مع أساتذة القسم الذين لهم خبرة في تدريس هذه الوحدة.

نتائج هذا البحث أظهرت ان جل التحديات التي يواجهها الطلاب في هذه الوحدة هو افتقارهم للمعلومات الكافية عن المجتمعات الناطقة باللغة الإنجليزية , طبيعة المادة بحد ذاتها المعقدة , ايضا المستوى الضعيف للطلاب من الناحية اللغوية و جمع المصطلحات . ومن الاسباب التي تسبب بعض التحديات للطلاب ايضا هو كمية المعلومات المقدمة في الحصة الواحد وهذا يصعب عملية الحفظ على الطلاب. و علاوة على ذلك طريقة شرح الأساتذة وكذا الأقسام المكتظة تحول أيضا دون مقدرتهم على فهم المادة المطروحة.

من خلال هذا البحث نقترح عدة استراتيجيات ليتم اتباعها من طرف الأساتذة و الطلاب لتحسين و تطوير معارفهم حول ثقافة اللغة المستهدفة و التقليل من التحديات و الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب من ناحية استيعاب الوحدة الثقافية.