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**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
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**Sciences of the Language**

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# **MASTER THESIS**

Submitted and Defended by:  
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**The use of Facebook as social media to develop students’  
intercultural competences**

**The case of third year English Language students at Biskra  
University**

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A dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the requirements of the Master Degree in  
Sciences of Language

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## **Declaration**

I, Hani Faiza, do hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work that has been compiled in my own words. This work has not been falsified or used for other courses and examinations. Nor has another person, university, or institution for another degree or diploma previously, or concurrently, published it, unless explicitly acknowledged (In-text citation and the list of references).

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## Dedication

### *I Dedicate This Work To:*

*My Parents.* The reason of what I become today. Thanks for your great support  
and continuous care;

*My Fiancé.* Your presence in my life relieves a lot of difficulties. I wish you to  
spend a happy life with me;

*My Lovely Sister.* My world is full of smiles, whenever you're with me;

*My Beloved Brothers.* Thank you for all the times we spent together, and for just  
being in my life;

*My Brother-In-Law and My Sister-In-Law.* Your presence in our family, makes  
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### **Abstract**

Intercultural competence appears to be imperative for foreign language learners as it is more likely for them to experience intercultural communication. In light of this, the main concern of the current research is to dive into the scope and nature of the role that online exchanges play through Facebook in enhancing third year students' intercultural awareness. On the grounds of this, it is hypothesized that if third year students of English at the University of Mohammed Kheider of Biskra use Facebook appropriately as a means for the intercultural online exchange, then they will develop their intercultural competence.. Therefore, to collect necessary data for the current study, one main research instrument was The results obtained reveal that the informants under investigation, to a certain extent, have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow them to operate adequately in intercultural communication situations, that they hold the view that the online exchange via Facebook contributes to the promotion of their intercultural competence consequently, they take advantage of using it to know more about other cultures, develop empathy, and then avoiding misunderstandings, conflicts, prejudices, and stereotypes. In a nutshell, it is safe to state that the research hypothesis on which the study at hand is constructed was confirmed. On this account, it is recommended for teachers to give more importance to the teaching of culture and intercultural competence as well as taking into consideration the vital role of integrating technology in education.

**Key words:** *cultural awareness, enhancement, oral competence, English as a Foreign Language.*

## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

**CLT:** Communicative Language teaching

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**FC:** Foreign Culture

**FL:** Foreign Language

**ICC:** Intercultural Communicative Competence

**NC:** Native Culture

**TC:** Target Culture

**TL:** Target Language

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# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

### Background of the Study

The field of foreign language teaching (FLT) has gone through a diversity of phases in parallel with the development of events throughout history. The very first methods to language teaching and learning were merely based on teaching the linguistic aspects of a language such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and so forth. The core aim was to promote learners' linguistic competence (LC) that was introduced by Chomsky; that is, the focus was on teaching the system of the language with the negligence of the contextual factors of language use. Notwithstanding, in the past several decades and with the emergence of communicative language teaching (CLT), the purpose behind FLT has shifted from the emphasis on the linguistic competence to the emphasis on the communicative competence (CC) introduced by Hymes reacting against Chomsky's LC.

As the literature shows, there have been growing appeals for the inclusion of other features far beyond the linguistic in FL classes namely the "cultural component". Cakir (2006) pointed out "...understanding a language involves not only knowledge of grammar, phonology, and lexis but also a certain features and characteristics of the culture." In a similar vein, Sellami (2002) noted "there is a developing consensus that it is important to include culture learning as part of language learning with a primary goal of making students aware of alternative ways of interpreting personal and social experiences" (as cited in Kourova and Modianos, 2013). By all means, in order for communication to be successful, a deep understanding and awareness of culture is required. Lately and as a result of the technological advancements in the present time, the field of FLT has witnessed a shift from teaching CC to teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). This is, basically, because contemporary societies are to communicate and interact

with each other more frequently than ever before. To this end, it is worthwhile to mention that an intercultural awareness (ICA or IA) is highly recommended and required for FL learners to operate and interact adequately across the national borders.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent years, more emphasis has been devoted to heighten learners' ICC. For this purpose to be realized, developing an intercultural awareness, in the first place, seems to be imperative. Considering the fact that EFL learners are not interculturally aware, then they may come to interpret the cultural norms of the others by referring to their own cultural norms in intercultural communication (IC). Consequently, they are likely to encounter the problem of misunderstanding. Probably, one way to enhance intercultural awareness could be through using communication technologies namely social media, more precisely, Facebook. As a matter of fact, insights drawn from scholarly literature show that a wide amount of research has been dedicated to the study of ICC and cultural awareness (CA). Conversely, little research has been devoted to the study of ICA (Demiröz, 2019). Similarly, it is the case in the Algerian context in general and at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra specifically. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to conduct such research to investigate the role of online exchanges via Facebook in improving Algerian EFL learners' ICA.

### **Aims of the study**

This research examines the effectiveness of the Intercultural Approach in enhancing students' positive attitudes towards the target language-culture. The main purpose is to make students develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards the target culture, in a sense of empathy towards cross-cultural differences, understanding and appreciating of one's own culture as well as that of people belonging to different cultural backgrounds.

Hence, students achieve successful communication in the target language and avoid intercultural misunderstanding.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

This research addresses the following questions:

1. Does implementing of the Intercultural Approach foster students attitudes towards the target language-culture?
2. Do Third Year students of English have the sufficient knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow them to function effectively and adequately in intercultural communication situations?
3. Do they benefit from Facebook to know more about other cultures and then avoid misunderstandings?

On the basis of this research questions, we hypothesize that:

The implementation of the Intercultural Approach would foster students' attitudes towards the target language culture.

### **Methodology of the Research**

For the sake of testing the hypothesis and answering the aforementioned research questions, quantitative research methods were adopted as a questionnaire was distributed. This research method was administered to a group of Third Year students of English at the University of Mohammed Kheider of Biskra.

### **Population and sampling**

The study population will be the Third Year Level students (L3) of the English department at the Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The reason behind choosing this

particular level is that they are at a point where they are improving their intercultural competence. Furthermore, university students nowadays are heavily reliant on social media both for academic and personal purposes. Since it is too difficult to conduct an experiment on the whole population for time and effort limitations, the investigation was conducted on a sample of forty (40) participant students who showed interest in being a part of this research and demonstrated their willingness, motivation and commitment in taking part in an online research.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The actual study is limited by the nature of variables under investigation. There is no single way to approach the concept of 'culture'. Additionally, this study is limited by the findings identification and categorization, reflection and analysis, synthesis and evaluation which are not the only but the fundamental factors that might approach culture and oral competence. Similarly, limitations go further to the learners' dispositions, readiness and motivation to respond to the questionnaires. Finally, the implications of Covid-19 on the timing of classes made it difficult to be get in touch with students directly. Therefore, the questionnaire was shared online and gathering the participants' answers was time consuming to a certain extent.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitations suggest how the study will be narrowed in scope by providing descriptions of the population to which generalizations accurately may be made. The research setting and the focus on a single unit limits its generalizability of the findings to other situations. The current study took place within Third Year (L3) students' context in the department of English language at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra and was conducted during the academic year 2021-2022. Thus, the outcomes and the conclusions to



be reached may well not be generalized to other departments where students are facing different conditions.

### **Structure of the Research**

The current research work contains two chapters. The first chapter figures the theoretical part while the second is concerned with the practical part (field-work). The theoretical part is concerned with defining culture and integrating technology in language teaching and learning, more precisely, the use of social media specifically Facebook as a medium for online exchanges. It is also devoted to the development of intercultural awareness in EFL teaching. The second chapter deals with the research methodology and addresses the data analysis and discussion of the results obtained from the questionnaire administered to Third Year students of English at the University of Mohammed Kheider of Biskra.

# **Chapter One:**

# **Theoretical Framework**

## **Introduction**

Though the term “culture” is used today as a scientific concept by most of the social sciences, its most comprehensive definition has been provided in anthropology. Humans are social beings. That is why we live together in societies. Day-to-day we interact with each other and develop social relationships. Every society has a culture, no matter how simple that culture may be. Culture is shared. The members of every society share a common culture which they have to learn. Culture is not inherited it is transmitted from one generation to the other through the vehicle of language. Like societies, cultures differ all over the world. The two concepts society and culture are closely related and sometimes can be used interchangeably. This unit discusses the meaning and definition of society and culture in anthropological perspective. The unit also discusses some of the characteristics and elements of society and culture.

The concept of culture is highly nuanced. Over the course of at least two centuries, the notion of culture went through dramatic transformation and it became difficult to define and to achieve. Core debates revolve around the content of culture, its relationship to society and civilization as well as its function and role in the human condition. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to examine three related questions: What is culture? In what way is culture related to language and society? To what extent is cultural awareness important and how can a person achieve it? In other words, it is an attempt to examine the relationship between the content of culture, its purpose, its association with society and language.

## **Section One: The Concept of Culture**

### **Definition of Culture**

The constant development of a society is related to contact and experience of its members and their sense of discovery. “The growing society is there, yet, it is also made and remade in every individual mind.” (Highmore, 2002) Thus, it is compulsory to start making the mind, first, learning how to cope with the surrounding environment, and its meanings, and then, implementing this experience in observations and meanings that bound the society members. This complex phenomenon is known as ‘culture.’ The significance of culture remains a hotly debated subject among researchers, scholars, and academics despite the wide range of definitions devoted to illustrate its nature. To this end, it is worth mentioning that culture is multidimensional; that is, each research discipline has perceived it from a divergent angle. (Highmore, 2002)

### **Meaning of the Word Culture and Definitions of the Concept**

In an anthropological perspective every society has a culture; it is universal, though in some societies it may be simple, while complex in others. Likewise, every human being is cultured and culture is an attribute of the human life through history. Culture is designed for living. It is the basis of human life. It rests on biology but is not biological. It is human biology such as a developed brain, nimble hands, and freely moving tongue which helped humans to acquire a design for living. What has been acquired as a design for living is not biological. It is a totality of mental, rational and material, technological processes and products. This totality is what anthropologists call culture. . Edward Tylor in “Primitive Culture” (1870) defines culture as “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” (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

Culture is a word that all of us use in our day to day lives. In its daily usage, the term culture refers to polished behavior, personal refinements as classical music; the fine arts and world of philosophy...etc. But anthropologists define and use the term in quite a different way. The term culture is used in a much broader sense by anthropologists as culture includes much more than just the “finer things in life.” There is no differentiation between “cultured” people and “uncultured” people, since all people have culture from the anthropological point of view (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

Hofstede defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another”, which is passed from generation to generation, it is changing all the time because each generation adds something of its own before passing it on. (Nakata, 1980) It is usual that one’s culture is taken for granted and assumed to be correct because it is the only one, or at least the first, to be learned.

Culture is a complex concept, and no single definition of it has achieved consensus in the literature. So, out of the many possible definitions examined, the following definition guides this study: culture is a set of shared and enduring meaning, values, and beliefs that characterize national, ethnic, or other groups and orient their behavior (Mulholland, 1991).

Culture means a whole way of life that exists in every society and every mind. However, culture has been conceptualized in different ways in different academic disciplines. In this section, we tend to provide different subjective conceptualizations of the term, ‘culture’; in addition to the empirical operationalization of each conception to be able to somehow measure, ‘culture’ in experimental fields. (Spencer-Oatey, 2012)

Niklas Luhmann removes culture as the one and only solution to the problem of double contingency. Instead, the problem of ego's selections of behaviour depending on alter's selections, with alter's selections depending in turn on ego's, is solved, if it is solved, by the very fact of a selection which must not be given by culture but can as well be the result of a chance event, a tentative offer, an involuntary gesture. Luhmann therefore asks for a temporal analysis of both the problem and its solution instead of a cultural one. Like Parsons he accepts culture as a token for the distinction between correct and incorrect behavior, or between correct and incorrect "use of themes", as he would have it, and conceives of culture as the "supply of themes" ready for use in communication situations (Baecker, 1997).

Luhmann also treats culture differently from other notions. Yet he seems to have different reasons for doing so. He for instance calls it "one of the worst notions ever invented", having "devastating effects" for religion as well as for art. He takes great care to describe it as a "historical notion", invented in the 18th century, when culture lost the genitive which it had in ancient times. According to him, culture now became an independent sphere of decisively "intellectual" comparisons of human behavior in different times and regions (Baecker, 1997).

Taylor (1870) (as cited in Avruch, 1998) stated 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." Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) (as cited in Adler, 1997) reported that:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their

embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action (Bennett, 2015).

Scholars and researchers went forward in their explanation throwing more light on the term “culture”. Consequently, they divided culture into two types; Big “C” culture and little “c” culture. On the one hand, Peterson (2004) defined Big “C” culture as the culture that includes grand themes “such as geography, architecture, classical music, literature, political issues, society’s norms, legal foundation, core values, history, and cognitive processes.” On the other hand, little “c” culture according to him is the culture that focuses on common or minor themes; it “includes themes such as opinions, viewpoints, preferences or tastes, gestures, body posture, use of space, clothing styles, food, hobbies, popular music, and popular issues...” (Choudhury, 2013).

The above definitions of culture range from very complex to simple ones. However, the common definition is that culture is a set of patterns that shape thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted by symbols, which constitutes the nature of a social group and its achievements in artifacts, traditions, and values.

### **The Development of Culture through History**

In the nineteenth century, the term culture was increasingly employed in different usages; it was employed in three ways: The first view is shown in Mathew Arnolds’ “Culture and Anarchy” (1867) Culture referred to some specific intellectual or artistic product, the so-called today “high culture”, as opposed to “popular culture” or “folkways”. Accordingly, a limited number of individuals belonging to a certain social group have

culture, the rest are accused of acquiring no culture and make a source of anarchy (Choudhury, 2013).

In this sense, culture is more closely related to aesthetics than to social science (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). In reaction to the first view, Edward Taylor's view in his book entitled "Primitive Culture" (1870) (as cited in Avruch, 1998) referred to a quality owned by all the individuals within the same social group. This view was a crucial perspective towards the concept culture for its entirety to make fundamental premises to anthropology. According to Taylor, culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capacities acquired by individuals as members of a society (Bennett, 2015).

In contrast to Arnold's view, all folks, which are acquired through belonging to a social group, have culture. In addition to the whole things from knowledge to habits and performances make up culture (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). The greatest legacy of Taylor's definition stayed with anthropology for a long time and laid in his "complex whole" definition. This view was even accepted by later anthropologists who rejected his evolutionarism. They perceived culture as wholes integrated systems (Bennett, 2015).

The third view to culture was coined in anthropology in the 20th century by Franz Boas with relation to the 18th century writings of Johann von Herder. As Taylor's reaction to Arnold was to found a more a scientific rather than aesthetic basis for culture, Boas reacted against Taylor and other evolutionists. Boas concentrated on the uniqueness and the variety of cultures and societies; on the other hand, evolutionists emphasized on the universality of a single culture where all societies shifted from savage stage to the civilized one. Besides, Boas revealed that each one must not compare cultures as high or low or as savage or civilized (Spencer- Oatey, 2012).



Hofstede and Hofstede's Onion Model is one of the most popular ways to visualize the concept of culture. Hofstede (1991) was the first who suggested the metaphor '*Cultural Onion Model*' in which the layers of the onion reflect different dimensions of culture. Later on, Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) offer a four-layer onion model containing symbols, heroes, rituals, and values as the core as Table 1 below shows:

| <b>Four-Layer Onion Model</b> | <b>Dimensions of Culture</b>  |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>1. Symbols</b>             | Words (including jargon), gestures, objects with particular meanings that are recognised only by those who share the culture.   |
| <b>2. Heroes</b>              | “persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture and thus serve as models for behaviour” (p. 8)  |
| <b>3. Rituals</b>             | “collective actions” such as how we pay tribute to others, as well as social and religious events such as greetings and social and religious ceremonies. They also include “discourse, the way language is used in text and talk, in daily interaction, and in communicating beliefs” (p. 9). |
| <b>4. Values</b>              | Beliefs about opposites such as good versus evil, clean versus dirty, safe and dangerous, permitted and forbidden, honest and dishonest, moral and immoral, beautiful and ugly.   |

**Table.1: Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov's (2010) Four-Layer Onion Model**

These multiple meanings to the term culture reflect its complexity for understanding and interpretation. However, another part of the difficulty resides not only in the conceptual or semantic meaning, but rather it is related to the ideological “agendas” that still resonate today.

## **Culture and Society**

Culture is the sum total of learned, shared and socially transmitted behaviour that includes ideas, values, and customs of groups of people. A fairly large number of people living in the same territory constitute a society. Members of a society share a common language, which facilitates day-to-day exchanges with others and participate in a common culture. Nadel in his work says it is necessary to make a distinction between “culture” from its companion term “society.” According to him culture is the way of life of the people; while a society is an organised, interacting aggregate of individuals who follow a given way of life. In simple terms a society is composed of people; the way they behave is their culture (Dyczewski & Sławik, 2016).

Since the time of Boas, culture became a tool for understanding and describing the exotic society. Anthropological study on cultural relativism allows a comparison of culture without assuming evolutionary hierarchies. It means that every culture has in its own rights to be different and does not stand for the purpose of other culture. In other words, all cultures express validity in their perspective of the world. Thus, it could be in-appropriate to judge cannibalism activity among society even if we use universal notion on violence. What we can do is try to understand the reason and rationalise such activity.

Early notion of culture was popularised among Anthropologist in order to understand homogeneous societies. In the modern world the relationship between culture and society is a complex one. Culture is produced and reproduced within the society and society acts in certain way in a culture. But how does culture work in the complex societies? Early Anthropologists used culture as the set of practical and contingent significations, while postmodernists use it to mark the domain of signifying practices.

According to Rahul Pertierra, (2004) society can be seen as the collection of individual members pursuing their interest in the context of formal rules administered by specialists and implemented by the state. It was also a constant state of self-constitution, whose members are engaged in individual life projects marked by purposive and value rationality. Society consists of individuals mostly unknown to one another but nevertheless linked through abstract categories such as class, nation, or gender. In this case society assumed as the real place or arena, an institution in which individuals play their roles in order to achieve their different objectives. When we see the relation between society and culture, society and culture are two elements that are complementing each other. Society expresses itself through culture. We can associate the group of people or society from the culture they practice, such as Asian society is characterised by Asian culture. (Nadel, 2006)

Furthermore, culture is manifested in the socio economic structures as frames for the organisation of social relationship; it is embedded both in the material setting and the social institutions of society. Material experiences are organised and group relations are structured through culture. But culture has also the medium through which the social world is experienced, interpreted and understood. In this sense, culture is something more basic than ideological superstructure. Culture is produced in a given society within the framework set by the socio-economic structure. The cultural process perpetually occurs among the different groups and classes in a society, and also affects social structure (Herawati, 2006).

One of the key problems which an institutional account of culture can remedy is the notion of wholeness. It is all too common to talk of 'cultures' as isolable, identifiable, genetically distinct actors synonymous with societies or groups. A vague culturalist tendency can lead, sometimes, to the thought that cultures which are more homogenous are, in some way, more effective or pure since they provide for people more stable, secure

and predictable paths through life. Such an intuition is apparent in the following passage from Ruth Benedict:

The significance of cultural behaviour is not exhausted when we have clearly understood that it is local and man-made and hugely variable. It tends to be integrated. A culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action. Within each culture there come into being characteristic purposes not necessarily shared by other types of society. In obedience to their purposes, each people further and further consolidates its experience, and in proportion to the urgency of these drives the heterogeneous items of behaviour take more and more congruous shape. Taken up by a well-integrated culture, the most ill-assorted acts become characteristic of its particular goals, often by the most unlikely metamorphoses (Herawati, 2006).

Each of the institutions provides a context within which people develop. Often, the genesis of each of the institutions is diverse, meaning that the relationship between society and culture is far from fixed. Throughout history, people have developed with narratives and systems of social interaction of different geneses to their mode of production or legal-political system. This is not always associated with imperial or colonial societies. People, through inter-group trade, have to develop shared forms of existence which accommodate difference, harking back to Gray's defence of *modus vivendi*. To give one recent example, Coptic Christians can, at various points in their life, proceed through a Christian system of narration, an Islamic system of social interaction, a capitalist mode of production, a legal-political system combining elements of representative democracy and Islamic jurisprudence, an autocratic system of security, a scientific system of healthcare, and a

Victorian system of education. Institutions can reach beyond societal boundaries, meaning that people divided by geography can share cultural contexts of ‘alien’ genesis (Alesina & Giuliano, 2015).

### **The Relationship between Language and Culture**

A wide range of research has been dedicated to shed light on the critical relationship between language and culture and how they influence one another. Researchers such as Kramsch, Sapir and Whorf and others have worked extensively on understanding cultures on the basis of analyzing language in use. “Language is the principle means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in context of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways” (Hussein, 2012).

Therefore, when language and culture are both present, people can communicate successfully. This means one cannot speak a language fluently and use it appropriately without having knowledge of the culture that shapes this language. In this respect, Kramsch (1998) stated that language expresses cultural reality (with words people express facts and ideas but also reflect their attitudes), language embodies cultural reality (people give meaning to their experience through the means of communication) and language symbolizes cultural reality since people view their language as symbol of their social identity (Rabiah, 2012).

Varying systems of symbols are possessed by different cultures, but a common symbol to all cultures is called ‘language’. According to William G. Sumner (1906), “Language is a symbolic system through which people communicate and through which culture is transmitted.” Language as a system of communication between members of the same society can be verbal, non-verbal or written (Swoyer, 2003).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, other ways of looking at meaning in language emerged. Several scholars pointed to the variable and relative reference that linguistic signs may have and, consequently, to the important role that context plays in determining the meaning of language. Important influences came from the field of anthropology, where Malinowski (1923) introduced the terms ‘context of situation’ and ‘context of culture’. In trying to explain the meaning of Kiriwinian texts (from the Trobriand Islands in the South Pacific) to his English-speaking readers, he felt the need to provide information not only about the situation in which the texts unfolded, but also about the wider context, the total cultural background. While Malinowski applied the concepts only to the particular situation of the Kiriwinian texts, Firth (1968) developed them further to apply to the study of language in general (Swoyer, 2003).

Context is not only something that needs to be taken into consideration in order to understand a given instance of language. According to Halliday and Hasan (1985), language only makes sense when it is placed within some context or situation, and language (text) and context are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. Halliday & Hasan use the term ‘cycle of text and context’ to indicate that the notions of text and context are inseparable, i.e. that texts and contexts are each other’s contexts. The cycle encompasses the text itself and its relations to other texts, as well as contextual factors related to situation and culture (Swoyer, 2003).

This means that, when trying to understand something that is said or written, we also, simultaneously, interpret the context in which the text is embedded. Given an instance of language, we are immediately able to construct and interpret the situation in which the text functions. Widdowson (1995) illustrates this phenomenon by referring to our ability to even interpret the single letter ‘P’ as a meaningful text, provided that we meet it in a context where parking a car is relevant (Swoyer, 2003).

When we use our native language, within our own discourse community, we are hardly aware of the way in which our prior knowledge of context helps us act in a language situation and make sense of what is being said or written. When we use a foreign language, on the other hand, we often lack this background knowledge. It has been argued that the problems that users of a foreign language experience are caused just as much by their lack of knowledge about social values, norms of behavior and cultural frames of reference as by their limited linguistic repertoire (Swidler, 1986).

It seems obvious, then, that learners of a foreign language need to concern themselves not only with the linguistic aspects of the language, but also with the contexts in which it can be used. Only then can they develop the ability to interpret the references that are being made in a communication situation and to explore the full meaning potential of the language. Insight into and awareness of the interrelationship between language and its contexts is, of course, also a necessary prerequisite for students to be able to use the language appropriately in different situations (Kramsch, 1993).

In order to discuss questions of context and the ways in which they can be dealt with in the foreign language classroom, it seems useful to maintain a distinction between the notions of 'context of situation' and 'context of culture' and perhaps to break these notions down into even smaller components that can be singled out and worked with. 4 At the same time, Halliday & Hasan's concept of a 'cycle of text and context' can be used as a reminder of the close relationship that exists between the different elements in the cycle. Thus, it could be argued that the main task for foreign language learning is not to identify and to cover an extensive inventory of elements in this cycle, but rather to prepare students to cope with the complexity of it.

According to R. Fowler (1996), the notion that language and culture are closely linked together stems from the awareness that nature has no ‘natural structure’ from which language draws its meanings passively. Rather, it is language that provides us with a classification of phenomena and experience and a system of categorization that make the world around us manageable. Our thoughts are not prior to language and language is not just a useful device we use in order to express them, but language is the very thing that makes thought possible. The anthropologist Edmund Leach (1964) states that ‘This world is a representation of our language categories, not vice versa. Because my mother tongue is English, it seems self-evident that bushes and trees are different kinds of things. I would not think this unless I had been taught that it was the case’ (Busch, 2009).

The infamous ‘Sapir-Whorf hypothesis’ is central in the discussion of the relationship between language and culture. Sapir wrote in 1929:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society... The real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached (Busch, 2009).

This, then, accounts for the fact that English, for example, can be used in quite different ways by native speakers who live under very different conditions, in quite different communities, in all corners of the world. It is obvious that, although these users of



English share many concepts and categories that are embedded in language, they do not share the same knowledge, experience, values and beliefs, and it would be absurd to claim that all speakers of English represent the same culture (Busch, 2009).

Many languages share common basic parts of speech. The written system of languages is based on the Alphabet ‘the symbolic shapes that represent sounds’. Within the same culture, rules of writing and speaking are not the same. As communities create novel ideas, languages develop constantly. Language is seen as an element of culture and even a reflection of culture (Swoyer, 2003).

### **Culture, Language and Identity**

As stated earlier, the term culture has been defined differently from different disciplines; yet, culture is considered to be so closely related to the language being learnt. Therefore, the relation between the two is so obvious that one cannot speak about language without acknowledging the role of the other. Moreover, what is of paramount importance to note is the relationship between language and identity as far as, in most cases, language is used “to maintain identity” (Zhang, 2006). For this reason, an extensive body of research has explored the tripartite interconnectedness between language, culture and one’s identity.

Identity, on the one hand, can provide us with a sense of belonging to a group or community and, on the other hand, can serve as the basis for negative views and reactions to people who are different from us. As Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy (2012) assert, “[our] preference for things we understand and are familiar with can adversely influence our perception of and attitude toward new and different people and things; this can lead to stereotyping, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism.” Consequently, we are naturally drawn to people who share a similar language, culture and way of being and we may unconsciously or consciously avoid others who do not belong to our community.

### **The Relationship between Language, Culture and Communication**

One cannot make a clear distinction or understanding of the one without the knowledge of the other because it is like the thin phantom line that separates the linked borders of two neighbored countries. Claire Krumsch (1993) states that: “Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways.” Languages on the one hand, present the cultures of societies and carry meanings and cultures on the other hand, hide in languages, and to interact with a language means to interact with its culture.

Krumsch (1993) further stated that: “The people express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. In other words, language expresses cultural reality.” So, they both are intertwined like the two sides of the same coin. In addition, language and culture walked a long way together and they shape what it means to be human.

For foreign language learners, an understanding of the relationship between language and culture must be deduced, because it frequently comes to mind as a question that raises confusion and loss. On one hand, learning a second language is actually learning a second culture because they have evolved together and they influence one another. On another hand, teaching a second language is in itself teaching a second culture, because culture is the product of human interaction. So, second language teachers are at once second culture teachers. Furthermore, cultural competence is as needed and important as the rest of every other linguistic competence like grammar, syntax, and phonology because it is never enough to possess linguistic tools and rules without associating them with cultural competence.

Culture and language are the two strongly rising concepts when speaking about communication; because they both are the solid ground and the floor where it is practiced and brought to life. It can be deduced that “the relationship between culture and communication nevertheless, is very complex and interrelated since they are joined together in a partnership relation. First, cultures are created through communication.” In other words, “communication is the means of human interaction, second cultures are the results of social communication and they give it an understanding and without it, it would be impossible to preserve and pass along cultures from one generation to another” (Krumsh , 1993).

Therefore, communication is a bridge between cultures. It can be said that culture is created, shaped, transmitted, and learned through communication. Communication is a vital element of culture, so it is quite safe and possible to say that communication shapes culture, and culture shapes communication. Cultural differences, however, are the problem. In other words, intercultural communication can be a challenging task for it is a social behavior and not an individual one. Consequently, it must be ruled, contained and governed by specific regulations and limits. According to Edmund Leach (1976), “communication is no longer limited or exclusive to the same society or the same culture. International communication is influenced by cultural differences.”

The teaching and learning of foreign languages should take into account these differences, and second language learners and teachers as users of these cultures’ languages, have to construct at least an overall idea or knowledge about these differences in order not to fall in communication breakdowns, because the same words may mean different things in different cultures. To conclude, it is important to acknowledge the significance of the latter concepts and that communication is the foundation of any successful relationship.

## **Section Two: Online Exchanges and the Development of Intercultural Awareness**

### **Intercultural Communicative Competence**

Within intercultural contact situations, people may encounter other cultures that are foreign to their own, that is, they come into contact with the unfamiliar. According to Weber (2003), “Within intercultural encounters individuals find that their familiar patterns of behaviour, value systems, beliefs, certain practices, symbols and other artifacts no longer function” Therefore, individuals who frequently come across these intercultural communication situations need to be interculturally competent. To this end, it is crystal clear that gaining insights into the unfamiliar resulted from the encounter of the other and being aware of the concept of ICC appear to be a must (Morris, 2013).

The most popular definition devoted for signifying the notion of ICC, according to Deardorff, is “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” In a similar vein, ICC refers to the “ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality.” Additionally, Chun (2011) put forward the view that ICC does not, merely; focus on the understanding of the target language and culture, but also on the readiness and willingness to reflect on the native culture and to be curious enough to question the values and presuppositions in one’s own cultural practices (Byram et al., 2002).

ICC appears to be of paramount importance for people to function effectively when they are encountered with and come into contact with the other. On this account, Byram demonstrated an emphasis on knowledge, skills, and attitudes aside from those that are

primarily linguistic. Thus, ICC entails being able to reflect and to interact effectively and appropriately based on three grounds namely: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. (2002)

### **Intercultural Awareness**

Recently, it can be noticed that many scholars in the field of FLT have turned their attention towards intercultural awareness (ICA). With this in mind, more research work has been dedicated to spot more light on the nature of this notion. Consequently, it could be rightly said that a variety of definitions has been devoted as an attempt to conceptualize and illustrate ICA. Yet, the literature indicates no consensus among researchers on a particular definition. On this matter, it can be argued that “these varying definitions of ICA in the literature enhance the challenges faced by practitioners to identify matching theoretical models and teaching tools that can support them in their classroom” (Yu & Maele, 2018).

Souryana (2006) claimed that ICA can be perceived as the process of developing awareness and understanding of one’s own culture and the cultures of the others all over the world. He added, ICA aims at increasing intercultural and cross-cultural understanding. In a similar vein, Korzilius et al. (2007) adopted the following definition:

Intercultural awareness is the ability to emphasize and decentre.

More specifically, in a communication situation, it is the ability to take on the perspective (s) of (a) conversational pattern (s) from another culture or with another nationality, and of their cultural background (s), and thus, to be able understand and take into consideration interlocutors’ different perspective (s) simultaneously (Yu & Maele, 2018).

ICA is considered by Chen and Starosta (1998) as “the cognitive aspect of intercultural communication competence that refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that effect how we think and behave.” In this respect, they distinguished ICA from *intercultural sensitivity* (the affective aspect) and from *intercultural adroitness* (the behavioral aspect) (Yu & Maele, 2018).

Donald (2019) argued that this definition presented by Baker contributes to the clarification of the difference between ICC and ICA. With this in mind, this definition revolves around the idea that one’s cultural practices and frames of understanding can affect the intercultural communication. In addition, ICA refers to one’s capacity to perform them in dynamic and emergent contexts in real time communication (Yu & Maele, 2018).

### **Foreign Language Teaching and Intercultural Communicative Competence**

One of the most significant current trends in the field of Foreign Language Teaching over the past few decades has been the immersion of the intercultural dimension, as a key component, in language education. This increasing recognition for the need for an intercultural orientation was an impetus for many scholars and researchers to go further in their research and build grounded theories in FLT that would support teachers in their job with hope of helping learners to communicate and interact with others. “FLT has a central aim of enabling learners to use that language to interact with people for whom it is their preferred and “natural” medium of experience, those we call “native speakers” (Byram, 2002).

Kramsch and McConnel-Ginet (1992) argued that the primary focus of intercultural based teaching is not merely the target culture, but it also includes comparisons between learners’ country and the target country, hence, enabling them to reflect on the culture and civilization of their own countries (Byram, 2002).

The intercultural dimension requires teachers to help in developing learners' ICC so that they would carry out and handle intercultural communication. Castro (1999) said that "teachers are now expected not only to teach the foreign linguistic code but also...to promote the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence." As far as FL learners are concerned, the aim of FL learners is to become intercultural speakers who are conscious of their own and the other. To this end, the intercultural dimension requires learners to acquire and to develop their ICC for the purpose of functioning adequately in intercultural contexts (Swoyer, 2003).

Incorporating ICA in foreign language teaching has been perceived by recent pedagogy of great importance for better and successful achievements in the process of learning a foreign language. Kourova and Modianos (2013) argued that learners' awareness of their own identity and their personal growth can and should be developed once we integrate intercultural awareness in FL classes. It can be noted that ICA is a key phase in the development of ICC: "We believe it is an essential "prerequisite" stage for developing intercultural communicative competence and it is a vital concept in an intercultural approach to foreign language teaching." In Chen and Starosta (1998) perception, the importance leveled in the notion of intercultural awareness can be clearly observed in the increasing demands for intercultural training programs all over the world (Byram et al., 2002).

### **Online Exchanges**

As a matter of fact, the pervasive use of technology with its inclusion in education has changed learners' lives. Besides, social networking sites (SNS), particularly Facebook, have gained most of learners' interest following the fact that the former aims at making users interact and exchange ideas with different people around the world. Therefore, this

kind of online communication and interaction is called “Online Intercultural Exchange” (OIE) or “Tele-collaboration”.

Over previous years, tele-collaboration has been known by several terminologies namely: “Online Intercultural Exchange”, “Virtual Exchange”, “Collaborative Online International Learning” (COIL), and so forth (O’Dowd, 2016). Therefore, the term “Tele-collaboration” can be defined as an online communication where members from different countries are joined together for the aim of interacting, exchanging ideas, and developing cultural awareness. In this regard, O’Dowd and Ritter (2006) put forward the claim that tele-collaboration is “the use of online communication tools to bring together language learners in different countries for the development of collaborative work and intercultural exchange” (p. 623).

In the same regard, O’Dowd (2011) stated that tele-collaboration in foreign language education context refers “to the application of online communication tools to bring together classes of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work” (p. 623).

### **Facebook and Language Learning**

Since English is considered as the language of the Internet (Crystal 2001), alongside with its unique features such as feed, online games and chat, many wondered how Facebook can enhance EFL students’ English ability (Chang 2014). In this regard, Hasan and Muhi (2012) interviewed 50 Saudi EFL learners who used Facebook to confirm whether they improve their English through it; as a result, the findings showed that they have positive attitudes towards it (Chang 2014). Similarly, he stated that university students are more aware of the positive use of Facebook to enhance their learning.



Consequently, Facebook has gained many characteristics which make it a suitable social platform for language learning. These unique features are summarized as follows:

- Facebook motivates students for learning and fostering their interaction with other peers.
- It allows students to exchange knowledge with peers or people from different backgrounds.
- Facebook allows students to develop a positive attitude towards learning.
- It allows them to develop interpersonal intelligence and critical thought.
- Facebook also allows for students-teacher relationships outside the classroom (Petriovic et al. 2012)

On this account, Facebook is considered as an effective tool or an important social network site for any language learner. In addition, Facebook provides opportunities for learners to engage in spaces for collaborative learning (Mazman & Ushel 2010). Therefore, it allows for intercultural communication and exchange of ideas with other learners from different countries.

As a matter of fact, these unique features give Facebook a significant stance in education especially in the field of language teaching and learning. Thus, it is paramount that this particular social network is beneficial for both learners and teachers. On the one hand, Facebook allows learners for interaction, collaboration, and active participation. As a result, it fosters their positive relationships with their colleagues and teachers, encourages knowledge transfer through various learning tasks, and also helps them to develop positive attitudes towards learning. On the other hand, Facebook provides teachers with opportunities to construct and practice pedagogy that is based on learners' interests, helps

to evaluate their learners formality, and to establish effective educational relationships that help in developing new skills and knowledge (Bennacer 2018).

### **Conclusion**

Culture is precariously helpful when it comes to the temporal facets of meaning. Since it relies on generalizing and tradition, it very much plays down the temporal intricacies of distinctions between before and after. It provides society with a future very much in accordance with its past. It almost blends after and before, past and future, with a present which consists in being faithful to a culture. Perhaps, that is a reason why we encounter so many difficulties when entering into a temporal description of the social.

Culture is perhaps at its best with respect to the social dimension of meaning. Memory and control provide social situations with solutions of its double contingency. Almost automatically and without even noticing one enters a situation, remembers comparable situations, realizes possible means of control, and complies. It is revealing that one can read the wisdom of Indian or Buddhist meditation with respect to the obstacles which hinder us becoming aware of our social conditionings. In addition, the extent to which culture is able to regulate the chances to dissent and consent, and you start to realize the extent to which it indeed controls by memory (both remembering and forgetting). Even the distinction between ego and alter fades into the characteristics of persons known to be known, thereby losing the knowledge of how we all maintain the construction of our selves which consist of both ego and alter.

# **Chapter Two:**

## **Field Work and Data Analysis**

## **Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of quantitative data of the research related to the cultural effects of Facebook on the students' intercultural awareness. The presentation and analysis of the findings has helped answer the distinct research questions and eventually test the research hypotheses. The chapter at hand sheds light on the practical part of the research. To further simplify it, it represents the methodology where a description of the main research tool and the population is provided. It also focuses on the analysis and the discussion of the results obtained from the students' questionnaire.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

### **Design**

Questionnaires are practical and large amounts of information can be collected from a large number of students in a short period of time. They are also the most convenient and inexpensive way of gathering information from students and teachers, because they are familiar to most of them and nearly everyone has had some experience completing a questionnaire. They generally do not make people confused or lost. The objectives of the study could be achieved by questionnaires when they are well defined and well designed, another reason is that questionnaires are somehow easy to analyze and most statistical analysis software programs can easily process them and the results of the questionnaire can be quickly and easily quantified.

For the purpose of conducting the current research and collecting necessary information, one simple yet effective research tool was adopted: a questionnaire. This research tool is administered to Third Year students of English at the University of Mohammed Kheider - Biskra as an attempt to answer the previously set research questions.

## **Population**

The population selected in the current study Third Year students of English at the University of Mohammed Kheider - Biskra (around 40 students). So, among the reasons behind selecting Third Year students of English is the fact that they have spent three years studying English. Thus, they have had sufficient exposure to the English language and its culture. In addition, as they have spent many years studying English, it is more likely that they have already experienced intercultural communication or exchange with native speakers or people from other cultures and affiliations.

## **The Students' Questionnaire**

### **Description of the Questionnaire**

This questionnaire is designed for Third Year English students of English at Biskra University of the academic year 2021-2022. The participants of this questionnaire are 40 students from different classes. They are chosen randomly to investigate the points of views and perceptions about the topic of integrating culture in English language teaching. This questionnaire involves different types of questions: "closed" and "open-ended" questions. Closed questions require the students to answer by "Yes" or "No" or to choose the right answers from a set of options and open-ended questions which require from them to give their personal opinions or background information or add a justification for their choice. The whole questionnaire is made up of (15) questions.

**Distribution of the Questionnaire**

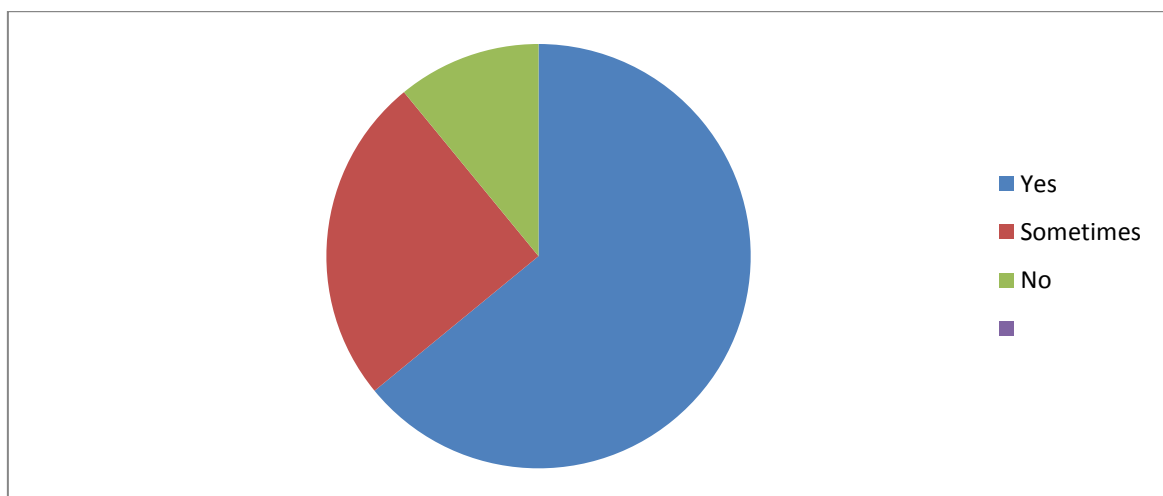
This questionnaire was created with Google Forms (a web-based survey tool) and distributed online on May 10th to Third Year EFL students at the University of Mohammed Kheider - Biskra. In other words, this questionnaire was distributed on Facebook groups and was sent to several students via direct messages and e-mails. Additionally, it is important to note that about 40 students participated in completing this questionnaire.

**Analysis of the Results of the Students' Questionnaire**

**1- Are you often active on social media?**

| Choices   | Number | Percentage % |
|-----------|--------|--------------|
| Yes       | 37     | 93 %         |
| Sometimes | 3      | 7 %          |
| No        | 0      | 0 %          |

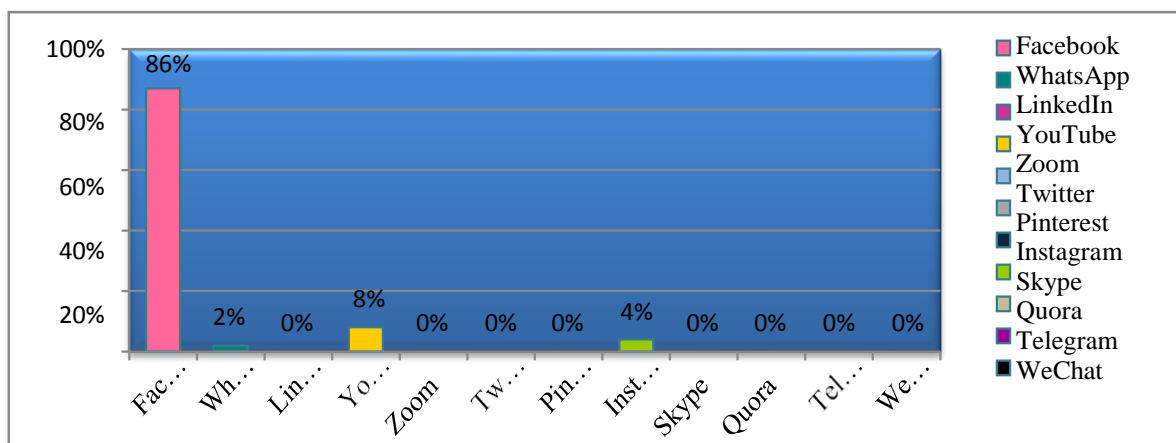
**Table 2: The Use of Social Media**



**Figure 1: The use of social media**

The first question was addressed with the goal of testing whether the respondents under study are updated with the world of communication technologies. The results displayed in table 2 reveal that (93%) of the informants chose “yes” whereas the rest (7%) selected the second option “sometimes” and expectedly, no selection (0%) fell upon the third option “no”. To this end, it is safe to declare that the informants are familiar with the field of communication technologies and none of them selected the last option.

**2- If yes, which platforms do you use most?(you can choose more than one)**



**Figure 2: The Most Used Social Media Platforms**

The second question primarily seeks to discover whether Facebook is the most popular and commonly used Social Media Platform amongst the participants for the purpose of communication. This graph indicates that the vast majority of students with (86%) use Facebook the most, other students (8%) use YouTube, additionally few students (4%) use Instagram, yet only (2%) of the students use WhatsApp. Almost no one of them opted for the remaining options such as LinkedIn, Zoom, Twitter, Pinterest, Quora ...etc. Therefore, by asking this question we came to the conclusion that the most popular and commonly used social media platform among the students is Facebook.

3- Why do you use social media?

| Choices                 | Number | Percentage % |
|-------------------------|--------|--------------|
| To watch content        | 7      | 17.5 %       |
| To share content        | 3      | 7.5 %        |
| To chat and communicate | 25     | 62.5 %       |
| All of the above        | 5      | 12.5 %       |

Table 3: The Purpose of Using of Social Media

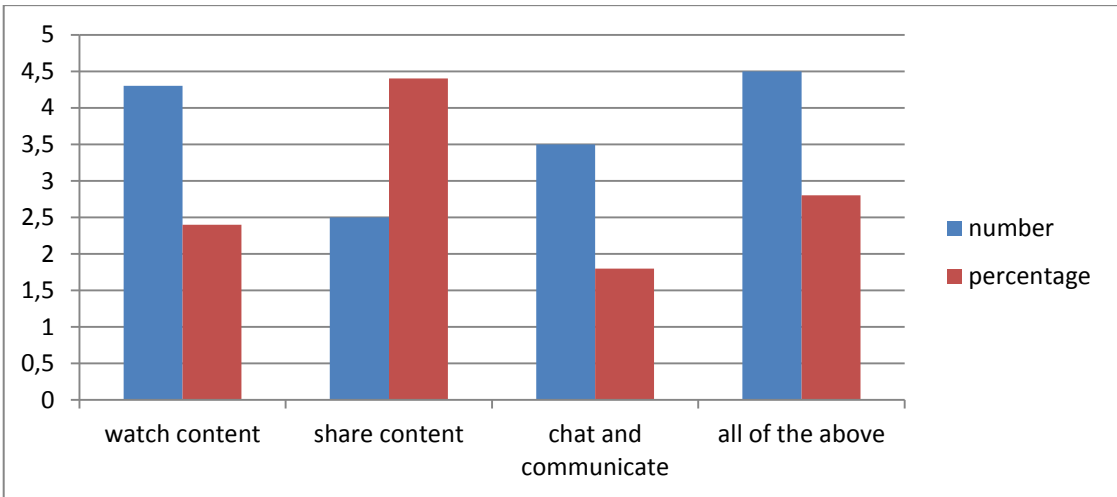


Figure 3: The Purpose of Using of Social Media

In light of this question, the participants under discussion were asked to choose the purpose of using social media platforms in general. It attempts to see whether they use it for cultural purposes. The highest percentage (62.5%) answered that they use them “to chat and communicate” and keeping in touch with family and online friends. (17.5%) answered that they use it mostly “to watch other people’s content” and rarely to interact with others whereas (7.5 %) of the students answered that they like “to share their own content” by updating status, sharing files, videos, photos, and links with their contacts. Finally, only (12.5%) of the participants answered “all of the above” and that indicates that they use

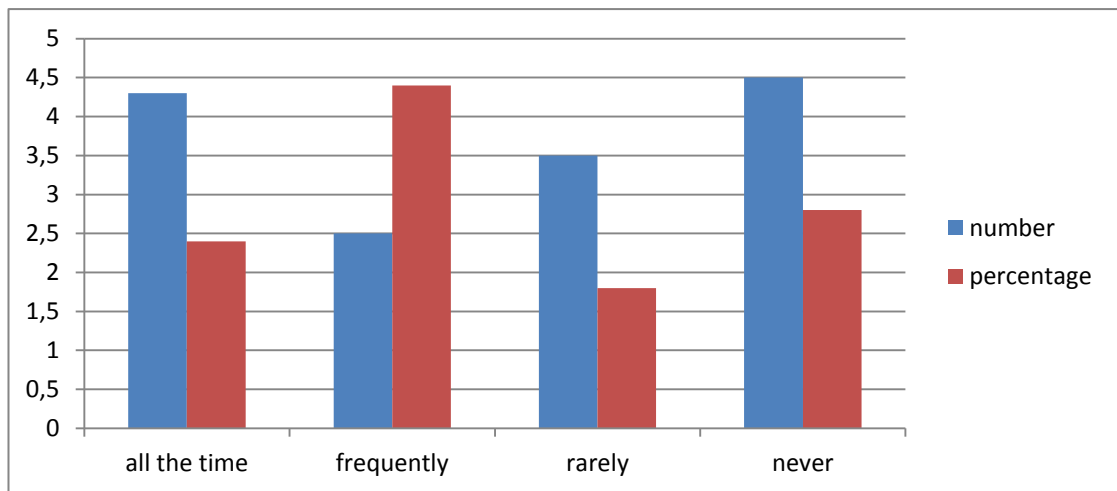


social media platforms for multiple purposes. To conclude, the most frequent answer was that students use these platforms mostly to chat and communicate.

**4- How often do you speak English outside the classroom?**

| Choices      | Number | Percentage % |
|--------------|--------|--------------|
| All the time | 17     | 42.5 %       |
| Frequently   | 3      | 7.5 %        |
| Rarely       | 12     | 30 %         |
| Never        | 8      | 20 %         |

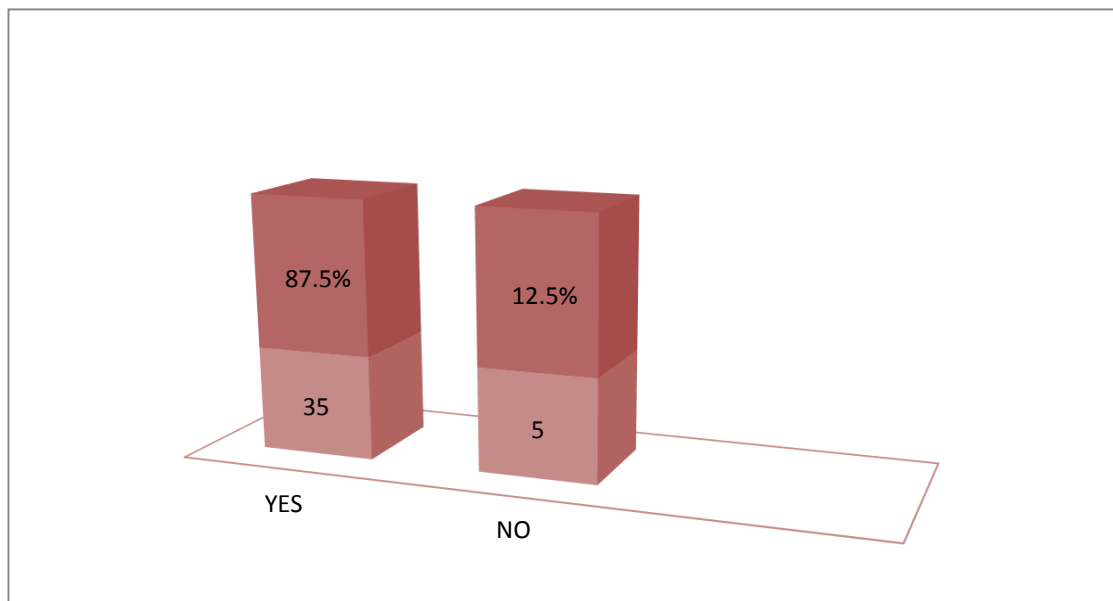
**Table 4: The Frequency of Speaking English outside the Classroom**



**Figure 4: The Frequency of Speaking English outside the Classroom**

This table shows that (42.5%) of the students who participated in this questionnaire like to speak in English outside of the classroom all the time, (7.5%) answered that they do that frequently, (30%) answered that they rarely use English if it's not in the classroom whereas (20%) answered that they never speak in English once they leave their classrooms. This indicates that some students are interacting and communicating with English-speaking individuals while others are not.

**5- Do you usually like to use English when using your favorite social media platforms? Please explain.**



**Figure 5: Students' Use of the English Language on Social media**

This figure shows that (87.5%) of the students who participated in this questionnaire usually like to use English when they use their favorite social media platform, while (12.5%) of the participants answered that they do not use the English language on social media. The students were given the option of explaining the reason behind their choices. However, only few students have provided an explanation. Those who said “yes” explained that they use English on their social media accounts because: they genuinely like the language, they have native speakers as friends, and they believe that it facilitates interactions...etc. On the other hand, those who answered “no” said that they don’t like to use the English language on social media mainly because they do not interact online with English-speaking individuals. Therefore, this indicates that the majority of students are interested in using and improving their language in order to communicate with others.

**6- Are you interested in making new friends / contacts / connections through social media especially Facebook?**

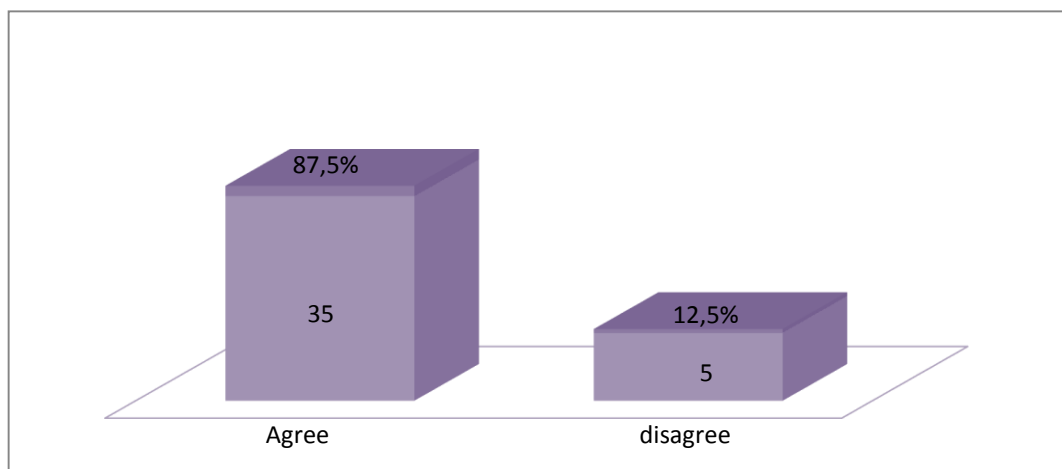
| Choices         | Number | Percentage% |
|-----------------|--------|-------------|
| Very interested | 22     | 55%         |
| Somewhat        | 9      | 22.5%       |
| Not interested  | 9      | 22.5%       |

**Table 5: Making New Friends Especially On Facebook**

This previous table reveals that a decent number of students who participated in answering this questionnaire (55%) are in fact “very interested” in making new friends and contacts through social media especially on Facebook. While an equal number of the participants answered that they are “somewhat” interested in making friends on Facebook (22.5%) and some answered that they are “not interested” at all in having new friends on social media (22.5%). This shows that the majority of the participants are interested in making new friends on social media especially Facebook.

**7- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? And why?**

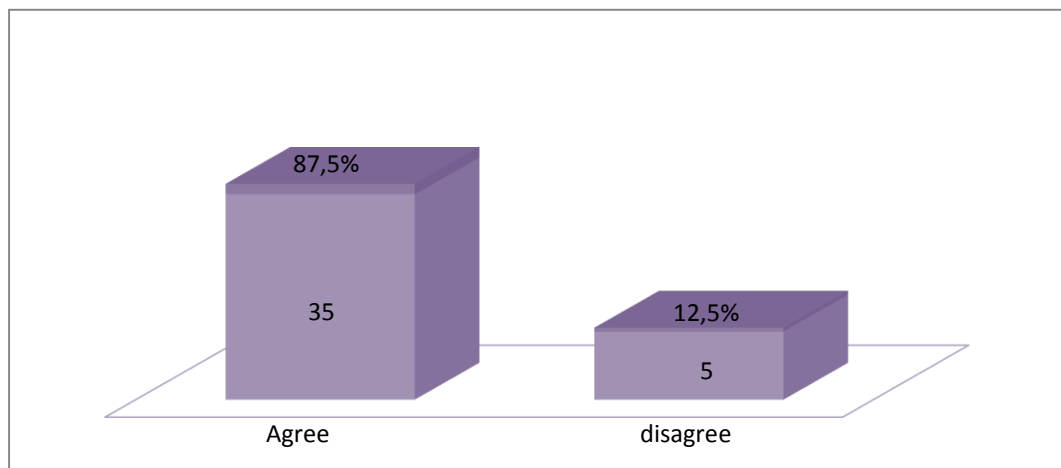
**a. Facebook is one of the three most indispensable applications on the internet.**



**Figure 6: Facebook Is Indispensible**

This Figure shows that (87.5%) of the participants agreed that Facebook is indeed one of the most indispensable social media platforms on the internet whilst only (12.5%) disagreed with the statement. When asked to justify their choices, the ones who agreed argued that they use it to stay in touch with people and up to date to their studies/work. The ones who disagreed, however, argued that they don't use Facebook as much as other social media platforms or that they simply do not think that social media is indispensable.

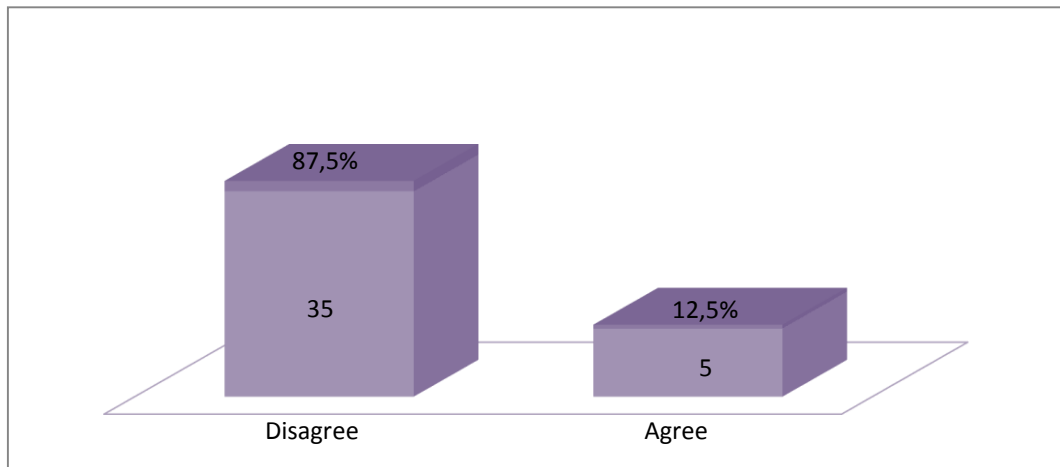
**b. Facebook enhances human communication and interaction by connecting people in different parts of the world.**



**Figure 7: Facebook Enhances Human Communication**

This Figure shows that (87.5%) of the participants agreed that Facebook as social media does enhance human communication whilst only (12.5%) disagreed with the statement. When asked to justify their choices, the ones who agreed argued that helps them stay in touch with people. The ones, who disagreed, however, argued that they don't use Facebook as much for this purpose solely.

**c. Facebook's importance has declined over the years.**



**Figure 8: Facebook Importance**

This Figure shows that (87.5%) of the participants disagree with the statement that says that Facebook's importance has declined over the years and that it no longer plays a significant role in human communication. However, (12.5%) of the students who answered the questionnaire answered that they agree with the previous statement. When asked to justify, they explained that the decrease of Facebook's popularity might be due to the emergence of other social media platforms, or it can be due to the changes which occurred in people's lifestyles; their fast pace of life does not allow them to interact with others as much as they used to. Yet, others have answered that Facebook is still as important as it used to be. This indicates that the participants acknowledge the importance of Facebook in communication mainly and other tasks generally.

**8- How much time do you usually spend on Facebook on a daily basis?**

| <b>Choices</b>            | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage%</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Less than an hour</b>  | <b>14</b>     | <b>35%</b>         |
| <b>More than one hour</b> | <b>26</b>     | <b>65%</b>         |

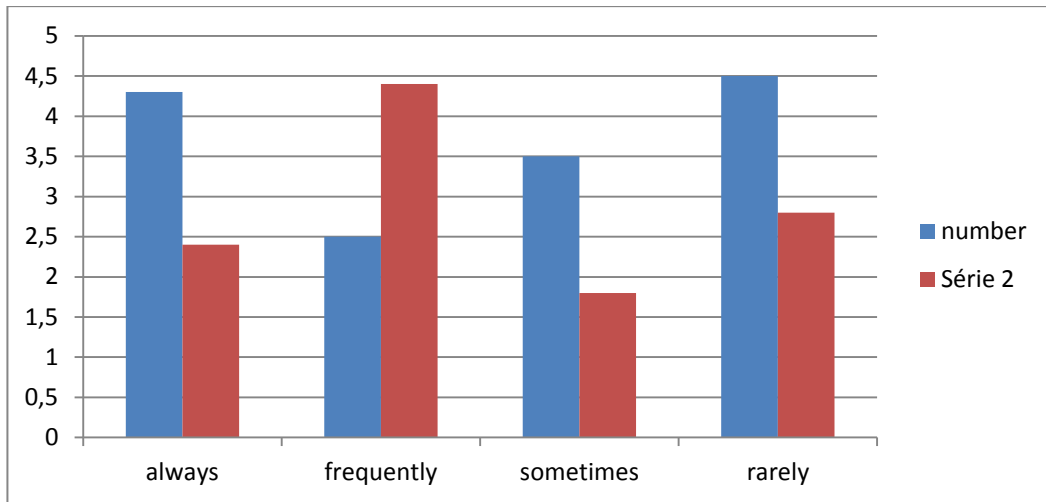
**Table 6: The Time Spent on Facebook on a Daily Basis**

The present question was meant to figure out whether the participants are active users of Facebook. On the ground of this, only (35%) answered that they spend less than an hour on Facebook, while (65%) of the participants stated that they use Facebook for more than one hour. This indicates that the informants under investigation are active users of this communication platform.

**9- How often do you chat with people from English-speaking countries?**

| <b>Choices</b>    | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage%</b> |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Always</b>     | <b>12</b>     | <b>30%</b>         |
| <b>Frequently</b> | <b>9</b>      | <b>22.5%</b>       |
| <b>Sometimes</b>  | <b>9</b>      | <b>22.5%</b>       |
| <b>Rarely</b>     | <b>3</b>      | <b>7%</b>          |
| <b>Never</b>      | <b>7</b>      | <b>18%</b>         |

**Table 7: Chatting With Native Speakers**



**Figure 9: Chatting With Native Speakers**

In this last question, the participants were asked to state the frequency of chatting with native speakers or people from other cultures. The purpose was to know the extent to which they interact and exchange knowledge with native speakers and those who belong to different cultural affiliations. In this regard, (30%) of them stated that they always chat with them, (22.5%) went for frequently, (22.5%) of them also selected sometimes, (7%) selected rarely, and (18%) answered that they never interact with native speakers. Therefore, the above percentages indicate that the participants tend to like having conversations and interactions with native speakers of the English language.

**10- When chatting on Facebook with native English speakers, do you feel an urge to learn about their cultures and customs as well? Please explain.**

| Choices    | Number | Percentage% |
|------------|--------|-------------|
| Yes        | 22     | 55%         |
| Somewhat   | 9      | 22.5%       |
| Not really | 9      | 22.5%       |

**Table 8: Learning About Others' Cultures**

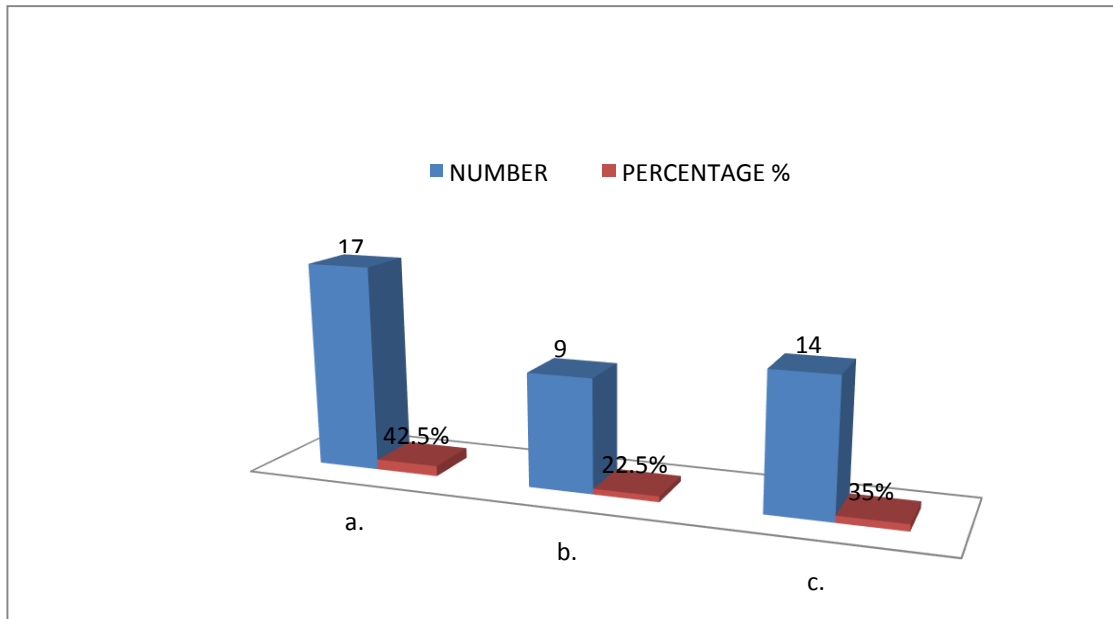
This question was designed for the purpose of getting answers which could confirm that they are conscious about the importance of being aware of their own culture as well as other people's cultures when learning a FL and its culture, so they would have the ability to compare and contrast between the two. The results revealed in the above table indicate that (55%) of them answered "yes", (22.5%) selected "somewhat", and the same percentage (22.5%) selected the last option "not really". When asked to justify, some of them write that they learning about people's cultures enables them to understand the language better since it contains a lot of cultural references, others answered that they are actually interested in knowing different cultures, and others stated that they simply believe that it is sufficient to learn the language only. This indicates that a considerable number of participants are conscious of the importance of culture when learning a FL.

**11- To your understanding, what does the term *Intercultural Awareness* mean?**

**Choose the most suitable answer.**

- a. It means that a person is fully aware of the existence of several differences between them and people from different cultures and with different backgrounds.
- b. It is the notion on which human communication and interaction are based. It requires one's awareness of his/her own culture as well as the others'.
- c. It is based on realizing the similarities and differences between people from different cultures but being passive about them.





**Figure 10: The Meaning of Intercultural Awareness**

In this question, participants were asked to choose the most suitable definition of the concept of “Intercultural Awareness” according to their understanding. In this regard, (42.5%) of the participants opted for option (a), (22.5%) chose option (b), and (35%) of the informants selected option (c). This indicates that most of them believe that “It means that a person is fully aware of the existence of several differences between them and people from different cultures and with different backgrounds.” Therefore, it can be said that students are aware of the importance of knowing one’s culture, other people’s cultures, as well as the existing differences and similarities.

**12- Do you follow any page(s) or are you a member in any group(s) that post cultural content (lifestyles, arts, travel-photography...) on Facebook?**

| Choices | Number | Percentage% |
|---------|--------|-------------|
| Yes     | 25     | 62.5%       |
| No      | 15     | 37.5%       |

**Table 9: Facebook Groups and Cultural Content**

Depending on the results gathered from this question which attempts to confirm whether they follow Facebook groups and pages that share cultural, (62.5%) responded “yes”, and (37.5%) of the participants responded with “no”. Based on the data obtained, most of the respondents do follow pages and groups that share cultural content.

**13- As an EFL student and a Facebook user, do you feel that you can develop your intercultural awareness as well as your fluency during university lectures or through virtual interactions on social media?**

| <b>Choices</b>  | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage%</b> |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Lectures</b> | <b>15</b>     | <b>37.5%</b>       |
| <b>Facebook</b> | <b>15</b>     | <b>37.5%</b>       |
| <b>Both</b>     | <b>10</b>     | <b>25%</b>         |

**Table 10: The Role of Social Media in Developing Intercultural Awareness**

The present question was addressed to spot and check their opinions concerning the role FB plays as a tool for communication in developing their cultural and intercultural knowledge/awareness as well as its efficiency. (37.5%) of the participants chose that they feel that they can develop their intercultural competences through “Facebook”, another (37.5%) chose to answer that “lectures” help them learn better about other cultures, and (25%) chose “both”. According to the participants’ answers, Facebook has a positive effect and plays an effective role in developing their cultural and intercultural knowledge, and therefore, having successful intercultural exchange.

**14- Do you find intercultural exchange beneficial and amusing?**

| <b>Choices</b>    | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage%</b> |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>        | <b>23</b>     | <b>57.5%</b>       |
| <b>Somewhat</b>   | <b>10</b>     | <b>25%</b>         |
| <b>Not Really</b> | <b>7</b>      | <b>17.5%</b>       |

**Table 11: Intercultural Exchange Is Beneficial and Amusing**

This question was meant to see if the participants find intercultural exchange beneficial and amusing. Thus, (57.5%) answered “yes”, (25%) answered with “somewhat”, whereas (17.5%) fell upon the last option “not really”. As a consequence, it can be deduced that the majority of students believe that intercultural exchange is in fact beneficial and amusing at the same time.

**15- Do you think that intercultural awareness should be taught in EFL classrooms? If yes, please explain why and share any suggestions you might have.**

| <b>Choices</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage%</b> |
|----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>     | <b>25</b>     | <b>62.5%</b>       |
| <b>No</b>      | <b>15</b>     | <b>37.5%</b>       |

**Table 12: Intercultural Awareness in EFL Classrooms**

The last question was with the objective of confirming whether the participants think that intercultural awareness should be taught in EFL classrooms. To put it more simply, (62.5%) which is the majority of participants responded with “yes”, while all the

remaining participants (37.5%) responded with “no”. To this end, it is vital to point out that most students who participated in answering this questionnaire believe that intercultural awareness should be taught in EFL classrooms.

### **Discussion of the Results**

As previously stated, this study was conducted with hope of answering the afore-stated research questions and to test the hypothesis on which this research is constructed. On that account, a questionnaire was designed. As far as the analysis of the questionnaire is concerned, distinct results were obtained. The first section was devoted for the sake of collecting data about learners’ use of Facebook. It clearly indicates that the respondents are accustomed with the various features and characteristics of Facebook since they are constantly using it (active users). In addition, the results in insinuate that they mostly use FB for: interacting online, sharing knowledge/information, as well as for cultural purposes. It can be noticed that some of the participants, to certain extent, seem to prefer making new friends online while others seem to be neutral concerning their preferences.

The results demonstrate that they occasionally interact with native speakers and people from other cultural backgrounds. It is also concerned with gathering information about learners’ perspectives regarding culture/cultural awareness, intercultural communication, and how they can develop their intercultural awareness level. The results in show that a considerable number of the participants are of the view that: culture and context are essential for the interpretation of meaning ; being aware of one’s native/local culture is a necessity when learning a FL, that the place of English as a lingua franca helps with their intercultural exchange, and that all the existing cultures are equal and no culture is superior over the other. Based on students’ answers to the set of questions displayed in the questionnaire, it was revealed that more than half of them showed to be curious,

willing, and keen to learn about other people and their cultures; yet, they sometimes feel uncomfortable when having intercultural exchanges, probably this is due to the cultural differences. Furthermore, the results gathered reveal that communicating with foreigners who belong to distinct cultural backgrounds is the most appropriate means for ameliorating intercultural awareness.

Lastly, it is undoubtedly shown that the prevailing majority support the idea of incorporating ICA within the language classroom. With regard to the third section which is concerned with the role Facebook plays to develop ICA, participants enjoy having intercultural exchanges and most of them have experienced IC before; yet, they sometimes encounter difficulties (misunderstandings and conflicts). Furthermore, they showed their willingness to discover other cultures and to develop their cultural knowledge using FB as most of them belong to groups and following pages on FB that are made for posting cultural things. For that reason, they came to see that FB has a positive effect and plays an essential role in developing their cultural/intercultural knowledge.

**Conclusion**

All things considered and depending on the results detected from the participants' answers to the questionnaire, different conclusions can be deduced. To simplify it more, EFL learners at the University of Mohammed Kheider - Biskra are interculturally aware i.e. they have the sufficient intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes that could push them to operate effectively and successfully in IC and when dealing with people who belong to distinct ethnicities and cultural backgrounds (the different other). On the grounds of this, it is intrinsic to articulate that they share the view that FB has a positive role for developing ICA and to state that they benefit from the online exchange through FB when used properly.

# **General Conclusion**

### **General Conclusion**

It is becoming crystal clear that the developments taking place in the recent time including communication technologies such as social networking sites have nourished intercultural communication. At its core, the study at hand chiefly aims at investigating the effect that online exchange through Facebook have on fostering learners' intercultural awareness.

For conducting this study, a questionnaire was used to test the validity of the hypothesis. The latter suggests that if EFL learners at the University of Mohammed Kheider - Biskra use Facebook appropriately as a means for online intercultural exchange, then they will develop their intercultural awareness. To come to the point, it is apparent from the analysis and the interpretation of the results obtained that EFL learners at the University of Mohammed Kheider – Biskra, to certain extent, are interculturally aware, that the online exchange via FB contributes in enhancing their ICA as they benefit from it to survive and handle intercultural communication situations. More specifically, they hold the view that Facebook is beneficial for boosting and fostering their intercultural awareness, and so, avoiding cultural conflicts that occur due to stereotyping, over-generalizing and the lack of the intercultural awareness.

To put it simply, it is safe to conclude that the research hypothesis is confirmed. In other words, interacting online with people from different cultural groupings through social media, precisely Facebook, has a positive role in developing EFL learners' intercultural awareness and in producing successful intercultural exchange.



### **Recommendations**

To end this study that highlights the topic of integrating culture in English language teaching and enhancing oral performance through the use of social media; specifically Facebook, we state some suggestions and recommendation that will hopefully be useful and helpful for both teachers and students on a long term:

- Teachers are recommended to bring the cultural aspect of the language to the forefront of discussion with students whenever possible.
- It is suggested for teachers to make their lessons sound more interesting and stimulating by choosing attractive topics and updated matters to talk about in the classroom.
- It is best for teachers to emphasize openness on the students' part, and show them that there is no shame in getting to know different cultures and different people with different orientations.
- Discuss all types of differences with the students, and so the class environment would feel more familiar and comfortable so that students will relate to each other in a relieving way.
- Motivate the learners to explore foreign cultures and urge them to learn more about them; widen their horizons and expand their sight range by using real life examples of co-existence between cultures.
- Teachers ought to try change the setting by taking a field trip or two, for example, during the year outside the usual setting because field trips can actually work miracles on students.
- Make every lesson interesting for your students to explore ethnicities, arts and cultures

- It is suggested for teachers to employ visuals in the classroom to encourage students to express themselves and share their opinion with the rest of the classroom to promote class collaboration.
- It is best for teachers to get creative in their teaching strategies and ways of thinking in order to impress the students and catch their attention by being imaginative and artistic.

The authors believe that intercultural proficiency should be an important goal of language learning and that once students pass a basic level of proficiency, intercultural communication can be a motivating factor that leads to further improvement in language ability. Future research along these lines could use larger groups, additional cultural cohorts, and long-term interaction. In addition, studies that provide best practices for integrating intercultural competence into the regular curriculum will be a valuable addition to the scientific literature.

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# Appendix

## Students' Questionnaire

Greetings! Dear students, this questionnaire is intended for Third-year LMD students. When you answer this questionnaire, it will enable us to gather the necessary information. It will assist us in our attempt to investigate the role of Facebook in developing EFL students' intercultural competences. Your help makes this study useful and valid. Thank you for your time and contribution.

### 1- Are you often active on social media?

Yes

Sometimes

No

### 2- If yes, which platforms do you use most?(you can choose more than one)

Facebook  WhatsApp  Instagram  Twitter  Youtube  Quora  Pinterest   
Telegram  LinkedIn  Viber  Zoom

Others: .....

### 3- Why do you use social media?

To watch content

To share content

To chat and communicate

All of the above

### 4- How often do you speak English outside the classroom?



All the time

Frequently

Rarely

Never

**5- Do you usually like to use English when using your favorite social media platforms?**

**Please explain.**

Yes

No

.....  
.....

**6- Are you interested in making new friends / contacts / connections through social media especially Facebook?**

Very interested

Somewhat

Not interested

**7- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? And why?**

**a. Facebook is one of the three most indispensable applications on the internet.**

I agree

I disagree

.....  
 .....

**b. Facebook enhances human communication and interaction by connecting people in different parts of the world.**

I agree  I disagree

.....  
 .....

**c. Facebook's importance has declined over the years.**

I agree  I disagree

.....  
 .....

**8- How much time do you usually spend on Facebook on a daily basis?**

Less than an hour

More than 1 hour

**9- How often do you chat with people from English-speaking countries?**

Always

Frequently

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

**10- When chatting on Facebook with native English speakers, do you feel an urge to learn about their cultures and customs as well? Please explain.**

Yes

Somewhat

Not really

.....  
.....

**11- To your understanding, what does the term Intercultural Awareness mean? Choose the most suitable answer.**

a. It means that a person is fully aware of the existence of several differences between them and people from different cultures and with different backgrounds.

b. It is the notion on which human communication and interaction are based. It requires one's awareness of his/her own culture as well as the others'.

c. It is based on realizing the similarities and differences between people from different cultures but being passive about them.

**12- Do you follow any page(s) or are you a member in any group(s) that post cultural content (lifestyles, arts, travel-photography...) on Facebook?**

Yes

No

**13- As an EFL student and a Facebook user, do you feel that you can develop your intercultural awareness as well as your fluency during university lectures or through virtual interactions on social media? Why?**

Lectures

Facebook

Both

.....  
.....

**14- Do you find intercultural exchange beneficial and amusing?**

Yes

Somewhat

Not really

**15- Do you think that intercultural awareness should be taught in EFL classrooms? If yes, please explain why and share any suggestions you might have.**

Yes

No

.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you for your time!**

**Your contribution is very much appreciated.**

## Third-year LMD Questionnaire form

Greetings! Dear students, this questionnaire is intended for Third-year LMD students. When you answer this questionnaire, it will enable us to gather the necessary information. It will assist us in our attempt to investigate the role of Facebook in developing EFL students' intercultural competences. Your help makes this study useful and valid. Thank you for your time and contribution.

1- Are you often active on social media?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

2- If yes, which platforms do you use most? (you can choose more than one)

- Facebook
- Instagram

3- Why do you use social media?

- To watch content
- To share content
- To chat and communicate
- All of the above

4- How often do you speak English outside the classroom?

- All the time 1
- Frequently
- Rarely
- Never

5- Do you usually like to use English when using your favorite social media platforms? Please explain.

Short-answer text



6- Are you interested in making new friends / contacts / connections through social media especially Facebook?

- Very interested
- Somewhat
- Not interested



7- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? And why? a. Facebook is one of the three most indispensable applications on the internet.

Long-answer text

b. Facebook enhances human communication and interaction by connecting people in different parts of the world.

Long-answer text

c. Facebook's importance has declined over the years.

8- How much time do you usually spend on Facebook on a daily basis?

- Less than an hour
- More than 1 hour



9- How often do you chat with people from English-speaking countries?

- Always
- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

10- When chatting on Facebook with native English speakers, do you feel an urge to learn about their cultures and customs as well? Please explain.

Long-answer text

11- To your understanding, what does the term Intercultural Awareness mean? Choose the most suitable answer.

- a. It means that a person is fully aware of the existence of several differences between them and people fr...
- b. It is the notion on which human communication and interaction are based. It requires one's awareness o...
- c. It is based on realizing the similarities and differences between people from different cultures but being ...



12- Do you follow any page(s) or are you a member in any group(s) that post cultural content (lifestyles, arts, travel-photography...) on Facebook?

- Yes
- No

13- As an EFL student and a Facebook user, do you feel that you can develop your intercultural awareness as well as your fluency during university lectures or through virtual interactions on social media? Why?

Long-answer text

13- As an EFL student and a Facebook user, do you feel that you can develop your intercultural awareness as well as your fluency during university lectures or through virtual interactions on social media? Why?

Long-answer text

14- Do you find intercultural exchange beneficial and amusing?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- Not really

15- Do you think that intercultural awareness should be taught in EFL classrooms? If yes, please explain why and share any suggestions you might have.

Long-answer text

**الملخص**

يبحث العمل البحثي الحالي على تعزيز الكفاءة الشفهية والثقافية لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. المتعلمين الذين عولجوا في هذه المذكرة هم طلبة السنة الثالثة في اللغة الانجليزية من جامعة محمد خيضر في بسكرة عينة 40 طالب. من أجل التحقق من فرضية هذه الدراسة، تم الاعتماد على استبيان تمت الاجابة عليه من طرف الطلبة وتم جمع البيانات من الاجابات لمعرفة دور وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في تحسين الوعي الثقافي وكذا الكفاءة اللغوية والشفهية لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ويفترض أنها تساعد المتعلمين على تحسين مهارات الاتصال وغيرها من المهارات. و قد تم التوصل الى أن لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ( فايسبوك خاصة) تأثيرا على تنمية و تطوير الكفاءات الثقافية واللغوية لدى طلبة السنة الثالثة للغة الانجليزية بجامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية: الوعي الثقافي ، التعزيز ، الكفاءة الشفهية ، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.**



## **Résumé**

Les travaux de la recherche actuelle étudient l'impact des réseaux sociaux (Facebook) sur l'amélioration de la compétence interculturelle chez les apprenants de l'EFL. Les apprenants traités dans cette thèse sont des étudiants de (3<sup>ème</sup>) troisième année anglais à l'Université Mohamed Khider de Biskra (échantillon : 40 apprenants. Il est supposé que les réseaux sociaux aident les apprenants à améliorer leurs compétences en communication et d'autres compétences, telles que la compréhension de l'orale. Les données étaient recueillies en utilisant un questionnaire. L'analyse des données a montré une cause-effet relation entre les réseaux sociaux, notamment Facebook, et la compétence interculturelle des apprenants, indiquant un impact direct.

***Mots-clés : sensibilisation culturelle, renforcement, compétence orale, Anglais  
Langue étrangère.***