

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
Mohamed Khider University of Biskra  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Foreign Languages  
Division of English



# **The teachers' Role in Coping with EFL Learners' Anxiety to enhance their Oral Proficiency**

Case Study: Third Year LMD students of English at Mohamed Khider – Biskra

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as partial fulfillment for the  
Master's Degree in English Language: Sciences of Language.

Prepared by:

-Miss. Abderrezagui Afaf

Supervised by:

-Dr. Meddour Mostefa

Supervisor	Dr. Meddour Mostefa	M.C.B	University of Biskra
Chairman	Mr. Slimani Said	M.A.A	University of Biskra
Examiner	Mrs. AichaouiTheldja	M.A.B	University of Biskra

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## **Dedication**

To the adorable memory of my late mother

To my precious father

To my gorgeous aunt

To my dear brothers and lovely sisters

To my nieces and nephews

To all my friends

I dedicate this work

## **Acknowledgments**

Initially, all my praise goes to Allah because He was with me all the way to reach this important phase; (Alhamdulillah).

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**Abstract**

According to the efficient role the teacher plays in foreign language teaching, the current study aims to discover the teacher's role in coping with learners' anxiety as a severe challenge most of foreign language learners are suffering from especially in speaking. This research opted for the qualitative research as a method through two instruments; a classroom observation that was conducted with two groups, and an interview that was also conducted with students and teachers. The results revealed from the two mentioned instruments have a contributing role in confirming the hypothesis set for this research that is the teacher' support has a crucial role in lowering foreign language anxiety and enhances their oral proficiency. These results are common in the roles the teacher plays in foreign language classto make it less stressful and enjoyable for students. Then a set of structured recommendations revealed at the end, for students and teachers as well. For teachers, to try to adopt new strategies and methods which contribute in making the class healthier and more comfortable for students to express themselves. Then for students, they should try to conquer their fears and try to work more on their level in order to be self-confident.

**Abbreviations**

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

LMD: License/ Master/ Doctorate.

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## **Introduction**

Within the context of English as a Foreign Language, it is observed that students have serious problems in oral performance and anxiety is one such area where students seem to struggle. Anxiety has a relation with the feeling of frustration, fear and apprehension particularly when it interferes with learning and speaking performances. For many third year English LMD students at the university of Mohamed Khider of Biskra, attending an oral classroom session is presented as a source of anxiety and this reflects their performances to show many negative emotions and behaviors such as: fear of negative evaluation, fear of volunteering or speaking in front of classmates and teachers, clear hesitation, losing words and in some cases it leads to the extent that they skip the oral classroom minutes before the session starts. These different signs of anxiety constitute an important problem that exists among EFL learners from the early stages to highly advanced levels. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986: 130) anxiety affects most the speaking skill. Speaking is the most provoking anxiety aspect of language learning in some situations, and it is one of the most negatively influential affective variables contributing in reducing learners' oral engagement and performance.

Hence, the role of the teacher in reducing this phenomenon among EFL learners comes to light. The teacher is the main contributor to a slighter rate of anxiety for EFL learners and his/her role suggested as a recommended solution through following a variety of humanistic and affective strategies in the academic settings to mitigate learners' anxiety and raise their spontaneous engagement and better their performance as a consequence. The teachers' support plays an integral role in lowering EFL learners' anxiety and enhancing their speaking, in that context; Ewald, (2007) mentioned that a teacher' support led to lowering of the level of students' anxiety.

## **1. Statement of the purpose**

The main purpose of this study is to shed light on the role of the teachers as they are responsible for providing students appropriate support using various and affective strategies that reduce their feeling of anxiety and consequently to foster communicative situations that allow students to express themselves and interact in the target language.

Moreover, this study aims to raise teachers' awareness about the role they may play to attain higher academic success in turn and to help EFL learners to create a positive and cheerful experience in English learning as well.

## **2. Significance of the study**

This study is worthy doing because it is an attempt to find out the roles the teacher may play in order to minimize the rate of anxiety of his/her students. Although, the teachers play a crucial part, they are the responsible beyond the appropriate atmosphere that leads to a less stress during the class. Teachers are most efficient participant in classroom because they are able to adopt new methods and ways that facilitate learning and make the students feel less stressful as well as more comfortable. Teachers should make learning context less stressful for pupils. This study is beneficial for the teachers because it deals with the uses of appropriate teaching strategies in oral classes and how the teachers make their oral lesson more enjoyable the thing that will push the students to feel free in expressing themselves orally without any sign of anxiety.

### **3. Statement of the hypothesis**

When conducting the present study, we hypothesize that if there is a higher support from the teacher, lower anxiety of learners will diminish and; in turn, lead to a better oral engagement and performance.

### **4. Research question and foreshadowed questions or sub-questions**

This piece of research is an attempt to explore some questions such as;

- What are the provoking reasons of students to be anxious particularly during the oral performance?
  - How does the teacher overcome these reasons of anxiety and diminish its debilitating effect and improves the students' oral performance as well?
  - What are the effects of reducing anxiety on the performance of students during the oral classroom session and its enhancement?
- What roles can teachers play in reducing the amount of anxiety triggered in foreign language learning?
  - What are the most procedures and the effective strategies that the teacher should follow up to diminish or at least to minimize the students' anxiety?
  - To what extent he is aware of the challenges the students may encounter during the oral classroom engagement?
  - Are he equipped with the requirement that may help them to lessen these challenges?
  - What interactional opportunities does the teacher provide in the classroom?
  - Are these procedures effective to reduce the anxiety of students and enhance their oral classroom performance?

**I. The method and data gathering tools:** in order to accomplish this research; suitable method, data gathering tools and a particular sample were chosen to attain accurate results to this work.

### **1. Method**

To assess the hypothesis stated earlier, this research is conducted through the qualitative method as an appropriate way to deal with this issue because it aims to gather an exhaustive understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. It is conducted in a natural setting with the goal of building a complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon. Moreover, qualitative data can provide a deeper implication as to how a phenomenon is experienced than numerical scores on the level of anxiety. People's feeling cannot be easily quantified.

### **2. Participants**

In this investigation, the sample is Third year LMD graduate students because they tend to show clearer anxiety and negative emotions and behaviors than first and second year students also, they have normally reached a proficiency level and master the English language. In addition, the participants are the students during the oral session as a focused group to attain clear image about the situation. It also includes the teachers of oral expression as participants.

### **3. Instruments of data collection**

To investigate this piece of research the instruments that are adopted as the appropriate tools used to collect data are:

**a. Classroom observation:** is used at English classroom particularly third year in oral session in order to have a clear image about the problem. Classroom observation often requires sessions of intensive work because we need to become accepted as a natural part of the environment in order to assure that the observations are of the natural phenomenon. Therefore, to observe all the changes according to various conditions in order to realize the exact reasons beyond students' anxiety.

**b. Interview:** because it is the most suitable tool for gathering adequate data about the research problem and the responses are gathered in a standardized way makes the interview more objective. The interview is conducted with eight students of third year from two different groups and another interview with the teachers; it is conducted with two teachers of oral expression.

**Introduction:**

Classroom anxiety is considered as an integral and fundamental area of foreign language teaching/learning where teachers and learners are the main participants in abrogating this challenge. The optimal aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical background about this phenomenon regarding its definition, types and its main provoking reasons, to make a clear image about the problem. Additionally, the correlation between anxiety and speaking comes to light according to that, this chapter will explain the relation among anxiety and speaking performance. Then it will clarify the chief sources of anxiety that the learner encounters during the speaking performance as well as the manifestations of speaking anxiety.

## 1. Definition of anxiety

Anxiety is actually too broad from which to free ourselves. It is a pristine or original element in every human being. Tillich (as cited in Hendrix 1967) defines anxiety as “finitude in awareness”, additionally; He describes this phenomenon as a “state of helplessness”, “a painful feeling characterized by a loss of direction” and a “lack of intentionality”. Moreover, it is defined in “Complete Wordfinder” as “a nervous disorder characterized by a state of excessive uneasiness.” Besides; Barker, R et al (2007: 330) indicated that “The definition of anxiety suggested that it is a negative mental state characterized by worry and apprehension.” Moreover, anxiety is defined as “a state of intense agitation, foreboding, tension, and dread, occurring from a real or perceived threat of impending danger.” Mayer, (2008: 4).

However; in direct correlation with the context of learning English as a foreign language, it has been observed that the concept of anxiety will change to foreign language anxiety or classroom anxiety in which it interferes with learning. Hence, some scholars defined anxiety within this orientation as; “a mental block against learning a foreign language” (Horwitz et al 1986: 125). Then they provide a clinical definition in this angle that “Anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system”. Furthermore, Horwitz, (2001: 113) points out that anxiety is perceived naturally by students of language and it influences language learning and in psychology and education it has been considered to be one of the most highly examined variables.

In this respect, MacIntyre (1999: 27) cited in (Dornyei, Z. 2005: 199) defines language anxiety as “worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language”. Foss and Reitzel (1988: 438) cited in (Pellegrino Avoni 2005: 22) defined anxiety as “abnormally high and debilitating level of fear associated with real or anticipated

communication with one or more persons.” Anxiety is the logical response to the fear of oral performance during the classroom especially when the learner obliged to stand in front of the teacher and his/her classmates.

## 2. Types of Anxiety

There are several types of anxiety. Trait anxiety is one of them; this kind of anxiety is an aspect of personality and is part of individual’s form of behavior. According to Barker et al (2007: 330) *trait anxiety* is “a behavioral tendency to feel threatened even in situations that are not really threatening, and then to respond to this with high levels of state anxiety”. There is another type of anxiety which is *State Anxiety* Barker et al (2007: 330) defined it as “a temporary, ever-changing mood state that is an emotional response to any situation considered to be threatening.” Moreover; the other kind of anxiety is a *Situation-Specific Anxiety*; it is approximately the same as trait anxiety except that it relates to a single particular context or situation. Cassady (2010: 96) stated that “Situation-specific anxieties are stable over time but not necessarily consistent across situations”.

There are other types of anxiety debilitating anxiety and beneficial one. Theorists highlighted the distinction between debilitating anxieties; nervousness before giving a public speech, and facilitative anxiety; feelings of pressure to get the job done (Brown, 2007). Accordingly, Woodrow (2006: 309) stated that “Anxiety experienced in communication in English can be debilitating and can influence students’ adaptation to the target environment and ultimately the achievement of their educational goals.” This means that anxiety probably has beneficial or inhibitory effects on the foreign language learning process.

Furthermore, sometimes anxiety is not seen as one factor but as a complex conceived of components that have different characteristics. Dornyei (2005: 199) established two important distinctions for anxiety mentioned below:

- **Beneficial/facilitating vs. inhibitory/debilitating anxiety:** Anxiety does not importantly hinder the performance as observed but sometimes it may stimulate it, and the cognitive component of anxiety 'Worry' has a negative influence on performance but the emotional constituent has not harmful influence.
- **Trait vs. state anxiety:** trait anxiety refers to a permanent tendency to become anxious in a cross-section of situations, whereas state anxiety as an emotional response to the present situation it is the momentary experience of anxiety.

### 3. Theories of anxiety

There are myriad causes of anxiety. Horwitz et al (1986) recognized three associated anxieties to help the researchers and scholars to understand anxiety-provoking potential of foreign language learning; communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1970), test anxiety (Sarason, 1978) and fear of negative evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969).

#### 3.1. Communication apprehension

The anxiety's psychological symptoms among students include feeling of nervousness and apprehension before and while a course. Interestingly, most of students assume that feeling of apprehension is unique for them only, and the rest of students are brave do not feel anxious when confronting the threat of speaking in front of others. However, interaction during the classroom or particularly when the teacher demands from the learner a short talk

tend to be a provoking reason for the learner to feel anxious this is the other shape of communication apprehension that is associated with fear from communication with other person. According to (Holbrook, Hilary Taylor 1978), 31 percent of elementary school students experience some level of communication apprehension. Moreover, they stated about communication apprehension that “It is a pattern of anxiety established often in the elementary grades, which can profoundly affect or all of a student’s oral communication, social skills and self-esteem”.

Furthermore, fear from communicating with others causes anxiety as mentioned earlier, hence; Horwitz et al. (1986: 128) defined communication apprehension as “a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people”. Simply, communication apprehension is an outcome of fear from communicating with others.

Predominantly, communication apprehension occurs when the two speakers were from two different cultures or with different social status. Hashemi&Abbasi (2013: 642) reported about social distance that “It can also explain the source of intercultural communication apprehension where unequal linguistic competencies of L1 and FL/SL speakers can make the communication event stressful for L2/FL speakers.”

### **3.2. Test anxiety**

Testing is considered as one of the most provoking reasons of anxiety. Each student encounters many negative emotions such as; stress, tension, dread and apprehension; that are associated with testing and reflect in nonsense mistakes particularly during the oral classroom session where the students are obliged to take a talk in front of others and their fear and clear hesitation will exchange their abilities and preparation for the test. Besides, Test anxiety as

clarified by Horwitz et al (1986) “refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure.” The same agreement for Ayres & Bristow (2009: 68) about Test anxiety in their report “Test anxiety is one of the most disruptive factors associated with underachievement of students.” This indicates that “pervasive negative feedback will undermine intrinsic motivation and promote feelings of incompetence, anxiety, and frustration.” Farr (2010: 100).

Moreover, in his intention to examine the nature of test anxiety, Mayer (2008: 81) stated that “Testing by its very nature is being judged and evaluated in relationship to one’s peers”. And in another context, Mayer (2008: 82) argues that there are multiple amount of reasons that cause test anxiety such as; having a previous anxiety disorder, depression during the entrance of school, low self-worth, cope poorly in stressful situation, life changes, school problems and Practical reasons include having poor homework and study skills. Hence, he concluded his agreement with this statement “So every test is fraught with anxiety to be perfect.” It is abnormal for any learner to be anxious and to experience this feeling of anxiety especially when he/she wants to reach an aim then this depends on particular test.

When it comes to components or manifestations of test anxiety; learners with test anxiety can experience physical, mental, or emotional indications which can vary from mild to severe. A figure 1 below is a schematic diagram that contains a summary of the theoretical construction of the present study. It clarifies the four components of test anxiety (i.e., Worry, Test Irrelevant Thinking, Bodily Symptoms and Tension) that function as independent variables and Academic Performance is the dependent variable in the study, which denotes the student’s final examination marks of accounting courses.

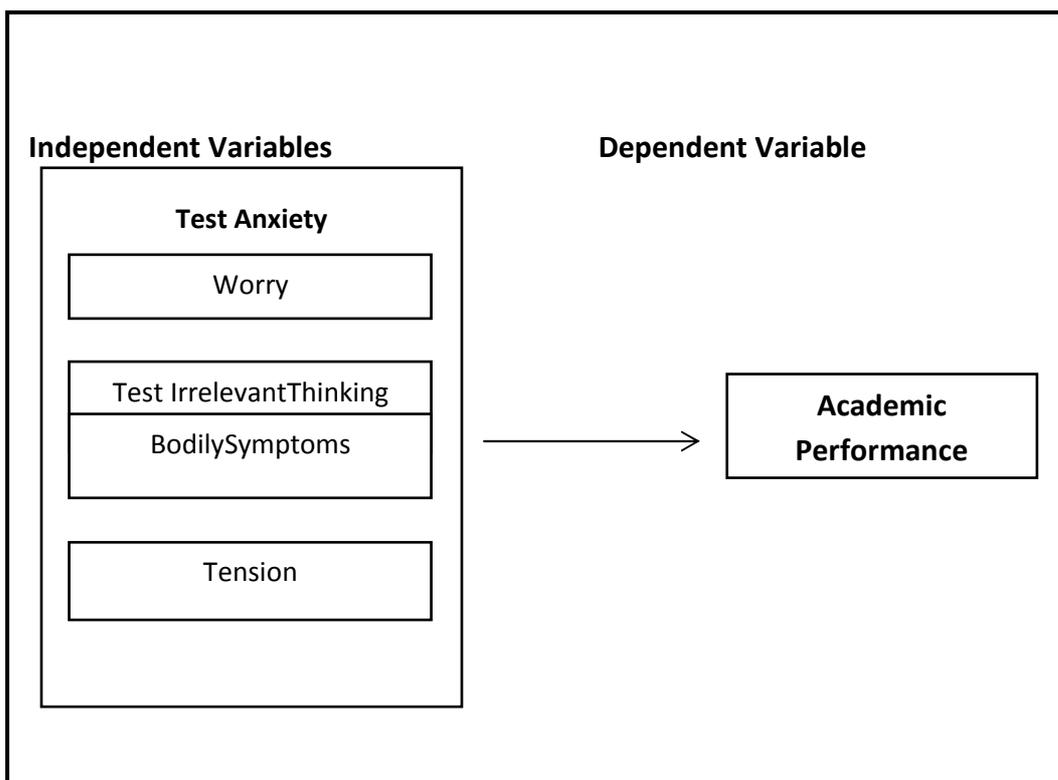


Figure 01: Schematic Diagram. Ayres & Bristow (2009: 75)

### 3.3. Fear of negative evaluation

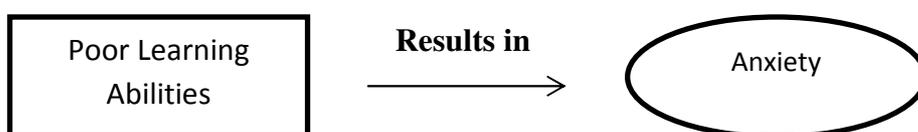
Anxiety and speech communication appear to have a strong bond with each other. Actually, this fear of negative evaluation is something normal as a natural reaction to real interaction particularly with proficient speakers, Richards (2012: 27) asserted that “many learners may also be shocked and disappointed when they have to speak in second or foreign language in real interactions with competent speakers of the language”. Consequently, it is a natural feeling when the learner in a foreign language context feels anxious during his/her oral performance because he/she will be exposed to many thoughts and expectations about the assessments of the teacher. Accordingly; the foreign language learner may face anxiety while performing something orally in front of class then he/she will be afraid from the opinions of others about his pronunciation, intonation if is it right or no. Thus, fear of negative evaluation will be one of the main provoking reasons of anxiety. Okata 2005 (in Richards 2012) points

out that some Japanese learners reported that their greatest source of anxiety is fear of negative evaluation by others.

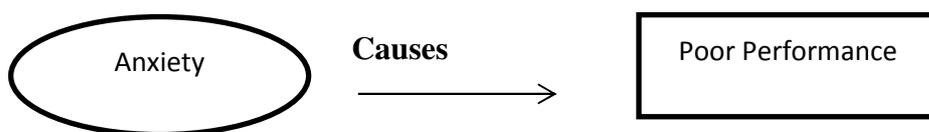
#### 4. Language anxiety as a result or as a cause

Many researchers dispute about language anxiety, whether; it is a result or a cause, or it may be both result and cause; and the following diagram shows that. According to the diagram bellow, anxiety as a result occurs when the learner shows poor learning abilities; whereas, its existence as a cause means that its occurrence causes or leads to poor performance. But in between there is a mediated point of anxiety where poor learning abilities results anxiety and anxiety in turn causes poor performance.

##### Anxiety as a result



##### Anxiety as a cause



##### Anxiety as a result and as a cause

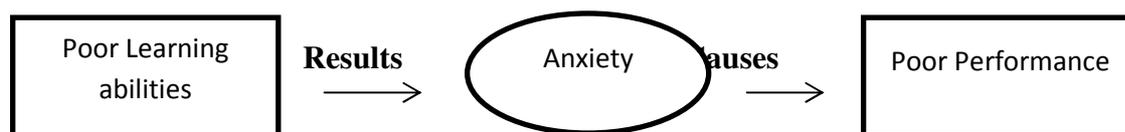


Figure 02: Anxiety as a result or as a cause of learners' poor performance (Achbi&Sebaà, 2012: 24).

## **5. Anxiety and speaking**

### **5.1. Definition of speaking**

Speaking is considered as one of the most important skills because actually it is the first responsible device that goes beyond making the first impressions about the person through his/her way of speaking. Rezakis (2005: 12) asserted that “your success depends greatly on your ability to speak well.” Therefore, speaking is a vital skill in any area of success, if students are speaking well in front of their classmates, this will enable them to explain their ideas and persuade others to their opinions particularly in the context of foreign language learning. Additionally, speaking has a direct impact on the success of second language learners. Richards (2012: 21) concluded that

*In sum, the development of good speaking skills is no longer a bonus for language learners, but an essential aspect of their language-proficiency development because it has a direct impact on the personal and professional success of many of them.*

Moreover, one of the previous works on oral interaction by (Hatch, 1978) in (Richards, 2012) emphasized the significant role that speaking plays in second language acquisition then he argues as well as some other researchers that engaging in a talk with some other expert speakers has two benefits; first, they will be helped by their interlocutor input; second, they have the chance to hear more accurate model of language being used. This clarifies the integral role of speaking skill in obtaining the language successfully.

### **5.2. The relation between anxiety and speaking**

During any oral speaking performance there are some associated emotions that are negative most of time such as; worry, fear, apprehension, hesitation, dread and these emotions and others are related in a particular way to speaking in front of audience that has a strong

bond with anxiety. Speaking and anxiety are something inseparable, the relation among these two concepts like the two faces of a coin. When it comes to the context of learning English as a foreign language, the graduate students are exposed more to show clearer anxiety than others. As a small prove, Wårnsby (2012) in her study to examine speaking anxiety and classroom dynamics in the English Second Language classroom from the students' perspective outcomes that "more than a half of students investigated do not feel positive about speaking English in class and most of them state that they often feel anxious when speaking in front of the class."

Moreover, Richards (2012: 26) stated "we could say that affective factors, such as anxiety, are most strongly linked to speaking" he added "learners who suffer from language anxiety perceive speaking in second language to be uncomfortable experience".

### **5.3. Speaking anxiety**

Speaking is considered as one of the highest causes of fear and stress for most of foreign language learners, yet it is unavoidably through the whole time of learning particularly in the oral session. In this dimension, it is called speaking anxiety; because speaking is particularly a provoking anxiety. Everyone gets nervous about speaking publicly. Richards (2012: 27) points out that many learners may be shocked and disappointed if they encountered with components speakers when they are obliged to use English language in a natural setting. Consequently, speaking anxiety will be an uncomfortable experience and it is the set of feelings the speaker experiences during any interactional use of English as a second language. Hence, Young (1990: 540) defined speaking anxiety as "the feeling of apprehension, nervousness, or worry that interrupts students speaking performance just before or whilst performing English speaking tasks in class".

## **6. Sources of speaking anxiety:**

Many studies have explored the main sources and causes of anxiety among foreign language learners (Shabani, 2012; Tanveer, 2007; Subaşı, 2010). The sources listed below are the most common ones as a foundation for anxiety being constructed.

### **6.1. Lack of self-confidence**

Anxiety symptoms most of cases belong to the lack of self-confidence, or self-esteem; where the learners build a bad image about themselves then the deeper mind in turn, believes this negative thoughts and produces this feelings of fear, apprehension, dread, worry and so on that are correlated with anxiety. This interpretation of anxiety symptoms reveals that lack of self-confidence is one of the primary sources of anxiety. However, increased or decreased rate of self-confidence may perceive to improve or to hinder the extent of anxiety.

In a study about foreign language anxiety, Hashemi&Abbasi, (2013) reported that“Speaking in a foreign language was found to be disturbing because of the fear that it might lead to the loss of one’s positive self-image.” This indicates loss of self-confidence because of fear that results with anxiety from speaking particularly in foreign language. Basically, the vulnerability effect of low self-esteem on the learners while speaking in front of class is a direct source of anxiety.

Learners with low self-confidence are more prone to experience feeling of anxiety, and this will make them think about themselves less than they are. Supporting to this point, Cheng, Horwitz&Schallert (2009) prepare a study that concentrated on both speaking and written communication between Taiwanese learners come to result that students who reach higher stages of anxiety inclined to have low self-concepts as language learners (Richards, 2012).

## **6.2. Fear of mistakes**

Another important foundation of anxiety that most of foreign language learners experienced with varied rates from low extent to high extent is fear of making mistakes. Actually, they do not take the risk to talk because they are not sure about the validity of their answers which results to anxiety, as a negative feeling threatening their oral performance in a particular sense. As confirmed by many theorists, (Nunan, 1999; Yi Htwe, 2007; Robby, 2010) (in Dobinson, 2014) they asserted that “fear of mistake becomes one of the main factors of students’ reluctance to speak in English in the classroom”. In fact, major of learners who experience this fear are may be afraid from their other classmates’ laughing or mocking, also, their teacher’s critical evaluation or negative evaluation. Contrary, the teacher should not criticize them badly because they may learn better from their mistakes.

## **6.3. Negative experiences**

Each learner has a set of events that he/she experience throughout the varied phases of learning and it will remain present in his/her mind in each similar moment particularly if these moments were negative. In fact, negative experiences have a fundamental correlation with anxiety for most of foreign language learners. And most of times those negative experiences stem from the teachers and the way they are dealing with their students’ actions and attitudes or from falling in some exams test anxiety is an apprehension and fear of academic evaluation. Shabani (2012: 2379) indicated about anxiety that “It could be defined as a fear of falling in tests and an unpleasant experience held either consciously or unconsciously by learners in many situations”. In addition, Tóth, Z (2011) in her interview study about foreign language anxiety and advanced English foreign language learners points out that, at their early phases, foreign language learners with negative experiences are more expected to improve foreign language anxiety.

In his study that examines in detail the reactions reported by Japanese university students to an anxiety-provoking situations; Andrade & Williams (2009: 4) reported that Low performance and reduced attainment are the outcome of negative social behavior that can be characterized with keeping silence, reluctance to react in the class, nonattendance of the session. In correlated to this, Farr, (2010: 100) included that “Pervasive negative feedback will undermine intrinsic motivation and promote feelings of incompetence, anxiety, and frustration.”

Equally, Long et al. (2011: 135) in their book *The Psychology of Education* claimed that there are some social challenges that may cause enduring problems such as school phobia, and these challenges correlated with a high levels of anxiety. According to Long et al. (2011: 15) “pupil becoming anxious about going to school, possibly as a result of a stressful experience such as bullying or a bad experience with a teacher.” As shown in figure 03.

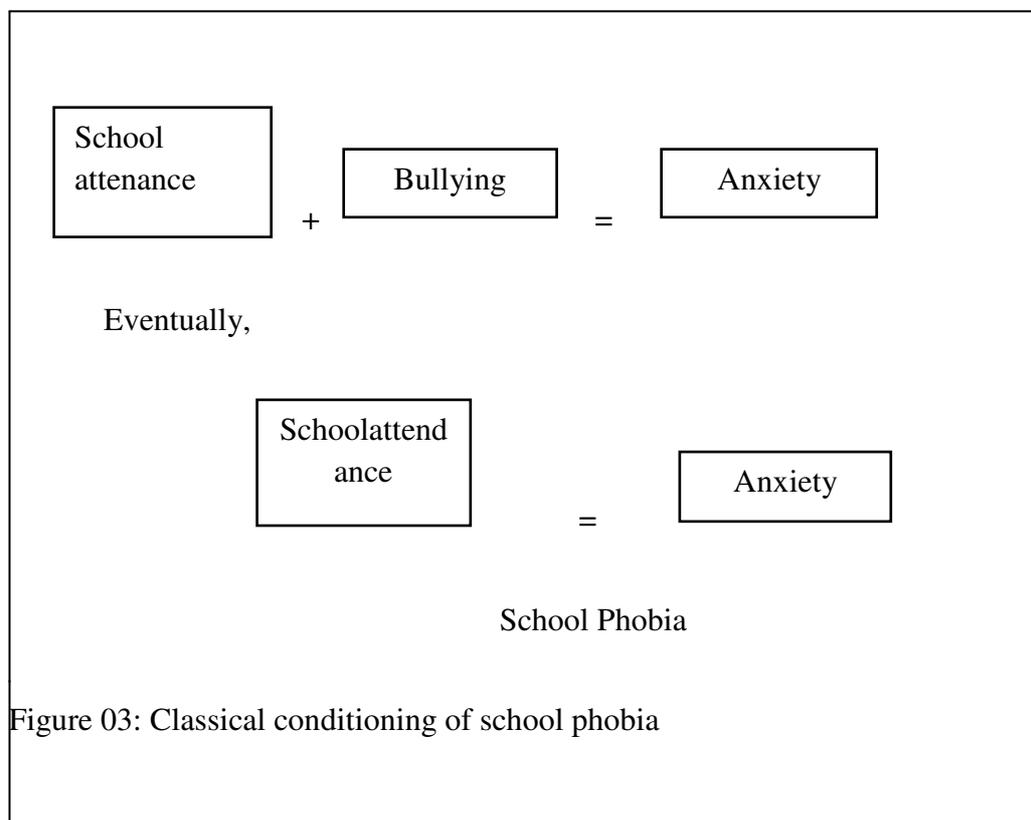


Figure 03: Classical conditioning of school phobia

Then, Long et al, (2011: 335) added that “Although school phobia can be triggered by an unpleasant school-based experience such as bullying.” This supports the point that anxiety and social phobia caused by a negative experience, and bullying is a suitable example and evidence that promotes this opinion.

#### **6.4. Shyness**

All of us experience anxiety at different times and feeling of shyness is one such an integral source that yields it. Most of foreign language learners particularly are shy to ask for help if they encountered with a difficulty to understand what the teacher means with his/her words or they are shy to be volunteering to talk. Dobinson, (2014) defined shyness as “an emotional thing that many students suffer from at some time when they are required to speak in English class”. Hence, shy students are more exposure to result with more anxiety during any oral performance. This means that shyness is a natural feeling but in some increased degrees it becomes a direct source for anxiety then the student who is shy will be an anxious student as a result of speaking orally in an English class. For instance, Baldwin (2011) (in Dobinson, 2014) further explains that “speaking in front of people is one of the more common phobias that students encounter and feeling of shyness makes their mind go blank or that they will forget what to say”.

#### **6.5. Lack of motivation**

Motivation has an integral role in the achievement of learners in their learning process. The deficiency of motivation is probably the main contributor in many serious challenges that hinders the operation of learning. It leads to reduce the power that pushes the learner to perform well particularly during the oral performance. One supporting study by Bernard concerning academic motivation and treats it in correlation with foreign language learning, found that language motivation is originate in predicting the results, besides activities that

reinforce language use about students' own lives and interests. Thus, Bernard (2010: 06) in this study stated that "intrinsically motivated students perform better in the classroom." Additionally, Horwitz et al (1986: 127) indicates that "the poor test performance and inability to perform in class can contribute to a teacher's inaccurate assessment that the students lacks either some necessary aptitude for learning a language or sufficient motivation to do the necessary work for a good performance."

Yan (1998) suggested that there is a negative correlation among anxiety and power of students in general, then the anxious behaviors will be an outcome of lack of motivation (cited in Wei, 2007: 07) here in more explicit manner there is an obvious correlation among anxiety and lack of motivation.

#### **6.6. Overcrowded class**

Overcrowded class is another fundamental source for anxiety which contributes in creating an unpleasant atmosphere that hinders the students' opportunity to express their ideas freely. Consequently, overcrowded classrooms or classes that have a high density are more exposed to produce anxious students than less crowded classes. In this respect, Savage, et al (2010: 71) asserted that "students are becoming anxious and stressed because of the density of the classroom".

Moreover, overcrowded classroom is an important indicator that confronting the students during the class and causes anxiety for them, it makes them feel that the whole class hacking their opportunity to express ideas and thoughts. Hence; Savage, et al (2010: 71) points out that the two signs that make learners feel crowded and that someone attacking their own universe are high of aggression and anxiety.

## 6.7. Instructor-learner interaction

Generally speaking, it is well known that most of teachers interact more with brilliant students and discussing with them a variety of topics, ignoring intentionally the other students and those ignored students as a result to that they do not try to talk much. And this will be a sign of speaking anxiety with time.

*When you get the chance to observe other teachers teaching, it's often noticeable how some race along at the speed of their best students, oblivious to the fact that the weaker learners are getting more and more left behind, more and more lost. Scrivener, (2012: 196).*

Furthermore, the teachers tend to ask those students who seem active more and more questions because they get answers, and they feel their teaching has been successful. However, the point that someone gives a right answer means that they have already know the answer and the learning happened, but the learning is still around, it is happening with the students who did not get the answer. It is these ones that need our attention (Scrivener, 2012: 150-149). The Sequence of exchanges of classroom work below clarifies that; shadowed students that mediate that interaction among the teacher and his or her active students are more expected to suffer from speaking anxiety.

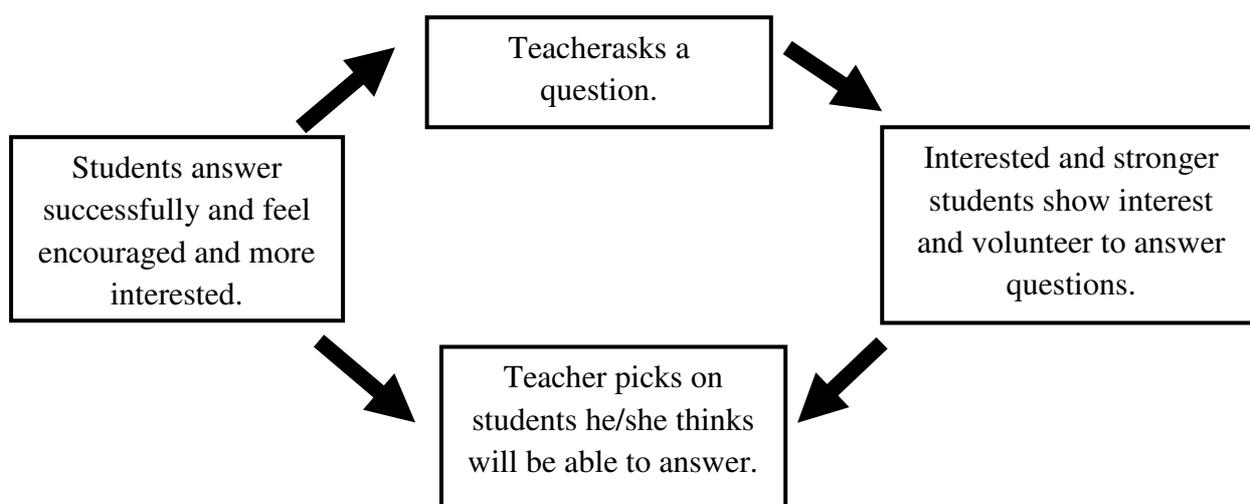


Figure: 04. Sequence of exchanges of classroom work.

## **6.8. Peers**

For learners, in the context of learning foreign language another foundation of anxiety is speaking in front of their peers (Koch and Terrell, 1991 as cited in Shabani, 2012: 2379). In his study about sources of anxiety, Shabani (2012: 2380) identified some findings which reveal that “communication apprehension felt towards teachers, peers and native speakers was suggested as a factor provoking anxiety.” This indicates that peers are also another important source of speaking anxiety within the context of learning foreign language. In the same angle, Krashen (in Young, 1991: 427) suggested that “People with low self-esteem worry about what their peers think; they are concerned with pleasing others. And that I think has to do a great degree with anxiety.” This indicates that when students fear or worry about what their classmates think about them, the performance they do will be affected negatively and lead them to be anxious.

In retrospect, Hashemi & Abbasi, (2013: 642) included in their study that Jones (2004) claims that the learners of language experience fear owing to their “fear of appearing awkward, foolish and incompetent in the eyes of learners’ peers or others.”

## **6.9. Lack of preparation:**

The more you practice something the more you be fluent on it, all of people know this, the same thought for speaking a foreign language. The English foreign language learners do not speak English as native speakers do; with high confidence and without any hesitation but with imitation, repetition and more preparation the speaker’s performance will be improved. Kanar (293) stated that “preparation and practice are the keys to feeling confident about giving a speech or presentation.” (as cited in Achbi & Sebaà, 2012).

Furthermore, Preparation minimizes the students’ mistakes in one way or another. Hence, the students who do not give sufficient preparation for the exam it may lead to poor

performance. Ayres and Bristow (2009:70). In other terms, a reduced amount of preparation causes a higher rate of anxiety and fear of failing in the test; Ayres and Bristow (2009: 83) asserted that “Normally, less preparation would seem to lead to a higher test anxiety due to the greater chance of poor performance.”

## **7. Other common sources of anxiety**

Additionally to what has been mentioned earlier, there are a set of sources that are most commonly spread among the whole foreign language learners approximately. Such as;

- Lack of communication competence, Hashemi&Abbasi, (2013: 642) included that “unequal linguistic competencies of first language and foreign or second language speakers can make the communication event stressful for second language or foreign language speakers.”
- Social and cultural status as Hashemi&Abbasi, (2013: 642) stated “The social context, culture, social status, the sense of foreignness of the language learners has also been found to affect the L2/FL anxiety.”
- Personal and interpersonal issues,
- Classroom procedures; many classroom activities and situations considered as a provoking reason for anxiety.
- Language testing, here Ayres and Bristow (2009) assumed that “most students experience normal nervousness during tests, others experience severe anxiety.”
- The atmosphere,

All of these alternative symptoms appear as manifestations of anxiety on foreign language learners’ attitudes and behaviors, particularly, during the oral presentation.

## **8. Manifestations of speaking anxiety**

Mainly, it is important to discuss how anxiety is manifested, Oxford (1999: 66) argues that the behaviors vary from one culture to another and the one seems to be anxious in one culture will be normal in other culture.

Seemingly, speaking anxiety can be manifested as purely psychological symptoms with few physical manifestations, or it may be also seen as a purely physical experience with no clear psychological distress.

### **8.1. General avoidance**

Foreign language learners may experience anxiety that it can appear in some manifestations such as; being unable to remember the answer, displaying carelessness, cutting class, coming late, arriving unprepared, lack of volunteering in class, having difficulty to answer even the simplest questions. (Oxford, 1999: 66)

### **8.2. Physical actions**

During the exposure to foreign language learning settings, and the stressful feelings that encounter the learner especially in speaking, anxiety will be manifested in students' behaviors as physical actions such as; struggling, fidgeting, and playing with hair or clothing, nervously touching objects, unable to produce and pronounce the words in the right way (Oxford, 1999: 66).

### **8.3. Psychological symptoms**

Foreign language learners may also suffer from anxiety that revealed with psychological manifestations such as; complaining about a headache, experiencing tight muscles, feeling unexplained pain or tension in any part of the body(Oxford, 1999: 66).

#### **8.4. Other signs of language anxiety**

Besides to the manifestations that have been mentioned above, there are also some other signs which might reflect language anxiety relying on the culture such as over studying, perfectionism, social avoidance, conversational withdrawal, lack of eye contact, hostility, image protection or masking behaviors (exaggerated smiling, laughing, nodding, joking) and so on(Oxford, 1999: 66).

Furthermore, Craske and Barlow (2006) (in Clark and Beck, 2010) provide a very helpful explanation of the three components of anxiety in their self-help book for worry called *Mastery of Your Anxiety and Worry*. They note that a better understanding of the physical, cognitive, and behavioral components of anxiety helps reduce the mystery and uncontrollability of anxiety and provides a framework for learning how to reduce anxiety.

#### **Conclusion**

To conclude, exposure of students to foreign language learning' environment stimulates anxiety particularly while speaking in front of the whole class. Speaking anxiety as a serious challenge has a variety of provoking reasons that appear as manifestations on learners' behaviors that hinder his/her assimilation and affect the educational achievements as well. Concerning foreign language anxiety as a challenge that requires immediate and effective strategies and methods to conquer it, it is worthy to mention that this depends on the first step on the teacher's role as a remedy and his way to cope with it in order to enhance the students' oral proficiency. This will be the content of the second chapter.

## **Introduction**

One of the current challenges in foreign language teaching is to provide students with a low-anxiety classroom environment. This chapter attempts to highlight the significant multidimensional role of teachers of English as a foreign language through covering a theoretical foundation about it to probe the effectiveness of the teacher's coping with classroom anxiety. Accordingly; this chapter will explore varied definitions of teacher and teaching and their mediate relation. It also emulates some important roles of the teacher, strategies, support, methods and procedures that are affective in dealing with classroom anxiety. Moreover; this chapter will look for some qualities the teacher should be equipped with.

## **1. Defining teacher and teaching**

Since that, teacher and teaching are the main participants in the operation of learning and teaching, it is important to provide some definitions for each of them.

### **1.1. Definition of teacher**

Since teaching is a process, the teacher is one of its main pillars. He/she is a person who presents his/her efforts to make a positive impression on his/her students. All of people have an idea about the teacher as he/she is the person who teach and provide someone else with knowledge or instructions. Teacher is “a schoolteacher, educator, instructor, professor, tutor, fellow, lecturer, reader, preceptor, master, mistress, schoolmaster, schoolmistress, coach, trainer, guide, mentor ...” all of these terms used in “Complete Wordfinder” as an explanation for the utterance of teacher. Additionally, Wrench, J.C et al (2009) asserted that “Effective teachers are effective communicators”.

### **1.2. Definition of teaching:**

There isa considerable amount of perspectives or theories that exposure the operation of teaching from varied angles, such as; the behavioral approach, the cognitive and others. However, this research concerned with the definition that exceeds the ordinary definition of teaching as “The work or profession of a teacher” or “the ideas or beliefs are taught” (Oxford dictionary) to the one regarding the emotional side and the other roles the teacher should pay more attention to.

Hence, Scrivener (2012: 154) stated that “As educators, we have wider responsibilities for helping humans to learn how to learn better, to grow and develop, to become more rounded, more autonomous, more capable, more balanced, happier people”. This means that

teaching is not just allowing the learner learn the language as Tomlinson, (1998: 3) defined it “the term ‘teaching’ is used to refer to anything done by materials developers or teachers to facilitate the learning of the language.” Rather than it is helping the learner to be independent, capable and happier and all of this happen with teachers’ support.

Furthermore, Wrench, J.C et al. (2009) stated “Teaching is about establishing effective and affective communication relationships with your students.” Where the students and the teacher’ interaction should be real and emotional equally and effectively. According to Bachar (2013: 377), teaching has an intensely emotional base. In teaching, teachers should know how to deal with their students’ wants and needs; they should not forget that they are human beings and they have to work with emotions. As a result, emotions play a great role in effective teaching and it has a positive impact on students’ achievement.

## **2. The Relation between teachers and students**

The relation between teachers and their students is a serviceable matter which leads to a better educational achievements and developments. Accordingly, the instructors and learners’ interaction and its success depend on the way the teacher or the instructor deals with his/her students. The teacher is the first and the main contributor in a successful relation being shaped among them, and the students should respond to them. However, sometimes the teacher is the responsible of raising the students’ fear and apprehension of expressing themselves freely. Young (1991: 429) claimed that “A harsh manner of correcting students’ errors is often cited as provoking anxiety.” Hence, it is important to the teacher to give more attention to the way he/she is correcting students’ mistakes, and the way of dealing with all the students during the class.

### **3. Teachers' role**

The teacher is the main pillar for the operation of teaching being constructed. Within the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign language, it is important for the teacher to pay more attention to the problems that hinder the learning process, particularly the problem of anxiety that most of students experience during the oral performance. Along these lines, Phillips (1992: 22) warns, "In today's proficiency-oriented classroom, teachers must continue to view foreign language anxiety as a serious problem to be confronted in the effort to encourage students to further their education in foreign languages." (Cited in Wei, M, 2007). This indicates some roles the teacher as the main participant in the classroom should be equipped with.

#### **3.1. Caring**

Before the teacher gives instructions for his/her students, he has to provide them with some behaviors as evidences in order to show his care about them especially regarding the emotional side. Particularly, O'Connor (2008) claimed that "The caring behavior that teachers exhibit in their work is seen to have professional, performative and philosophical dimensions as individual teachers". This means that when teachers show their care in teaching, this will be helpful in guiding and shaping their emotional and professional decision in turn and controlling the students also to be careful in their performances.

#### **3.2. Understanding**

Understanding students is another important role the teachers should approach. Before teaching; the teacher primarily should understand his/her students' attitudes and thoughts.

Each student has a background, for instance; if the learner behaves badly in particular situation, the teacher should understand the learner's position or at least he/she has to try to interpret or to predict the impellent beyond their bad behaviors avoiding by that the pre-judgments. Most of times, the student commits some bad behaviors as a result of some particular conditions.

### **3.3. Listening**

Listening is an important role for the teacher, where he/she is the main contributor in the educational achievements of students. One of the most important techniques that encourage the student to speak in the class that the teacher should be equipped with is listening to what the student says "people speak most when they feel really listened to". (Scrivener, 2012: 180). Additionally, one of the most solutions of the unwillingness to speak for students by the teachers is by listening to them in a good way, to know their problems, and the reasons behind their silence and their fear from interacting in the class.

### **3.4. Knowing Students as individuals**

Knowing the student as individual is another important characteristic the teacher should be equipped with during performing his/her role as a teacher. Each student has his own personality, interests and way of learning. In this respect, Scrivener, (2012: 41) urges the teacher to treat each student as individual stating that,

*Don't view the class only as a class. As quickly as you can, learn names and start to see and believe in each person as an individual with potential. Let them see that this is how you view them.*

This indicates that, the teacher should know each student's interests and traces of his/her personality, and then try to treat each of them separately from the whole class according to the person as an individual.

#### **4. Teachers' strategies to enhance the willingness of students to speak**

There are many strategies that the teacher should consider in his way of dealing with students. These strategies are important in one way or another for reducing the amount of anxiety.

##### **4.1. Humanistic Strategies**

The teacher should approach humanistic strategies to deal with his/her students appropriately as individuals, understanding the nature and the requirements of each one, and dealing with each student as a human before anything is an important point the teacher should consider. Accordingly this will give each student a chance to succeed and receive positive reinforcement and consequently will hinder the feeling of anxiety during speaking in front of the class because this will give them self-confidence.

##### **4.2. Cooperative learning**

Collaborative or cooperative learning is an effective strategy in encouraging anxious students to participate in group activities; it is beneficial in getting students to engage in groups and to reinforce the mutual respect and honesty among them. This type of learning will break the ice and allow the student to learn how to foster peer relationships, then will erode the anxiety caused by peers. Cooperative learning is effective treatment in reducing shyness and anxiety. Apparently, Slavin, R et al (1985: 222) asserted this in their *book Learning to Cooperate, Cooperating to Learn*, saying that "Strong but

nonsignificant tendencies were found for the alternating individual-group exam procedure to result in lower test anxiety than the other treatments”.

Furthermore, Hashemi&Abbasi (2013: 641) stated that “language learners reported to be less anxious and stressful in environments that emphasize collaborative activities among the teachers and the students”. This indicates collaborative practices are effective in conquering the feeling of anxiety the students encounter during the foreign language class, seemingly; it is appreciative for the teacher to use that kind of strategies to alleviate any sign of anxiety during the session.

Additionally, it is worthy to mention that cooperative learning may be a source of anxiety for some students. Due to their lack of linguistic competence which means that they may be ashamed from their level in front of their peers.

### **4.3. Motivation**

Motivate students also is an effective strategy the teacher should approach in order to make the class more enjoyable and attractive for the learner. If the learners are motivated, they will have an inside-power that pushes them to express themselves. Accordingly, the teachers should consider this point in the way of choosing the subjects of discussion, trying to choose some attractive and motivating topics. Bernard (2010: 6-7) in his study about motivation in foreign language learning stated that “students who receive autonomy-support from teachers to enhance their intrinsic motivation, perceive themselves to be more competent and have more interest in and enjoyment of material”. This is clear evidence about the importance of motivation and the enjoyment motivation gives to the learner.

Besides, the students experiencing some social difficulties, regardless to the setting, it can be hard for them to engage and they may be recognized as unmotivated (Kirby and McDonald, 2009: 21). Then, when the learner encounters with those difficulties such as anxiety or depression, in the treatment presented to this challenge it is important to concentrate on this issue and try to motivate them. Kirby, E. & McDonald, J. (2009: 22) in their book '*Engage Every Student*' that is about motivation tools for teachers and parents, stated as a solution for some social problems such as; anxiety that teachers should "build strong relationships with them, and carefully examine what they may need to be motivated to learn." This clarifies the role of the teacher in motivating his/her students to push them towards conquering those negative feelings that hinder their learning.

##### **5. The procedures and methods that reduces anxiety**

There are some procedures and methods the foreign language teacher should approach to alleviate the students' anxiety in the classroom setting and to make the atmosphere in the class less anxiety-provoking and hence to improve learners' oral performance. Accordingly, Rozakis, L (1995: 10) indicated that "Speaking creates an adrenaline rush. You can harness this adrenaline and make it work for you rather than letting it make you feel nervous".

In that respect, there is a set of approaches that entail teachers to establish good relationship with students, then the illumination of the phenomenon of anxiety among English foreign language learners might be the implementation of techniques related to humanistic approaches such as Total Physical Response, Silent Way, Suggestopedia and Community Language Teaching (Richards & Rogers, 2001)

## 5.1. Total physical response

Total Physical Response is developed by James Asher a professor of psychology at San Jose State University, California; it is a method that stems from learning theory rather than from a theory of the nature of language. It treats both the process and condition aspects of learning relying on the point that the child who learns the language is based on motor activity and this forms the foundation of adult in foreign language teaching. "Orchestrating language production and comprehension with body movement and physical actions is thought to provide the conditions for success in language learning".(Richards and Rogers, 1986: 19).

According to Richards and Rogers, (1986: 87) Total Physical Response (TPR) is a "language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity."

When it comes to assessing the teacher's role in this approach, the teacher has the major role. Asher, (1977: 43) stated that "The instructor is the director of a stage play in which the students are the actors" (as cited in Richards and Rogers, 1986: 93). Clearly, it is the teacher who has the decision about the content of teaching and what are the appropriate supportive materials for class. Accordingly, he/she is stimulated to be more interested and prepared for the movement of the lesson easily and unsurprisingly (Richard and Roger, 1986: 93). According to Asher, (1977: 47)"It is wise to write out the exact utterances you will be using and especially the novel commands because the action is so fast-moving there is usually not time for you to create spontaneously".

Additionally, the teacher is the responsible of guiding the interaction and turn taking during the class not the students. Even the interaction among classmates the teacher directs it (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 94). This shows the role of the teacher in reinforcing the

interaction among the classmates and incidentally enhancing their acceptability to speak up in the class without any sign of fear.

Furthermore, Asher (1977) has elaborated an explanation of what he feels facilitates or inhibits foreign language learning then he utilizes three influential learning hypotheses of his learning theory; the bio-program, brain lateralization and 'Reduction of Stress' the third hypothesis. Asher views this hypothesis as,

*An important condition for successful language learning is the absence of stress. (... ) whereas the adult language learning environment often causes considerable stress and anxiety. The key to stress-free learning is to tap into the natural bio-program for language development and thus to recapture the relaxed and pleasurable experiences that accompany first language learning. (Richards and Rogers, 1986:91).*

There are some additional researchers that also agree with 'total physical approach' ability of reducing the stress the students feel during learning a foreign language, "Krashen (1981), for example, regards provision of comprehensible input and reduction of stress as keys to successful language acquisition, and he sees performing physical actions in the target language as a means of 'making input comprehensible and minimizing stress.'" (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 97).

## **5.2. The silent way**

Caleb Gattegno is the founder of this method of foreign language learning that is called 'Silent Way'. Its elements are the use of color charts and the colored wooden sticks called cuisenaire rods (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 99).

According to Richards and Rogers, (1986: 99) silent way method is "Based on the premise that the teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom and the learner should be encouraged to produce as much language as possible." This indicates that the

teacher's role is to try to be silent during the class opening the opportunity to the learners to speak more, the matter that hinders their fear about speaking gradually.

The intention of Gattegno is not only learning a second language, but also, "it is the education of the spiritual powers and of the sensitivity of the individual" besides the "Mastery of linguistic skills that seen in the light of an emotional inner peace resulting from the sense of power and control brought about by new levels of awareness." In addition, learning of Silent Way aims to combine the human aspects of the learner, which contains a groups and individuals as importantelements for accepting others as contributors to one's own life(Richards and Rogers, 1986: 103). Accordingly, the intention of the Silent Way contributes in two shapes for effective ways of learning foreign language without emotional problems that causes anxiety, one of them correlated with raising students' self-confidence by the mastery of linguistics skills, and the second is by raising the students engagements with others in the class through cooperative learning that is an effective instrument in lowering foreign language anxiety.

### **5.3. Suggestopedia**

Suggestopedia is another effective method of foreign language teaching and learning, coined by GeorgiLozanov. The main features of Suggestopedia are the decoration, furniture, and arrangement of the classroom, the use of music, and the authoritative behavior of the teacher (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 142).

This method triesto diminish the learner' fears and raise their self-confidence in order to make the mind and body works together at their highest level (Vega Nieves, 1998: 136).This means thatthis method is important in enhancing the mental capacities besides the emotional side; by helping the teacher to create a positive image for learning. "The primary role of the teacher is to create situations in which the learner is most suggestible and then to

present linguistic material in a way most likely to encourage positive reception and retention by the learner.” (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 149).

As previously mentioned, the characteristics of this method contain decoration, furniture, classroom arrangement and music, and this purely explained in the following passage stated by Vega Nieves, (1998: 136).

*The ideal suggestopedia classroom is commodious and vibrates a positive environment. It resembles more a family room than a typical classroom. Chairs should be comfortable, cushioned arm chairs arranged in a semi-circle. The room should spacious, well ventilated, clean nicely decorated, and have plants or flowers. It should be sound proof with good acoustics and have a stereo system. The idea is to create a totally comfortable and pleasant atmosphere. This contributes to promoting psychological relaxation and positive suggestion.*

For all intents and purposes, comfortable and natural and nonthreatening situation is important in the classroom to interact with knowledge. “Learning should be pleasant and joyful and the teacher should transmit that” (Vega Nieves, 1998: 134). The teacher is the first responsible in realizing all of this, and maintaining the appropriate conditions for successful learning without any amount of fear, stress or frustration that causes anxiety.

Another important characteristic for suggestopedia where both of teachers and students create another identity, in the classroom that is a personality of a native speaker of the target language being studied to facilitate the learning, these identities are “devices to help students relieve tension and fears and create a jovial atmosphere in the classroom”.(Vega Nieves, 1998: 159).

#### **5.4. The communicative approach**

After 1970, the intention of “communicative movement” in applied linguistics and language pedagogy was the conviction that language teaching should consider the use of

language in real world taking into account the requirement of the learners to acquire it (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004: 326). According to Howatt and Widdowson (2004: 327-328)

*One practical consequence of this new perspective was a different kind of teaching syllabus built round a graded selection of rhetorical or communicative acts which learners needed to perform appropriately if they wanted to be accepted as speakers of English in their chosen roles.*

According to that the result of applying communicating approach was teaching the learners communicative strategies that make them accepted as English speakers. Some second language acquisition theorists besides to Krashen classically assert that through utilizing language communicatively the language learning originates (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 72). This indicates the impact of communicative approach on learning language. In addition, Ahmad and Rao, (2013: 202) concluded in their study about applying communicative approach in teaching English that “the use of the communicative language teaching approach has shown to increase motivation for learning.” Then, they recommended the examination system to do “not focus only on writing skills, and the evaluation of all language skills should be ensured. Teacher training programs should include the use of the communicative language teaching approach in English language teaching.”

According to Breen and Candlin, (1980: 99) (as cited in Richards and Rogers, 1986: 77) there are two main roles for the teacher;

*The first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group.*

Consequently, the teacher has to use communication approach to facilitate students speaking in the classroom with high confidence in their ‘communicative competence’ that is the result of communicative approach and coined by Dell Hymes, (1972).

In the receiving end, the mutuality of all of those methods have been mentioned above is that “these approaches entail teachers to establish good rapport with students, accept them as individuals, tolerate their mistakes, and create a supportive and relaxed classroom environment.” Karakas, A. (2012).

## **6. Communication strategies for reducing classroom anxiety**

Rozakis (1995: 21) defines communication as “the process of sending and receiving messages to achieve understanding.” But in correlation with foreign language learning this matter will be provoking-anxiety for some learners if they were afraid from communication. Therefore, the teachers should approach some principals and strategies to diminish this negative feeling.

### **6.1. Interactional opportunities provided by the teacher**

The teacher is the first responsible beyond monitoring the classroom and providing it with enjoyable activities, practices and tasks that may promote students’ engagement in speaking inside and outside the classroom. Role play and pair work are good examples and essential for reducing the rate of anxiety the students suffer from to some extent.

#### **6.1.1. Role play**

Role plays improve the students’ oral performance generally (Klippel, 1984: 122). Actually, role play is taking someone’s role and keep your role of speech within the context of the setting in which the performance exists. Accordingly, Klippel, (1984: 121) states about that “role plays often consist of short scenes.” Usually, it is helpful in learning a foreign language appropriately if the performance was concerning imitating native actors. In this respect, Klippel, (1984: 122) points out that role plays are fairly requiring foreign language setting where the foreign language has to be utilized by participants in a correct and sufficient

way mutually concerning the foreign language itself and its specific role beyond its use. Besides of being the role play a “valuable training”(Klippel, 1984) and an effective instrument used to enhance the learners performance and background about the foreign language, it seems to be a helpful device in improving the interaction among the learner and his/her classmates, which reinforces also its willingness to speak in front of the class.

### **6.1.2. Pair work**

Scrivener, (2012: 199) stated that “Learners often need to work together in pairs.” When you hear the word Pair work, intentionally comes to your mind a mutual work between two persons involves exchanging ideas and knowledge.

Scrivener, (2012: 199) has mentioned that the choice of students in pair work is always to choose the person who sits beside them, rather than that has an advantage of speed and does not need much time to change the place or to think of that; but this means that the students will deal with the same people and the same thoughts.

Pair work has a major role in fostering the engagement and the interaction of the learner with classmates, in this context Kagan, S & Kagan, M (2009: 6.21) indicated that “Pair work doubles the active engagement”. Then he restated the same idea in other allocation saying that “Pair work maximizes simultaneous interaction”. Kagan, S and Kagan, M (2009: 7.2).

### **6.1.3. Simulation**

Simulation differs from role play in that it is often trains all the four skills. When it comes to performing, it needs to rearrange all the whole class. But its advantages are equally similar concerning the enhancement of the interaction among learners and enriching their competences in communication, as said by Davison and Gordon (1978: 55) (in Klippel, 1984:

121) “Simulations are simplified patterns of human interactions or social processes where the players participate in roles”.

## 6.2. Classroom confidence and trust

Most of anxious students experience anxiety since they have a feeling of insecurity, lack of confidence on their teachers and peers. Therefore, the teachers should make more efforts to raise the students' spontaneous engagement with oral performance by making them more trustful and confident during the foreign language class either with the teacher, the peers or the environment as well. Fundamentally, it is clear that the learner who has an adequate trust and confidence on the educational setting will be less stressful and consequently more comfortable in expressing their ideas freely.

According to Scrivener, (2012: 181) the teacher gradually will get to know his/her class, and then he/she will tend to notice the students that do not speak much during the class, then Scrivener stated “it is worth taking some time to support them and boost their confidence”.

In view of that, Scrivener in the same position has been mentioned some techniques of building confidence in individual students which are as follows:

- **Nominate widely in class:** teachers when asking students to speak, they have to name them equally lower and higher ones. Then they have to evaluate them in a positive way even if their answers were false, and to encourage them.
- **Use ‘choral-answer’ question:** besides to asking students as individuals, it is also helpful to ask some questions where the students answer as a whole. It is true that the teacher will not hear each student's answers but the most important that all the students will have the chance to participate.

- **Ask open questions to stronger students and closed questions to weaker ones:**the teacher should ask open questions that require full answers, explanations and interpretations for stronger students that have a high level of knowledge, while asking weaker students who have less knowledge closed questions that needs less explanations and examples, because he/she will encourage them, and improve their confidence.
- **Allow private turns:**Sometimes it is helpful for teachers to build confidence and courage in their students for later speaks, by asking questions and letting the answers to themselves.
- **Tutorials:**the teachers should make some activities during the class that enable them to invite the students as individuals to make a short tutorial discussion and take the opportunity to ask quieter students about their feeling during speaking, why they avoid it and encourage them to speak more avoiding criticism.
- **Chat after class:**if there is no enough time for teachers to make a tutorial they have to try to make a short time for chat with students after a class.

As an interesting outcome, the interaction of students and their speaking in the class will be simultaneously present in each session. Accordingly; the teacher is the main contributor in establishing those points have been mentioned above during the class, so he/she has to pay more attention to that way of providing students with opportunities that enriches confidence and trust.

### **6.3. Create less stressful environment**

Generally speaking, create a less stressful environment for learners to learn a foreign language effectively and in appropriate conditions depends on the teachers' way of teaching; by creating a careful environment and enjoyable atmosphere for communication. Further, the

teacher should adopt adequate strategies that make the environment more comfortable for the learners and this occurs through presenting exciting tasks and practices, in warm conditions. Accordingly, Joseph S.C. stated that “Implementing creative teaching strategies will change a classroom from a four walled room with educational hopes into an environment that is infused with excitement, curiosity, and genuine student learning”. (As quoted in Herrman, 2008: 97).

Furthermore, the first important needs of the learner to be active and centered in the classroom activities are a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the group (Klippel, 1984:7). This indicates that the relaxed and the friendly atmosphere have an integral role in making the student an active participant of learning. Consequently, in their study to realize the strategies of alleviating anxiety in language classes, Hashemi & Abbasi (2013: 641) establish that according to the participants of the study that “the more friendly and informal the language classroom environment, the less it is likely to be anxiety provoking”. So, the learners may feel secure then they may express themselves more freely within this friendly and encouraged atmosphere that is a responsibility of the teacher.

Similarly, for the remedy of encouraging the students to talk to each other as much as possible, Scrivener, (2012: 179) underlines some techniques for creating the conditions for speaking, and the first technique was “build an atmosphere where people want to say things” then he reported under this point that,

*For whole-class discussions, keep the mood relaxed, engaged and lively. Being asked to say something should feel like a great chance for students to give their ideas, rather than having a huge spotlight turned on them.*

## **7. Teacher’ support:**

Typically, learners who have a severe anxiety during the class are requiring a high consideration from the educator. Hence, teachers need to establish, protect and maintain their sense of personal, social and psychological safety in terms of their sense of support, control

and security. Teachers' support has an integral role in coping with students' anxiety, thus; the teachers should affirm the students and their worth to show them their support in order to help them feel valued. Scrivener (2012: 120) stated "being supportive is perhaps the crucial foundation stone to everything you do in class. If students feel valued and respected, this will result in good rapport".

Moreover, Ewald, (2007) points out that the support provided by the teacher, the friendly classroom environment, the use of humor, the choice of pertinent and attractive subject matter according to the learner's interests can reduce anxiety in foreign language classroom.

According to Scrivener, (2012: 121) teachers may be supportive of their students in many ways, not only by saying positive things but instead they may do actions, gestures and reactions to show their support.

- Use people's names: add names to comments and to questions when it is suitable.
- Good morning: use greetings in a warm way, and when students arrive welcomed them in a way that shows that you really mean it.
- Everyday interaction: equally, add supportive words and phrases to make the interaction more useful.
- Make eye contact: the teacher should not avoid eye contact with the students because this will enlarge the distance between them.
- Smile at people (many): the teacher should direct warm smiles to students, because it releases endorphins that make the students feel like smiling.
- Demonstrate that you enjoy being with them: the teacher should show his/her enjoyment with students and the work using gestures and expressions that appropriate to that.

- Show support when the news is bad: if the teacher is going to tell the students about bad marks or new, he/she has to show a full support for them.
- Look outside the classroom: the students may have some external problems and the teacher should help them for solutions, and trust them.

## **8. The teacher's coping with anxiety**

As previously suggested and treated the phenomenon of anxiety as a severe challenge that may surface in the foreign language class, besides the effective solutions and the recommended strategies, methods and approaches that eliminate that; the teacher is the first responsible of applying the appropriate strategies and suggestions that have been mentioned earlier.

In reality, many teachers want to support their anxious students in some situations that encounter them without direct support, (Scrivener, 2012: 172). According to Scrivener, (2012) the teacher should “seek any professional help that is available, and strongly encourage the students to take up other’ support”. And if this not available so the teacher should be a good listener, this will help the students to trust on their teacher and speak more about their needs and thoughts. Scrivener asserted that stating that “the most powerful way any person can support another is simply by being a very good listener”.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provides a set of recommendation and suggestions and the methods that may conquer the problem of anxiety in foreign language learning context or at least minimize it. In this respect the teacher is the first responsible of recognizing those elements in the classroom in the appropriate way that leads to eliminate learners’ anxiety and allows the learning to take place.

**Introduction:**

The previous two chapters included general theoretical information about anxiety and teaching methods that eliminate it. Here, this chapter comes to link all the points that have been mentioned earlier to the practical side that aims to identify and recognize the nature of anxiety in its natural setting. In order to understand well how the students are suffering from this challenge and how teachers as well react to that, this chapter is divided into three elements; classroom observation, an interview with students and an interview with teachers.

## 1. Classroom Observation

With the intention of examining the kind of difficulties foreign language learners and teachers encounter and to what extent they are aware of anxiety as one of these difficulties, a series of classroom observation was conducted with two classes (group two and group seven) of third year term during the oral session with two different teachers; novice and expert one. The whole time allocated is two sessions per week; the duration of each session is one hour and half. Classroom observation is the key or the opportunity that permits the researcher to be a natural part of the environment where the phenomenon occurs. Therefore, it seems to be the most suitable tool for obtaining accurate results that will contribute positively in the validity of the current research and its results.

### ➤ **Classroom Observation: settings and objectives of sessions.**

The settings in which the sessions take place were between the ordinary rooms and the laboratory. Concerning the classroom observation of the novice teacher, the first two sessions were in the ordinary rooms and the last two sessions were in the laboratory and the time is from 14.50 till 16.20 afternoons. In addition, the objective of the sessions is an open dialogue, in the first three sessions and a discussion about “*polygamy*” and “*taboos*”, in the last session.

In the other hand, the setting of the sessions of the expert teacher took place in the laboratory and the time of the sessions allocated from 08.00 to 09.30 and from 11.20 to 12.50 in the same day which is Tuesday. Moreover, the objective of the first session was a monologue prepared and presented before and it was about “*marriage*” and “*divorce*”; the second session was a play consisted of five participants in the car with a policeman. And the third session was about learning English with jokes consisted of funny videos and discussing them.

Accordingly, the interpretations that have been revealed from the observation of these sessions and exploring multiple behaviors such as; the role of the teacher, the students' behavior and the peers' reactions are listed as follows:

### **1.1. Novice teacher's classroom observation analysis**

- **Observed anxiety-related behaviors originated from students**

The four sessions that we have attended with the novice teacher shows that some manifestations of anxiety such as; clear hesitation, losing words, nervousness, stress, low voice and so on were barely observed in the first three sessions and well observed in the last session because the students asked the teacher to change the topic since it was boring which refers to the effects of the topic on the level of anxiety. When it comes to making mistakes which is a sign of linguistic anxiety, it was well observed in all the four sessions that we have attended with the novice teacher which reflects their lack of preparation, low proficiency level and lack of linguistic knowledge for some of them. Consequently, correcting mistakes is a job of the teacher; however, it was barely observed in the last three sessions and it was not observed in the first session which we noticed that the teacher did not correct every student's mistakes because this session was for explaining the task that was an open dialogue which included two participants, the students were not well prepared for that the teacher will not evaluate them. According to that, the students' fear from test was not observed in the first session but it becomes well observed in the remaining sessions. Due to this, we noticed that students' volunteering to talk orally in the first session was well observed because they have the permission to use the paper during the performance, also there is no evaluation and assessment.

Owing to this, the peers especially the extroverted ones were always laughing at the students when making mistakes and this was well observed in all the sessions. Since, the topic

is an open dialogue and the students are going to interpret the appropriate end, there are no ambiguous words and the students do not get nervous when they do not understand each word the teacher says. So, it was not observed in the first three sessions but it was barely observed in the last session because the teachers changed the topic for a discussion about polygamy. The oral performance looks somehow natural, it was well observed in the third session because the students were well prepared. In addition; the extroverted students take the priority to perform their tasks while the introverted students are the last; they are always choosing the short or the dependent roles and this was well observed in all the sessions.

- **Observed behaviors originated from teachers**

During attending four sessions; the relaxation, smiling and sense of humor in the teacher' behavior were well observed in all the sessions as a result to her attempts to make them feel comfortable in their performance. Besides, she was moving around the class to explain the lesson and was well observed in session one, barely observed in session two and not observed in session three and four because the teacher was bored and tired, especially that the session was at afternoon. Concerning the teacher's maintaining the eye contact with students was well observed in all the sessions which belong to her personality. When it comes to teacher's encouragement for students' thoughts and participation we have noticed that it was observed more in the first session because the teacher explained the task which demands from him to encourage students' interpretations about the end of the dialogue and it was barely observed in the last session when the teacher changes the dialogue into a discussion about polygamy and taboos.

During the observation; the teacher's attempts to reach all the students in the class, not just the extroverted students but the introverted students also, were not observed in all the

sessions. In that respect, the class was teacher-centered plus the extroverted students, and because of that they were the dominant participants most of the time which reduces the interaction in the classroom and minimizes the rate of introverted students to express themselves freely. It is worthy to mention that the negative evaluation of the teacher was barely observed in the three last sessions such as; blaming the introverted students about the reason behind their preference to choose the short roles that avoid eye contact with the audience rather than the main roles and force them to perform the independent roles next time which results with embarrassment and frustration for the students. When it comes to the teacher's support, it was barely observed in the last session where she gave one of the students a short break because she was nervous and this support was a reason in minimizing her fear and nervousness that is well observed also in session four. Additionally, the teacher's use of cooperative teaching strategies was barely observed in all the four sessions in one form which is a pair work because this is the only way that suits the needs of the topic which is an open dialogue.

Within the context of maintaining the students less stressful and active speakers there is a sort of instructional behaviors to reduce anxiety such as; using relaxation times (breaks) that were barely observed just in the last session, using enjoyable tasks (videos, jokes) and using rewards as a reinforcement instruments that was not observed in all the sessions, the permission to use the first language was noticed just in the last session because one of the students was not able to express exactly his ideas.

- **Observed behaviors originated from the environment**

Novice teacher suffered from classroom management problems. As a result of overcrowded class that was well observed in all the four sessions. According to that, the teacher may not be able to reach all the students and interact with them and this one of the

factors that keeps shy students reluctance to speak in front of class. Similarly, noisy atmosphere out and inside the classroom was well observed in the first session and barely observed in the other sessions. Organized class was well observed in the second and the third session because it was in the laboratory, and it was not observed in the other sessions because it was in the ordinary room that is poor of classroom arrangement' signs.

## **1.2. Expert teacher's classroom observation analysis**

- **Observed anxiety-related behaviors originated from students:**

Concerning the manifestations of anxiety on the students' behaviors at first sight such as clear hesitation, losing words, nervousness, stress, low voice were barely observed throughout the four sessions we have attended with the expert teacher; it was as a normal feeling that may join speaking in front of classmates. But it was well observed in the third session since that the teacher menaced them to perform the play in the third session but they did not prepare it well. The same result of students making mistakes that was barely observed because the students were well prepared whereas some mistakes were a result of a normal shyness especially in the third session. Consequently, students' fear from correcting mistakes was also barely observed in all the sessions as a reaction of fear from negative evaluation. Owing to using rewards and punishments the students were afraid from tests and this was well observed in the last three sessions.

Regarding peers' laughing at their classmate who was performing the task that was a monologue in the first two sessions, a role play in the third and fourth session, was barely observed in all the sessions but the thing that was obviously observed here was that the nature of the matters that peers laughing at did not concern the mistakes or mocking them but instead they were laughing at funny behaviors. Additionally, students allowed by the teacher to use mobiles and dictionaries for this, the students did not get nervous when they did not

understand each word the teacher says. Interestingly, the oral performance looked somehow natural, it was well observed in the first two sessions because the students were well prepared and it was performed in pairs, then it was not performed in the third session because it was a play, yet it was not well prepared. In addition; what was noticed most in this group that all the students were trying to work, not just the extroverted students but also the introverted ones, and due to the teacher's role because he knows all of them and he was trying to reach all of them.

- **Observed behaviors originated from teachers**

According to the sessions of the classroom observation were conducted with the expert teacher, the relaxation, smiling and sense of humor in the teacher's behavior were well observed in all the sessions because the teacher-students interaction was smooth as friends and he was trying to hinder the feeling of fear and gave them feeling of relaxation in turn. Furthermore, it was observed that he did not move around the class to explain the lesson because he used the videos to explain the lesson then he was remaining in front of class. Concerning eye contact the teacher was keeping it towards his students as he was trying to know them and interpret their ideas. When it comes to the teachers' encouragement for students' thoughts and participations, it was highly observed in the four sessions, and it was clearly noticed in his warm evaluation for their performances and the nature of topics being chosen from the students, respecting their ideas. Better yet, the teacher dealt with his students equally and he was trying to reach all of the students. Consequently, it was observed that the class was teacher-centered in addition to the students' performances equally. Here an important note that the students were also helping each other not just the teacher who was doing that, and they were recognizing very well their objectives. Furthermore, negative evaluation was not observed in the two first sessions but in the third there was some negative

criticizing points for the bad performance the students did as a result of their lack of interest and forgetting the text of the role play.

Regarding the teacher' support, it was well observed in all the sessions, for instance in the first session, one of the students performed her monologue but she was shy for instance; she was avoiding eye contact with her classmates, low voice. And when the teacher asked her classmates to give their comments, one of her classmates commented on her saying: "You are so shy". Here the teacher stopped him than he stated that: "we are here to learn, I don't want you to be perfect". This is assessed to be effective evidence about the support of the teacher. And this appeared also in the teacher's use of cooperative learning strategies that was well observed in the three last sessions because the first was a monologue that depends on an individual work. Within the context of maintaining students less stressful and active speakers, there was a sort of instructional behaviors to reduce anxiety such as; using relaxation times (breaks) that was well observed in all the sessions, using enjoyable tasks (videos, jokes) and using rewards as a reinforcement instruments that was also well observed in all the sessions, the permission to use the first language was noticed also in all the sessions. Scrivener, 2012: (216) stated that "allow first language, one possible strategy is simply to allow first language usage without prohibition or fuss, but just to gently cajole and encourage students to keep trying more use of English." And he described that as "the most understanding of students' needs."

- **Observed behaviors originated from environment**

Throughout the whole classroom observation, the overcrowded class was barely observed through the four sessions but the teacher can interact with the whole class because he knows all of them. Accordingly, noisy atmosphere out and inside the class was not observed but sometimes when the learners asked by the teacher to brainstorm in the task they

make some noise during the discussion among them. Organized class was well observed in all the sessions because it was in the laboratory room, then this affected positively the interaction in a calm and comfortable way.

- **Discussion of the results**

By the end of the classroom observation's analysis there were some points to illustrate the differences exist between the two groups we have attended with. It can be seen from the classroom observation that there is a sort of less level of anxiety in the second class where the expert teacher is responsible. Here, we felt that the teacher; based on his significant experience, has more capacities and more awareness of how to deal with the students' anxiety. You feel them more as friends than as an instructor with students, also the teacher knows many details about the students and their life background and this appeared in some behaviors originated from the teacher such as; singing for one of the students' birthday and further he gave her a gift, he was asking the students about their families, greeting the female' students for the occasion of women's day also he is contacting them on Facebook. Furthermore, he always tries his best to reach all the students equally. When it comes to enjoyments and relaxed atmosphere, the expert teacher is always using videos, and calm music to help his students to feel more relaxed, and this is an important instrument to diminish fear and raise self-confidence in the suggestopedia method of teaching. In that context, Young (1991: 434) stated that;

*Our task as foreign and second language teachers is to create an atmosphere in our classes for effective language learning and an attitude in our learners that reflects genuine interest and motivation to learn the language. By reducing language anxiety, we will begin to move in that direction.*

On the other hand, the first class with the novice teacher has some kind of higher anxiety than the other class, because the teacher is not well trained of teaching since it is her first experience in teaching at this university. It is not neglected, the matter of her efforts to

teach them well, but it is well noticed that she interacts more with the extroverted students and forget all about the introverted ones that needs more attention and care. Here, the extroverted students also have a role in keeping the anxious students silent, because they are laughing at them when making mistakes, first and because of their taking a long-time to perform and repeat their performances more than one attempt which means that they are taking all the available time.

According to that, it is worthy to notice that the experience of the teacher and his/her personality plays an integral role in controlling the extent or the level of anxiety originated in students' behaviors. The analysis steps and elements indicate that a higher support from the teacher to his/her students has a significant role in reducing the amount of anxiety in students' behaviors and results in turn, in enhancing their performances. Consequently, Kohn (in Hart and Hodson 2005) points out that if we want learning to take place, students need the emotional safety provided by "an environment built upon support, nurturing, consideration, mutual contribution, acceptance, encouragement, and understanding". In other words, a relationship based classroom where need of students and teachers are respected and this occurs through the crucial role that the teacher plays.

## **2. The interview**

The other instrument that is used for this research besides the classroom observation is the interview that was conducted with both students and teachers in order to attain sincere and accurate results from both participants during the foreign language class. The interview adds more validity to the results and enriches the research with sincere information which leads to the confirmation of the hypothesis.

## 1. Students' interview

With the purpose of examining the students' thoughts and opinions about the feeling of anxiety being experienced during the foreign language class, an interview was conducted with eight students of third year, from two different groups (the same groups we have attended the classroom observation with). The main aim of the interview is to explore the views, experiences and beliefs of students besides to provide a deep view on the phenomenon of anxiety from the individuals who experience it. Generally, the semi-structured interview is structured on out of seven questions.

- **Students' feelings towards foreign language class and what they like the most about it**

The first two questions about describing their feelings towards foreign language class and what they like the most about it. Here, most of the learners agreed with the positivity of learning foreign language, some of them stated that *"I find it interesting and I feel pleased to attend it"*, *"It is very helpful to improve ourselves"*, *"It is amazing to improve my language"*, but four of them mentioned that they don't like oral classroom session. One of them stated that *"it is normal class; I feel that the class lacks the atmosphere of motivation and also students are not really engaged in class, they are not motivated and they rarely participate or communicate in the target language"*.

- **The most things that bother or disrupt students in their foreign language class and prevent them from speaking**

When it comes to the third question, which is *'what are the most things that bother or disrupt you in your foreign language class and prevent you from speaking?'* Various answers were appeared as reasons that hinder students' will of speaking such as; the teachers' way of

presenting lessons lacks excitement and enjoyment, bad pronunciation, lack of motivation boring lessons and unmotivated subjects, new terms and strange words.

In view of that, there are some students who responded to this question in some special expressions such as, “*not having enough courage from my colleagues*”, “*pressure and when there is no time in order to do our best*”, “*being bored by topics that are uninteresting*”, “*I prefer choosing the topic that I’m going to present*”, “*when the teacher criticizes me and when forces me to talk*”, “*The thing that bothers me the most is ‘participation’*”.

From these answers, we may deduce that students affected by a number of elements such as; uninteresting topics, teacher’s criticizing, participation, lack of support from peers. These elements contribute in creating anxiety during the foreign language class, so they are the main cause that will eliminate the students’ speaking in turn, and hinder their learning and educational achievement as well.

- **Students’ beliefs about their language study, and their confidence**

Interestingly, the next question is included as a specific one which is: ‘Do you believe that you are good in your language study; that is, are you confident in your ability? The answers offered to this question were varied from no confidence to high confidence mediated by confusion about their abilities. Some students reported that they are confident of themselves and of their abilities stating that: “*of course I am confident of my ability*”, “*of course; I am good at my language study*”, “*and I am absolutely good at my language study*”. However, the majority of the responses provided by the students were that they have no confidence, and this is uttered in different statements such as; “*No, I don’t feel confident*”, “*Not really, but I’m trying to extend my capacities*”, “*I’m not good at my language study and every student is not good in their foreign language because we are not native speakers*”, “*Actually, I’m good in my language study and I have abilities but I’m not confident and this is*

*a big problem for me.*” And one of those students answered that question in a particular way stating that *“I am so stressed when standing in front of the teacher, after someone performs something so great and professional, I prevent myself from presenting”*. This last response grabbed our attention, and it indicates that peers have a contributing role in the rate of students’ self-confidence which means that lack of self-confidence is another important cause of stress and tension.

- **Students’ reaction to peers’ laughing at their mistakes**

The fifth question is *“How do you think people in your classroom will react if you make mistakes?”* this question revealed various answers. Some students answered that their classmates will correct them, and making mistakes is normal for learning. Nevertheless, the prominent portion of students’ answers agree with the idea that their classmates will laugh at them, in this angle, the brilliant responses are *“for sure they will correct it for me with laughing”*, *“they will laugh at me of course”*, *“they start criticizing me and comment on each little mistake”*, *“I think they will do their best to make us look weak and wrong”*.

Another question asked to the interviewees about their reaction if they find themselves in a stressful situation whether they worry or they actively seek a solution, all of the responses obtained from this question are worrying at first sight and seeking for a solution individually by thinking in something else out of the problem.

- **The teachers’ impact on the students’ feelings**

A question correlated to the teachers’ impact on students’ behavior which is *“Have your instructors played a role in your feelings, either good or bad, about your foreign language classes?”* all the responses resulted from this question show that the students agree with one point that the instructor played a role in their feelings. Some of them agree with the

positive role of the teacher, stating that “*teachers helping me by correcting my mistakes in a warm way*”, “*Instructors played a good role in my feeling about foreign language class because they help me and give me rest of time to prepare more*”. Whereas, others denote that the teacher has an impact on students to feel badly, and this appears in their declarations such as; “*The teacher sometimes demotivates me; I feel that I am not really comfortable about my progress in term of language*”, “*my teacher care only of students who sit in front of them*”, “*my teacher is arrogant and underestimate the shy students*”,

These answers appeared to signify that the teacher has a significant role whether in raising or reducing the amount of anxiety in students’ feelings toward foreign language class.

- **Students’ ideas and suggestions to make the foreign language class less stressful**

Based on all the previous answers and responses, the answer of the last question is the key for eliminating the stress and tension in foreign language classes according to the students we made the interview with. Hence, the last question is “Do you have any ideas of ways to make the foreign language class less stressful?” The respondents provided a set of suggestions and solutions for conquering anxiety and stress in the foreign language class: contributing

- Teachers should push and help shy students to show their abilities.
- Teachers should interact equally with all students during participations.
- Using technology (materials) in the class such as; using videos to give examples that will clarify the task that will be performed.
- Use different methods and approaches of teaching according to the needs of learners.
- The teacher should help students to feel confident and minimize their stress by supporting them.

- The teacher should give the students the chance to choose the topics they will perform.
- Students should have enough courage and confidence to improve their skills.
- Provide equal opportunities for interaction among students.

These responses provided by students signify a set of solutions to their unwillingness to speak that are considered as treatments for speaking anxiety in foreign language classes.

## **2. Teachers' Interview**

Besides to the interview with the students, this interview was conducted with the same teachers of the oral expression in order to examine the teachers' thoughts and perceptions about the issue of foreign language speaking anxiety and its existence among learners. This interview structured on out of ten questions with each teacher. The following is the analysis for the responses provided from the two teachers and the main indications for these responses.

- **The period of the teachers' experiences**

In order to know the length of the teachers' experience in teaching, the first question which is: 'How many years have you been teaching throughout your experience?' The response provided by the male teacher is "32 years" and the response of the female teacher is "1 year". According to the big difference between the responses, it is interpreted that the first teacher is an expert teacher whereas the other teacher is a novice one. This will help us to show the phenomenon of speaking anxiety during the foreign language class from two distinctive perspectives.

- **The most courses the teachers teach through their experience**

To have a look on this point the second question was: 'What are the most courses you have been teaching throughout your experience?' The responses provided to this question

reveal that both of teachers teach different modules not just oral expression module but also other modules such as, literature and culture of language. This will help to recognize if anxiety exists only in oral expression session or in other modules too.

- **The possibility of existing of some students who do not speak in the class**

The question asked to know this possibility was: *‘Throughout your whole experience in teaching have you noticed some students who have unwillingness to speak?’* here, both of teachers answered with “yes”. But the expert teacher provided the answer with a particular rate, he answered this stating that *“yes, let say about 60%”*. Whereas, the novice teacher answered this question stating: *“absolutely, there are some students who keep silent for the whole oral expression session”*.

These responses show that speaking anxiety exists much in foreign language classes. It shows also that the teachers are aware of those students.

- **The session that contains more anxious students**

The fourth question is ‘In which session you noticed them more.’ The answers of both teachers reveal that the students in all the sessions are suffering from this challenge of reluctance of speaking. But they are more observed in oral expression where debates and other activities of oral expression exist.

- **The assertion of teachers about anxiety and its manifestations**

‘Do you assert that they are suffering from anxiety? (With which signs or manifestations)’ this is the question, and both of the respondents asserted that the learners are suffering from anxiety, the expert teacher indicated self-esteem as a sign for anxiety. While the novice teacher asserted that few of students are suffering from anxiety and she stated that: *“I think few students suffer from anxiety with a sense of uneasiness and timidity, particularly*

*when they have to answer*". Then she reported some signs and manifestations that recognize the anxious students from the others such as; shaking and even sweating, intense feeling of distress, nervousness and fear.

Based on the respondents' answers, it is understood that the teachers are aware of the existence of anxiety among foreign language learners, and aware also of the signs and manifestations that clarify its existence.

- **The most provoking reasons of anxiety.**

Here, the appropriate question was: 'In your opinion, what are the most provoking reasons of anxiety?' According to the responses provided by the two teachers, there are many provoking reasons for anxiety to exist in foreign language classes. The expert teacher informed that: "*The main reason is the whole atmosphere in the classroom. It should be friendly and cooperative to avoid anxiety*". This indicates that the condition in the classroom should be adequate with cooperation and friendly atmosphere that reduces students' anxiety and makes them more comfortable to express their ideas.

When it comes to the novice teacher, she reported that the introverted students are more exposed to suffer from anxiety, stating that: "*The type of the students' character, I guess introvert students suffer from anxiety more than the extrovert ones*". Consequently, she added some other reasons such as; lack of self-esteem and fear from being a subject of criticism by their peers.

The responses provided by both of the teachers indicate that foreign language anxiety has many reasons beyond its existence, and the teachers have an image about those reasons.

- **Teachers' reaction towards anxious students**

Simply, to obtain precise information about this point, the question was: ‘What is your reaction or impression towards anxious students?’ and the answers revealed to this question has the same direction that is an attempt to conquer this negative feeling of anxiety. The expert teacher stated that: *“I generally talk to them and minimize things like errors in pronunciation and grammar”*. Whereas, the novice teacher stated in her response to this question that: *“I try to motivate them to break that ice of fear”*. This indicates that the teachers are trying to react positively to that negative feeling the students suffer from.

- **The effect of teacher’s higher support on the level of anxiety**

The question of this point was: ‘Do you agree that if there is a higher support from the teacher lower anxiety will result? How?’ here, the teachers answered with *“absolutely”*, *“I absolutely agree”*. Besides to this, the expert teacher added that the support should be from both the teacher and peers. Whereas, the novice teacher suggested that the teacher should support his/her students through building a good relationship with them.

These answers show that the rate of anxiety in foreign language classes affected by the support of the teacher and his/her role in the classroom.

- **The enhancement of speaking performance is a result of reducing anxiety**

Concerning this point, the question asked to the teachers was: ‘The speaking performance will be enhanced as a result of reducing anxiety. Do you think so? The responses provided to this question are *“yes”*, and *“indeed”*, the expert teacher agrees that *“once they deal with anxiety, things become easier for the students as far as performance is concerned.”* Whereas, the novice teacher added that the speaking performance requires a high self-esteem and competency that is a result of diminishing anxiety.

This indicates that the improvement of speaking performance in foreign language classes seems to be correlated with the importance of reducing anxiety.

- **The main strategies the teacher should approach to reduce the speaking anxiety of his/her students**

In view of interpreting the answers of teachers we resulted in a set of positive strategies that are; according to them, useful in conquering anxiety in foreign language classes such as; creating a healthy atmosphere where students should not laugh at or mock their peers when making mistakes, here the expert teacher stated that *“we speak about errors as gifts”*. Additionally, support the students is also another important strategy the teachers indicate to, through motivating them to express themselves freely. Moreover, the novice teacher suggested a discussion and private talk with those anxious students as a solution that may raise their self-confidence as she said: *“this will encourage him to take apart in the learning process”*. Here, the student is intended to deploy his/her ideas more freely without any tension or fear of criticisms from peers.

### **3. Recommendations**

Due to the instruments used and the results revealed from, a set of recommendations and suggestions to conquer the challenge of anxiety has been obtained. These recommendations will be presented as solutions for both foreign language teachers and students as well, in their future way of teaching and learning without suffering from this challenge.

### 3.1. Suggestions to students

As previously mentioned, foreign language learners find speaking as a provoking situation to feel anxious. Accordingly, they have to minimize that feeling and use their awareness to face the seriousness of this challenge.

Since, lack of preparation was one of the purest sources of anxiety, as the outcomes of the classroom observation and the interview showed; the students should pay more attention to this single important element that is the basic for an acceptable performance. Preparation has a significant contribution in any performance to appear in a level of proficiency. Accordingly; students with more preparation will feel more confident and less stressful in turn. As included in chapter one Kanar (293) stated that “preparation and practice are the keys to feeling confident”. Consequently, it will be an effective advice for foreign language students to prepare themselves before any performance using some methods such as; rehearsing, recording, mirror and so on.

Some students claimed that their presentations evaluated negatively by the teacher and underestimated by the peers, so it is better for them to do not take the teachers' evaluation as a negative point but instead they have to pay attention to their mistakes in order to learn and attempt to make the evaluation of the teacher as a reinforcing point to their level. In the same time, students should not underestimate their classmates when making mistakes by laughing at them. But instead they have to encourage them by correcting their mistakes appropriately, stating for example; *“Actually, I appreciated what you said; but it would be better if you say that instead of this”*. This will reinforce the cooperation among peers in the classroom leading them to express themselves freely in turn and minimize their shyness in some cases as well.

Furthermore, we recommend students also to trust themselves and in their abilities putting in their minds that we are all human beings and we are equal but our capacities are not

the same. This indicates that it is important for the students to feel confident about their abilities and not compare themselves with others because each one has his/her own way of learning.

## **1.2. Recommendations for teachers**

The significant number of recommendations revealed from this study belongs to the teacher. Here, the teacher should pay more attention to these recommendations and take them into consideration.

In accordance with some studied students' suggestions, using different methods and approaches of teaching according to the needs of learners could create a positive effect in the operation of learning and teaching. Therefore, it could be advised that the teachers should integrate in their teaching a set of varied strategies that are affective in making the learning' setting less stressful and enjoyable for students in order to learn. Besides, the use of those different strategies contained in a varied teaching approaches, enable the teacher to stimulate the learners' interests and tendencies as well.

Relying on the classroom observation we made we noticed that the teachers were discussing or interacting more with the extroverted students than the introverted students. According to that, we recommend teachers to do not ignore that important point and try to provide more opportunities to interact with all the students equally. This will reinforce the shy students to participate and speak more freely as well.

When it comes also to the students demands, teachers should provide their students with some motivational opportunities through encouraging them using some steps such as; giving them the chance to choose the topic of discussion, correcting their mistakes gently. By applying these small gestures in the class, the teacher will create a healthy atmosphere the expert teacher in the interview speaks about.

## **Conclusion**

For the purpose of obtaining an accurate result for this research three instruments were used; classroom observation, an interview for students and another interview with teachers. These instruments are the most suitable for gathering adequate and sincere data, since our active presence on it will contribute in that. Due to the analysis of the results, it is revealed for the confirmation of the hypothesis stated earlier. The results show the awareness of teachers about the existence of anxiety in their classes, and show also the problems that students suffer from. Moreover, those instruments and their results show that the higher support the teacher may provide his/her student has an effective impact on reducing the amount of anxiety. Mediating all of that, the most significant point is that the teacher has the major role in lowering foreign language anxiety his/her students are suffering from.

## **General conclusion**

This study is prepared under one important ultimate aim that is; lowering the level of English foreign language learners' speaking anxiety. Here, the role of the teacher is stressed to be the factor that contributes in reducing students' anxiety. Students of third year are the sample or the case study of this research because they are more expected to show anxiety, since they are graduate ones and they may experience teaching soon. In order to study this issue, two theoretical chapters as the first part were explored, starting by the phenomenon of anxiety (its definition, sources, manifestations and its correlation with speaking) moving to the most important teaching strategies and methods, ending with the most roles the teacher should approach to eliminate this phenomenon. Then the second part, contains a practical chapter that includes the analysis of data collected, besides a set of recommendations were offered to conquer or at least minimize the extent of anxiety

In the way of examining this problem, and exposure the nature of this phenomenon, two tools were used inside the qualitative method. Firstly, a classroom observation was conducted with two different groups from third year level in order to observe the sources and the main manifestations of anxiety at near. Secondly, an interview with students and teachers added in order to attain a clear image about both participants; teachers and students, and to know their perceptions and thoughts concerning the problem of anxiety.

Relying on the results that this research revealed, some points come to light and need more attention and emphasize. The teacher is concerned as the responsible participant who has the major role in the matter of reducing anxiety in students' behaviors. Accordingly, the teachers should adopt new strategies and methods that provide the classroom with the healthy atmosphere that contributes in minimizing the stress and tension the students feel especially when they speak. Moreover, the higher support from the teacher to foreign language students

has a significant impact on the level of anxiety, and leads to a better engagement in the oral performances. This indicates that the hypothesis stated at first comes to confirmation.

The attainments of the results stressed at the end of this research leads to the confirmation of the hypothesis stated at first. The higher support that the teachers provide the students with is a vital aspect that has a crucial role in making the setting smooth to learn the language. According to that, the foreign language teachers should adopt appropriate strategies in the class to cope with students' speaking anxiety.

The current research is come across some particular difficulties that limit the attainments such as; the interview and the classroom observation were conducted for a relatively short period of time which limits the results attained from these tools. Equally, the shortage of time does not permit for using further research tools such as; questionnaires for teachers and students.

To conclude, it would be worthy to end up with a call for further researchers to extend the scope of research to all the levels of foreign language learners for instance; first and second year EFL learners. Additionally, give extra attention for the other affective factors that influence learning such as; motivation, self-confidence, inhibition and so on. Without forgetting the integral role the teacher plays in making the main foundation for leaning EFL and reinforcing the interaction among teachers and students.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: The classroom Observation's Check List.

Direction: Below is a list of effective teaching/learning behaviors that may occur during an oral expression class. This form of observed anxiety-related behaviors originated from students, teachers and environments. We recommend that we use this list prior to the observation as a basis to discuss/highlight selected areas on which to focus.

Observed anxiety-related behaviors originated from students.	Well-Observed				Barely observed				Not observed			
	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4
Sessions.												
Manifestations of anxiety such as; clear hesitation, losing words, nervousness, stress, low voice...												
Students making mistakes.												
Students afraid that FL' teacher is ready to correct every mistake they make.												
Afraid from tests.												
Students volunteering to talk orally in front of peers.												
Students' laughing at their classmates.												
Students getting nervous when they don't understand each word teacher say.												
The oral performance looks somehow natural.												
Students do not prefer the mainroles.												

Observed behaviors originated from teachers.	Well-Observed	Barely observed	Not observed
--	---------------	-----------------	--------------

Sessions	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4
the relaxation, smiling and sense of humor in the teacher' behavior												
Moves around room while speaking.												
Teacher maintains eye contact with students (i.e., does not talk to board, windows/walls)												
Encourages student thought and participation.												
The teacher's attempts to reach all the students in the class.												
Negative evaluation from the teacher.												
Higher support from the teacher.												
Using cooperative teaching strategies.												
Using relaxation time (breaks)												
Using enjoyable tasks (videos, Jokes..)												
Using rewards as a reinforcement instrument.												
Teacher uses first language to explain the topic and allows the students to use it in some cases.												

<b>Observed behaviors originated from environment</b>	<b>Well- Observed</b>				<b>Barely observed</b>				<b>Not observed</b>			
Sessions	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4
Noisy atmosphere out/inside the class.												
Clean, organized class.												
Overcrowded class.												

**Appendix II: The students' Interview.**

**Semi-structured Interview**

1. Please describe your feelings about your English foreign language class.

.....  
.....

2. Please tell me what bothers you the most in your English foreign language class.

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

3. Do you believe that you are good in your language study (that is, are you confident of your ability)?

.....  
.....

4. How do you think people in your classroom will react if you make mistakes?

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

5. When you find yourself in a stressful situation, do you primarily worry, or do you actively seek a solution?

.....  
.....

6. Have your instructors (teachers) played a role in your feelings, either good or bad, about your English foreign language classes?

.....  
.....

7. Any suggestions about the teachers' role to make the foreign language class less stressful.

.....  
.....

**Appendix III: The Teachers' Interview.**

**Unstructured Interview with the teachers**

1. How many years have you been teaching at the university?

.....  
.....

2. And what are the most courses you have been teaching throughout your experience?

.....  
.....

3. Throughout your whole experience in teaching have you noticed some students who have unwillingness to speak?

.....  
.....

4. In which session you noticed them more.

.....

5. Do you assert that they are suffering from anxiety? (With which signs or manifestations)

.....  
.....

6. In your opinion, what are the most provoking reasons of anxiety?

.....  
.....

7. What is your reaction or impression towards anxious students?

.....  
.....

8. Do you agree that if there is a higher support from the teacher lower anxiety will result? How?

.....  
.....

9. The speaking performance will be enhanced as a result of reducing anxiety. Do you think so? Explain.

.....

.....

10. According to you as a teacher what are the strategies you should approach to reduce the speaking anxiety of your students?

.....

.....

### ملخص

نظرا للدور الفعال الذي يلعبه الأستاذ في تدريس اللغات الأجنبية، تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى اكتشاف دور المعلم في التغلب على القلق لدى المتعلمين باعتباره تحديا خطيرا معظم متعلمي اللغة الأجنبية يعانون منه لاسيما في المحادثة. اختير هذا البحث لمنهجية البحث النوعي كأسلوب من خلال اثنين من الوسائل؛ ملاحظة الفصول الدراسية التي أجريت مع مجموعتين، والمقابلة التي أجريت أيضا مع الطلاب و الأساتذة. النتائج التي كشفت عن اثنين من الوسائل المذكورة لها دور المساهمة في تأكيد الفرضية الموضوعية لهذا البحث التي هي، دعم المعلم له دور حاسم في خفض القلق لدى طلاب اللغات الأجنبية ويعزز كفاءتها عن طريق الكلام. هذه النتائج متداولة في الأدوار التي يلعبها المعلم في صف اللغة الأجنبية لجعلها أقل إرهاقا وممتعة للطلاب. ثم كشفت عن وجود مجموعة من التوصيات منظم في النهاية، للطلاب والمعلمين كذلك. للمعلمين، في محاولة لتبني الاستراتيجيات والأساليب التي تساهم في جعل الجو صحي وأكثر راحة للطلبة للتعبير عن أنفسهم جيدا. ثم للطلاب، ينبغي ان يقوموا بمحاولة للتغلب على مخاوفهم ومحاولة العمل أكثر على مستواهم من أجل تعزيز ثقتهم بأنفسهم.



**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra**  
**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
**Department of Foreign Languages**  
**Section of English**



**MOVING BEYOND CULTURAL BARRIERS: STRATEGIES FOR  
INCREASING EFL LEARNERS 'INTER-CULTURAL AWARENESS  
A CASE STUDY OF SECOND- YEAR MASTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH  
AT MOHAMED KHEIDER UNIVERSITY OF BISKRA-ALGERIA**

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as partial  
fulfilment for the Master's Degree in Sciences of Languages**

**Submitted by: Ms. Abir DRISSAT Supervised by: Dr. Saliha CHELLI**

**Board of Examiners**

**President: Mrs. Imene GUETTAL**

**MA University of Biskra**

**Supervisor: Dr. Saliha CHELLI**

**MC University of Biskra**

**Examiner: Ms. Warda KHOUNIMA University of Biskra**

**June 2015**

## **Dedication**

Dedicated to the Memory of Naima BETKA (1972-2012): Greatly loved, and sorely  
missed

To the man in whom I find my strength...to Dad for instilling a hard work ethic

To Mom for keeping her prayers and encouragements alive; I think of all the  
grants you gave me: Sacrifice, devotion, love and tears, your heart, your energy and  
your soul, all these have made me the person I am today. It is never too late for me to  
say that I recognize and appreciate what you did and still doing for me, I respect your  
sacrifice, I value your support, I thank you

To my loving sister Selma, for her unconditional love and longstanding support

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Above all, I thank God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful for granting me the chance to bring this work to a successful end. All of it was the outcome of his grace, mercy and blessings.

My cordial gratitude goes to my mentor Dr. Saliha CHELLI, who inspires me with her genuine enthusiasm, integrity and dedication, and to whom I owe many speeches of encouragements and support. I have had the privilege of working with her and taking profit of her sage advice, valuable guidance and insightful criticism.

I am, likewise, utterly grateful to the members of the jury: Ms. Warda KHOUNI and Mrs. Imene GUETTAL for their consent to read and appraise this work.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Nadia REZIG; her invaluable advice and genuine interest in my academic development were key motivations throughout this work.

I extend my words of thanks to all those who have been there for me in times of distress and anxiety, my family members and close friends: Amine, Bahi, Moh, Asma and Souad. Thank you for your unwavering moral and emotional support.

## **Abstract**

Being aware of the intercultural dimension of foreign language education and the need to dispel prejudiced attitudes, and promote cross-cultural understanding as part of developing the concept of intercultural communicative competence, this research work attempts to investigate the effects of raising EFL learners' intercultural awareness on minimizing perceived cultural barriers. Intercultural awareness promotes qualities of openness and tolerance in relation to others, and eliminates barriers to effective communication. Therein lies the need to shed light on some of the cultural factors seriously hindering English literature/culture teaching and learning, and the impact of fostering intercultural awareness on minimizing those inhibitive barriers. The research methodology adopted in this study is the descriptive one; it aims to describe two variables: intercultural awareness as the presumed independent variable and its role in reducing perceived cultural barriers presumed as the dependent variable. Data were gathered by means of two questionnaires distributed to a sample of 42 second year master students, and administered to 5 teachers of literature and civilization at the Department of Foreign Languages, Section of English, at the University of Biskra. The findings revealed that learners' lack of cultural awareness was a major factor that affected their cognizance and understanding of cross-cultural differences as well as their inability to overcome ethnocentric feelings, especially when it comes to dealing with hard-lined, prohibited and socially restricted taboo themes. On the basis of these results, therefore, the formulated hypothesis was confirmed in that there is a pedagogical utility in fostering the element of intercultural awareness being a key instrument in dispelling the effect of those inhibitive barriers. To this end, pedagogical recommendations are presented with the intention to provide English teachers with some ideas to foster EFL learners' intercultural awareness, and facilitate the process of culture and / or literature teaching and learning.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as Foreign Language

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**ICC:** Intercultural Communicative Competence

**FLT:** Foreign Language Teaching

**L1:** First Language

**FC:** Foreign Culture

**FL:** Foreign Language

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## **1. Introduction**

English as a lingua franca has become the essential medium of communication and interaction between different cultural groups across the globe. A wide range of EFL programmes have been elaborated to meet the growing needs of EFL students especially in non-English speaking countries. In foreign language learning, however, acquiring communicative skills does not only require acquisition of linguistic structures, but also a familiarity with cultural elements. A newly gained insight in foreign language teaching strongly advocates the inseparability of language and culture, and realizes the growing need to locate the teaching/ learning process in a socio-cultural context where learners are supposed to perceive the world as the native speakers do.

During the process of foreign language and/or culture learning, however, cross-cultural barriers are likely to emerge and cause misunderstandings instead of cultural richness. English language teaching should set itself the aim to help learners get rid of their ethnocentricity and develop an awareness of the target cultural beliefs, values, customs and daily life practices. This in essence enables learners to surpass the barriers of the mainstream culture as the only accepted, embrace cross-cultural differences and approach multicultural issues in a more comprehensive and effective manner.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Unquestionably, the incorporation of the cultural dimension of language has long been considered an indubitable issue in the field of EFL teaching/ learning. Since culture is embedded in language, and implicitly transmitted via its patterns, the need to foster EFL learners' intercultural awareness is deemed essential in order to facilitate teaching and enable learners to eliminate their ethnocentric perceptions.

At the Algerian university level, students enrolled for an English Bachelor of Arts, Department of Foreign Languages are required to attend courses of British and American literature/civilization with the goal of enabling them to approach the foreign culture and obtain a holistic view of the British and American speech communities. The literature based- culture approach adopted by EFL teachers is envisaged to enable learners develop skills of intercultural competence and surpass perceived cultural barriers. However, due to the ideological and cultural constraints imposed by the Algerian/ cultural patterns of thinking and behaving, modules of literature and civilization are taught marginally with great caution. De facto, the cross-cultural barriers attributed to the wide range of cultural disparities between the learner's local culture and foreign one may constitute a challenge both to the learner's success and teacher's efforts, and hence, seriously hinder the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process. Occasionally, a number of learners are likely to experience certain psychological blocks, feelings of anxiety, tension, and alienation from people of their home culture, the target culture, or even from themselves.

A successful EFL classroom, ergo, should obey to certain pedagogical strategies which stress the significance of not only providing learners with adequate language knowledge, but also of emphasizing positive attitudes towards differences, eliminating stereotypes- related to race or ethnic apartheid, and elaborating a mature perception of others.

The subject under study is the result of our concern to tackle the issue of cultural barriers and the significance of eliminating attitudinal inhibitors, and hence, promoting the concept of intercultural awareness. This research study in its essence attempts to attract teachers' attention to the sensibility of this problem which, in fact, if

not given due importance would hinder the effectiveness of culture and literature teaching/ learning in EFL classrooms.

### **3. Aims of the Study**

This research work, preliminarily, aims to identify some of the cultural factors constituting a challenge to the process of English language learning; more precisely, those cultural barriers that hinder foreign culture and literature teaching/learning. Moreover, the study aims to investigate the potential positive effects of raising learners' intercultural awareness on eliminating those cross-cultural barriers.

### **4. Research Questions**

In the present study, we seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the cultural barriers which mainly impede culture and literature teaching/learning at the Department of Foreign Languages, Section of English, University of Biskra?
  - a. Do the learners' prejudices and stereotypes have a negative impact on their language learning progress?
  - b. Does the learners' faithfulness to the native culture limit their involvement in language learning?
2. Does the learners' lack of cultural awareness leads to failure in language learning?
3. Which strategies have been proven most efficacious in developing EFL learners' cultural awareness and, hence, minimizing perceived cultural barriers?

## **5. Research Hypothesis**

It is hypothesized that learners' poor level of cultural awareness prevents them from overcoming barriers of ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudices. Therefore, increasing learners' intercultural awareness through pertinent strategies enables them to overcome impediments of cross-cultural differences, and enhances their proficiency and mastery of the foreign language.

## **6. Significance of the Study**

It is envisaged that the study will make a theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge related to teaching English as a foreign language. This study attempts to highlight some of the inhibitive factors seriously hindering foreign cultural teaching and learning, more importantly, it sheds light on the feasibility of devoting a separate module for the skill of cultural awareness, as the latter plays a significant role in enabling learners develop tolerance and understanding of cultural differences.

## **7. Research Methodology and Data Gathering Tools**

This research is descriptive in nature using qualitative research methods. There are two main reasons for choosing this research approach. First, the descriptive method permits us to identify the relationship between the two variables of 'cultural barriers' and 'cultural awareness', and to collect the data required for the subject matter. Secondly, the research questions are better answered and understood via the description and interpretation of data.

## **7.1. The Sample**

Both second year master students and teachers of literature and civilization enrolled at the Department of foreign languages, Section of English, University of Biskra, participated in the current study. The students' number was 42, while the teachers' was 5; no sampling measurements were taken upon the selection of both participants as the overall number of both groups was relatively small.

## **7.2. Data Gathering Tools**

The research hypothesis requires the use of several means of data collection in order to obtain reliable data that serve the study objectives. In this study, the choice fell upon the instrument of questionnaires. Whereas the teacher's questionnaire aimed at inquiring into their view points, techniques and strategies used in culture teaching, as well as, inhibitors and impediments to culture teaching, the student's investigated their perceptions and attitudes towards English culture teaching, in addition to the cultural elements which might hinder their learning process.

Concerning the use of questionnaires as a tool of research , it is our belief and that of many researchers , that it is an appropriate means of collecting data concerning students' difficulties and attitudes towards foreign culture learning , and the optimum method to both reach and discover the perceptions of a large sample of respondents. In view of this, Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) state "use questionnaires to collect data from participants in a sample about their characteristics, experiences, and opinions in order to generalize the findings to a population that the sample is intended to represent." (p. 289).

## **8. Structure of the Dissertation**

The thesis is organized into three chapters. The first and second chapters are devoted to the historical overview relevant to culture teaching and learning in EFL contexts, as well as cultural barriers and awareness in language learning. Whereas the first chapter probes culture teaching in EFL contexts and provides a full description of its components and integration in EFL instruction, the second highlights some of the perceived cultural barriers to the process of culture teaching /learning and emphasizes the role of cultural awareness in minimizing those perceived cultural barriers. The final chapter, on the other hand, corresponds to the field work. It identifies the sample involved; the instruments employed, the data generated from both teachers' and students' questionnaires, and concludes with a discussion of the obtained data. Finally, pedagogical implications and limitations met in the course of this study were presented.

## Chapter One: The Place of Culture in Foreign Language Teaching

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## **Introduction**

Many EFL programs today offer highly elaborated programs with professionally trained teachers who recognize that language learning is a developmental process which requires the internalization of both formal and cultural specific knowledge. Language is the carrier of culture; people's verbal and non-verbal behaviors reveal their cultural identities, thought pattern, values, way of living, and beliefs. Accordingly, in EFL learning contexts, a mere acquisition of formal properties of language is not sufficient for the realization of successful communication, the latter therefore, is guaranteed by the mastery and acquaintance of both linguistic and culturally specific meanings. This chapter is devoted to probe culture teaching in EFL contexts. It starts with a definition of the term "culture", and brings forth how different perspectives from designated disciplines provided an account of "culture". It then, switches to demonstrate the main elements which combine together to form the peculiarity of culture. The chapter, further, discusses various opinions on the integration of culture in EFL instruction, and highlights where cultural learning currently stands. Finally, a description on the importance of culture in EFL learning is forwarded.

### **1.1. Culture Defined**

Owing to its abstract and dynamic nature, defining the concept of "culture" is not an easy task to perform. One has to agree with Valdes (1986, p.5) that culture "is [a] very complex and broad topic to be learnt" because "it lies at the crossroads of a number of fields of study and academic disciplines" (Stern cited in Valdes, 1986, p.5). It is worth mentioning, therefore, that a number of disciplines gave rise to a myriad of

definitions to the concept of “culture”. Anthropology, and Cultural Studies are among the key disciplines which yielded many descriptions to the nature of culture; both disciplines have attempted to identify it from a designated perspective.

In the anthropological sense, the British scholar Tylor (1871, p.1) was the first to define culture as “the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society”. Implied in his definition is the idea that culture represents the body of shared cognitive and artificial characteristics which are acquired by the collective members of the society i.e. those common sets of beliefs, customs, artifacts and habits which are not biologically inherited, but rather, transmitted from one generation to another via learning. Though, Tylor (1871, p. 26) gave a holistic definition of culture, debate on what is meant by the expression “complex whole” is still a point of discussion. Shaules (2007) explains that this “complex whole” refers to “the shared knowledge, values, and physical products of a group of people”.

Hofstede (1984) , moreover, comes to support what has been advocated previously by Tyler (1871) in the sense that culture cannot not be transmitted by genes: “ Culture ...consists in those patterns relative to behavior and the products of human action which may be inherited that is, passed on from generation to generation independently of the biological genes”. This, however, does not restrict the cultural transmission solely from one generation to another. Culture can be exchanged and passed by from members belonging to the same generation; people can learn from each other and share cultural knowledge when needed. Peck (1984) states that culture “is that facet of human life learned by people as a result of belonging to the same particular group, it is that part of learned behavior shared with others” (p.1).

The definition established by the anthropologist Trinovitch provides a holistic description to the concept of “culture”, in the sense that the latter signifies “...an all-inclusive system which incorporates the biological and technical behavior of human beings with their verbal and non-verbal systems of expressive behavior starting from birth”( cited in Croft, 1980, p. 44). In fact, some other anthropologists were concerned with the definition of culture with regard to language. Kluckhohn, for instance, maintains that "Human culture without human language is unthinkable” (cited in Samovar, 2007, p. 38).

To sum up, the anthropological view of culture placed emphasis on the divergent nature of culture, and perceived it as what is exclusively observed, transmitted, learned, and shared among the collective members of the society. This view is similar to the behaviorist approach to culture which maintains that cultural behaviors and habits are acquired through the processes of imitation and drills, and hence, can only be learned when transmitted from one member to another.

In the field of cultural studies, on the other hand, culture is viewed as “man made” (Taibi, 2002, p. 20). In other words, human beings create culture as a distinctive device which sets them apart from another social group and enables them to develop skills and knowledge which can, subsequently, be transmitted to other generations. The cultural system of a given social group impacts their patterns of behaving and thinking, attitudes, work productivity, and gives them a sense of who they are, and how they should act and react in various situations (Harris, Moran, and Moran, 2007). Goodenough (1957) shares Moran ‘s perspective in the sense that culture is a set of systematic rules to which individuals adhere and must relate to if they are to integrate successfully in a given social group; he advocates that culture is “ a blue print for action, a system of rules for behavior” (p.74).

Unlike the fields of Anthropology and Cultural Studies, in the humanistic approach, culture constitutes the ways a community of people chooses to represent itself via the works of art, music, literature, history, and fine arts. These elements are considered as a society's legacy that is/ should be preserved and passed by to subsequent generations.

In the context of foreign language teaching, scholars define culture from two distinctive but related aspects because the incorporation of both is central in the language classroom: the "capital C" culture and the "small c" culture. According to Kramsch's distinction (1994), the former refers to the materialistic productions of a given society such as, arts, architecture, music, social and religious institutions, etc. More precisely, as Britten and Fahsi add "Capital C" is created "...to develop the highest faculties, the imagination, the sense of beauty and intellectual comprehension" (cited in Clouston, 1997, p.4). While the latter (small c), refers to the other aspects of lifestyle which characterize daily interactions and occupations between members of society, namely, their beliefs, values, customs, and interpersonal relationships.

In the process of teaching, the two types are employed differently, each of which designated to a specific learning stage. Taibi (2002) suggests that the "small c" culture is best suited to beginners and intermediate second/ foreign language learners, whereas Richards, Hull, Proctor, and Chastain (1997) believe that "Capital C" culture is pertinent to those "who wish to explore the society's contributions to the world knowledge and civilization in greater depth and breadth" (p.388). Scholars failed to reach an agreement with regard to the concept of culture. Subsequently, one can encounter a myriad of definitions, but still be confused as to which ones to select, and which to overlook, despite their significance.

## **1.2. Components of culture**

Irrespectively of its origin and foundation, culture provides its members with a set of socially agreed-on beliefs, values, rules and norms which guide and direct their behaviors and way of living, such as knowing when to pay someone an informal visit, or knowing the appropriate time and place to say or perform a specific action. A brief description, we believe, on the elements that form the assemblage of culture can best accommodate the study objectives.

### **1.2.1. Beliefs**

In its plain sense, a belief is a conviction of truth; a truth that an individual establishes about oneself, about others, or about the world surrounding him/her. The review of literature, however, has revealed that the term “belief” is among the most difficult concepts to define. As Mansour (2009) argues “beliefs can neither be clearly defined, nor do they have a single correct clarification” (p. 35).

Many theoretical perspectives, therefore, have yielded different conceptualizations of the term “belief”. Richardson (1996), for instance, maintains that beliefs are “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (cited in Sikula, 1996, p. 103). Another researcher, Pajares (1992) stated that a belief “is an individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do” (p.316). Implied in his definition is the idea that beliefs act as certain rules which are generated by the collectivity and acquired by the individual regarding the truthfulness or falsity of the human being’s verbal and non-verbal patterns of behavior.

Hall and Loucks (1982), further, explain that beliefs are static and resistant components in any given culture; they cannot be influenced by factors of time, reason, or experience, but rather, they are socially transmitted as they are to subsequent generations. This elucidates why certain beliefs are static and fixed to the extent that members of a given society stick to them even after proven erroneous by subsequent and contemporary research studies. Central to this idea, is the fact that beliefs are important because they act as guiding rules deemed essential to abide; it is according to one's own beliefs that one can judge and evaluate the world around.

### **1.2.2. Values**

Values are abstract concepts which can act as basis for ideal actions; they are broad constructs deemed essential to the evaluation and judgment of ethical patterns of behavior. Smith and Schwartz (1980) State that "values serve as standards to guide the selection or evaluation of behavior, people, and events" (cited in Berry, Segall, and Kagitcibasi, 1997, p. 80) .Cross cultural studies on values categorize them on two distinct levels: individual and cultural; the former, according to Schwartz (1992) are defined in terms of "motivational goals that serve as guiding principles in [individual]lives" (p.11). Whereas, the latter, views values as abstract morals which differ in response to the sociopolitical and economical streams in a given culture, eventually, leading to a change in the system of shared values.

The value system in a given culture differs from its belief system since values evolve according to the social group's needs and wants. Moreover, members within the same culture may not pose an equal chance to endorse identical systems of values. This proves to a certain extent that values are subjective in nature and are not entirely

aligned with the collectivity's shared system of what is right, wrong, or ought to be correct.

In brief, values are key elements in society given the fact that they possess the ability to influence the individual's decisions, actions, attitudes, and determine, therefore, which aspects of a behavior are deemed appropriate in a certain situation.

### **1.2.3. Behaviors**

The way people act and manifest in a given situation is called behavior. Human behaviors can be influenced, directed by cultural, societal, emotional, ethical, and moral factors. There are two conflicting views about which is responsible for shaping the human behavior; Kurtines and Gewirtz (cited in Moore, 2007) claim that the ecological context plays a major role in stimulating the range of manners and actions exerted by individuals, whereas another view advocated by Dupont (cited in Moore, 2007) stresses the idea that most of people's actions and behaviors are motivated by their needs and internal values. More specifically, he believes that people's intentions impact their behaviors; those intentions are primarily dependent on one's beliefs (his/her conviction of a truth) values (his/her conceptualizations of ideal actions) and subjective norms (other people's perceptions of what should be done).

Viewed from another perspective, Matsumto (2007) maintains that there are three basic sources of influence on the human behavior; either via "the human nature" i.e. the biological and psychological needs of people; via culture; or via personality and individual role identities. He further adds "individual behavior is the product of the interaction between culturally dependent social roles and individual different role identities" (p.1286). According to Matsumto, individuals in a given society comprise a set of social acceptable rules which guide their patterns of behavior, thus, behaviors

stem out of an agreement between the way an individual chooses to behave and his confinement to those socially and culturally appropriate manners of behavior.

Jandt (1998) shares Matsumoto's view, and further adds that those "rules may refer to socially agreed-behavior or to individual guidelines for behavior. Norms specify appropriate and inappropriate behaviors" (p. 18). One characteristic of culture is that it compels its membership to conform themselves to a set of norms and rules which govern appropriate behaviors, and which are dependent on subconscious set of values and morals. Having said that, we find it essential to note that culture does not restrict the behavior and action of its members as much as it grants them a sense of belonging and a well-organized pattern of living.

Moore (2007), on the contrary, views that individual behaviors are the result of a conscious effort, an actual process of deep thinking which takes place after logical and complex reasoning; individuals do not behave in reckless manners because they are obliged to consider the "acceptable practices [which] are firmly embedded in religious, cultural, and social layers" (Ibid, p.113). Environmental factors exert vigorous influences on people's behaviors; hence, members within a social group are expected to act rationally according to the conventions that assure compatible behaviors.

#### **1.2.4. Rituals and Superstitions**

Superstition is widely recognized as the belief in paranormal and supernatural phenomena, such as mysticism, omens, witchcrafts, mind reading, palmistry, signs, divination and lucky numbers. The origin of superstitions dates back to early man's fascination of nature, and his curiosity to discover the connection between life, future and fortunes. Bagehot (cited in Knowlson, 1910) wrote:

...every sort of European resident in the East—even the shrewd merchant and the ‘post-captain with his bright, wakeful eye of command’—comes soon to believe in witchcraft, and to assure you in confidence that ‘there is really something in it;’ he has never seen anything convincing himself, but he has seen those who have seen those who have seen those who have seen; in fact he has lived in an atmosphere of infectious belief, and he has inhaled it. (p.8)

Individuals perform various sets of practices and behaviors associated with their superstitious beliefs in luck, magic, fortune telling and other spiritual convictions, for instance, black cats and bad luck, the unlucky number thirteen, and the seven years of misfortune caused by looking at a broken mirror, or even at a water reflection are widely known superstitions that people immediately associate with unlucky and potentially harmful outcomes. Researchers and psychologists hypothesize that superstitious beliefs develop due to several psychological factors including low-self efficacy, high rates of anxiety, irrational beliefs, psychopathology, as well as magical idealism.

Accordingly, several attempts to probe the psychological and behavioral causes of such beliefs were considered; the theory of “partial reinforcement effect”, for instance, advocates the idea that superstitions evolve when an individual performs an action, but does not receive reinforcement, he/she, then, starts to duplicate that action several times until positive reinforcement occurs, subsequently, he/she creates superstitions as a way to solve and reduce his/her fears in other life contexts. In view of this, Cushner and Brislin (1996) state that a superstitious behavior is “a learned habit repeated periodically, often a behavior coincidentally reinforced in association with other rewarded action (e.g., a person always bets on gray horses because he once won a large sum of money on one” (p. 308-309).

Superstitions persisted for long periods because they are culturally transmitted from one generation to another; despite the fact that they come in direct contradiction

with modern science which empirically questions their reliability, some cultures cannot rise above them. Moreover, people strongly hold to their superstitious beliefs and consider them as divine forces that can affect their social, emotional, intellectual, or even professional lives in a positive or negative manner. Selborne (cited in Knowlson, 1910, p.8) criticizes people's deep conviction of superstitions stating that:

It is the hardest thing in the world to shake off superstitious prejudices; they are sucked in as it were with our mother's milk...they become so interwoven with our very constitutions... No wonder, therefore, that the lower people retain them their whole lives through, since their minds are not invigorated by a liberal education, and therefore not enabled to make any efforts adequate to the occasion.

Superstitions, therefore, are extremely difficult to uproot from society, as they lie deeply in the people's convictions and truth assumptions about what is good or bad.

Rituals, on the other hand, refer to the range of activities and practices performed by people on a daily basis, or in different ceremonies symbolizing specific meanings. According to De Jong (1996) "Rituals are to do with areas of behavior like ways of greeting and saying farewell, and showing respect towards others, i.e. 'customary' cultural behavior, both at the level of the individual and at the social level" (p.29). Cushner and Brislin (1996), further add that rituals exist in any cultural group; binds individuals to perform similar sets of behaviors deemed appropriate in a specific occasion, and organizes the degree of distance and proximity of relationships among the collective members of society.

Rituals vary across cultures, the ritual of kissing, for example, differs from one country to another. French people tend to exchange three kisses when meeting a friend, British and Germans prefer at most two, whereas, in the Arab world and

Middle East countries, exchanging only three kisses is considered rude, as the normal number of kisses, sometimes, exceeds the number four ( De Jong, 1996).

### **1.2.5. Symbols and Myths**

As Hofstede puts forward, Symbols are “words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share the culture” (cited in Jandt, 1996, p.29). Symbols vary from one culture to another expressing diversified experiences and ideologies. Zimmer (1951) adds “...Symbols hold the mind to truth but are not themselves the truth... each civilization, every age, must bring forth its own” (p, 2). In view of that, we should note that symbols exist in various forms: verbal and non-verbal symbols, drawings, pictures, gestures, sounds, clothing, and products.

Furthermore, they act as shared visual representations that are widely recognized by the collectivity, purposefully used to communicate ideas and meanings. A red ribbon, for instance, carries a symbolic message which communicates sympathy and support for those who struggle with the HIV disease. In Islam, women wear a scarf as a symbol of purity, dignity, and honor; whereas, carrying a cross is a symbol of one’s Christian beliefs. Artistic, architectural products, artifacts, visual arts, national and geographical monuments may, as well, imply culturally symbolic meanings.

Myths establish a culture’s values, customs, social structures, and laws as Jandt (1998) maintains “Myths provide the cultural image of perfection and provide a guide for living... [They] are expressed in the dominant symbols and rituals of a culture in story form” (p.8). What characterizes myths is the non-rational aspect, which may sometimes, portray dramatic events and add fictitious details to describe

past events. Bierlein (1994) notes that myths spread universally to transport historical events and predict future ones. Accordingly, a culture's myths carry a great value because they communicate symbolic meanings which grant it stability and shared identity. Moreover, myths are often used to change people's behaviors and influence their lives via imaginary characters that transmit noble themes of love, loyalty, freedom, sacrifice, and bravery.

### **1.3. Approaches to Teaching Culture in EFL Classrooms**

The debate on the issue of culture inclusion in EFL contexts has generated two opposing views. The first view endorses the integration of culture in EFL instruction, whereas the second advocates that cultural instruction is a fiasco and does not, therefore, yield positive outcomes to the EFL teaching/ learning contexts.

#### **1.3.1. Against Culture Teaching**

A growing body of tenets and beliefs seem to advocate the decreasing benefit of teaching culture in EFL classes. Primitively, Phillipson (1992) was the first to denote that the side effects of culture teaching cannot be overlooked; he criticized the spread of English as the exclusive language providing access to employment and international community at the expense of other languages: "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" Phillipson (1992, p.47). Accordingly, English is used as a vehicle for cultural and linguistic supremacy over other under developing countries.

English linguistic imperialism poses a threat to the indigenous cultures and vernacular languages in particular. The latter become marginalized due to the

hegemonic process of westernization implicit in the cultural-embodied linguistic structures of language. As a result, local languages may lose their status leading to a process of “linguistic genocide”. Modiano (2001) confirms that linguistic imperialism was the primary reason why some cultures lost their distinctive identities; even the French and German ones were not able to “survive” the ramifications of the Anglo-Americanization process despite the similarities in religious and socio-cultural peculiarities.

It is axiomatic to say that foreign languages reflect the cultural values and ideas of its users as Valdes (1990) writes “the way a culture sees the world is reflected in its language” (cited in Hyde, 1994, p. 300). Therefore, when learners are exposed to foreign cultural concepts “alien” and “contradictive” to their own, they feel overwhelmed. In fact, being exposed to a one way flow of western ethnocentric and elitist ideas threatens their cultural integrity as they soon start to pose serious skepticisms towards their own culture. According to Hyde (1994), culture teaching in non-English speaking countries gradually leads to a process of cultural deracination which refers to “the erosion of belief in the ability of native culture and language to deal with the modern world -leaves its victims at the mercy of culturally imperialistic and potentially dangerous forces” (p.296). Tomlinson (1991) further explains that the outcome of cultural deracination is the implicit internalization of the foreign cultural norms into the weakened collective identity of the local culture resulting in an advantage to the dominant culture.

Altan (1995) on the other hand, believes that language learning is an already challenging task to many learners, and any further accumulation of culturally-based instruction, therefore, would only evoke unnecessary perplexities to learners: “passages and units with foreign cultural themes and topics not only cause difficulties in

comprehension, but actually seem to increase misunderstanding and confusion about the non-native culture” (p .59). Culture instruction, therefore, does not bring about positive outcomes to the process of foreign language teaching.

### **1.3.2. For Culture Teaching**

When Pulverness (2003) stated “...language can ‘somehow’ stand alone and be taught/learned as a value-free symbolic system...”(p.3), it was the use of the word ‘somehow’ which revealed the supreme uncertainty of the scholar’s belief, and so assured the absolutism behind the inseparability of language and culture. Theoreticians and EFL practitioners advocate the indispensability of culture in FL teaching/learning, henceforth, they suggest the following arguments. First, language and culture are impossible to dissociate. Language is a social tool which cannot operate unless placed within a socio-cultural dimension; discourse patterns cannot be perceived in vacuum, and as such, cannot be taught free of their cultural-specific contexts. Teaching language equals teaching its related culture; Ladu (1974) writes:

Language cannot be separated from the culture in which it is deeply embedded. Any authentic use of the language, any reading of original texts, any listening to native speakers will introduce cultural concomitants into the classroom whether the teacher is conscious of them or not. By not making them explicit, the teacher permits misconceptions to develop in the students' minds (cited in Altman, p. 129).

Likewise, Sapir (1921) further emphasizes that “language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives” (p.221). In this respect, culture and language are intertwined, and as such cannot be treated as separate entities in the language classroom.

Supporting the inclusion of cultural instruction, Byram (1997) elucidates that foreign language teaching should aim to develop EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence. The latter, according to Byram, is the direct outcome of learning both the linguistic and cultural elements of the foreign language deemed essential for the realization of effective communication with native speakers. Moreover, it is believed that a complete mastery of language should include both aspects of "form and function" because "Knowledge of the grammatical system of a language has to be complemented by an understanding of culture –specific meanings" (Byram cited in Thanassoulas, 2001, pp.1-2), and "Students will master a language only when they learn both its linguistic and cultural norms" (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003, pp. 1-2). That being said, culture performs a fundamental role as it enhances and complements the task of language learning.

Moreover, merits of culture teaching/ learning are reflected in the increasing levels of motivation among EFL learners receiving cultural instruction. The integration of culture is meant to stimulate their cultural curiosity, and arouse their interest in the foreign culture (FC), hence, minimize the artificiality and obscurity of non-authentic learning of language. According to Niederhauser's (1997): "bringing cultural content into the language classroom is one of the best ways of increasing motivation. In a society in which the conflict between globalization and nationalism remains unresolved, many members of the younger generation greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn about life in other countries and to exchange ideas with teachers who are sensitive to both cultures"(p.11). Furthermore, Kitao (1991) maintains that engaging learners in cultural-based activities serves as a motive making language learning a worthwhile task for learners, and enabling language assimilation and apprehension.

When learners are taught how to critically evaluate their positions when introduced to cultural instruction, native languages are validated and cultural identities are preserved against potential imperialistic ideologies.

#### **1.4. Foreign Language Culture Teaching**

It could be maintained that the forms, rules and strings of words that comprise a specific language reflect its users' beliefs, conventions, and systems of meanings. Scholars and EFL practitioners (Ladu, 1974; Sapir, 1921; Niederhauser, 1997; Kitao, 1991), therefore, having realized that language and culture are inseparable, called for the need to incorporate the teaching of culture into the foreign language curriculum.

##### **1.4.1. Is it Necessary to include Culture in Foreign Language Teaching/Learning**

The conviction that language is a mere set of linguistic codes and structures free of any social and cultural dimensions was a major flaw that characterized foreign language learning/teaching back in the 1970's. Several approaches such as, the Direct Method, Audiolingualism, Community Language Learning, the Silent Way, and the Natural approach have eschewed the fact that foreign language learning is best realized if taught from a cultural dimension. According to these approaches, language learners achieve success in foreign language learning if they are, first, able to decipher and comprehend the message implied in the formal properties of the language via both skills of listening and reading, and second, if they are able to produce, write, and utter the speech sounds properly via both skills of speaking and writing. Simply put, to master the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

This narrowed perspective in ELT, nevertheless, came under attack by many scholars, who strongly believed that the pure knowledge obtained via the four skills is not sufficient, and that foreign language learning should expand to include the cultural aspect

of language. Politzer, for example, wrote “If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning...”( 1959, p. 100-101). Language is more than a compilation of syntactic, semantic and phonological mechanisms combined together to form a correct sentence, but rather, it is a system by which the cultural peculiarities of a given social group are carried; language just like dress, food, work habits, music, and arts reveals the social and cultural identities of its speakers. Therefore, Byram (1991) aligns himself with Politzer, and believes, as well, that language teaching with no reference to the target culture is nothing but a fiasco, and that any separation among the two would lead to a process of “epiphenomenon” where learners resort to their native culture in order to perceive the meaning of the foreign language, or sometimes employ the rules of their L1 in the construction of different speech acts.

Is it necessary to include culture in foreign language teaching/ learning? Presumably, a thorough answer to this question is best realized via the provision of several arguments which uphold the merits and importance of integrating culture in FLT.

First, the success of a communicative act highly depends on one’s ability to confine his/her linguistic behavior with the functional aspect of the language. The latter is worth much more than the former which once deprived of the social and conventional rules of language, loses its illocutionary force and becomes senseless. This situation is frequently experienced by EFL learners, who oftentimes, encounter difficulties of pragmatic failures and cross-cultural misunderstandings simply because the successful realization of their communicative needs exceeds their poor and insufficient knowledge of the target culture. Widdowson (1978), in view of this, voiced

“When we acquire a language we do not only learn how to compose and comprehend correct sentences as isolated linguistic units of random occurrence, we also learn how to use sentences appropriately to achieve a communicative purpose”( p.2).

Second, Culture plays a motivating role for learners because it offers them an opportunity to increase their world knowledge and elicit skills of critical thinking. As learners approach the foreign culture, they start to pose questions about their own culture and the target one, evaluate as well as make comparisons among the two, and finally reach an understanding and acquaintance about themselves, and about the other; Reynolds and Skilbek confirm that culture contributes “To develop pupils' understanding of themselves and their own way of life” (cited in Thanassoulas, 2001, p. 10).

Moreover, working with culture equals working with literature; the latter enlightens the learners' horizons of thinking, and paves the way for wider cultural and societal dimensions of the target society and its inhabitants. As a consequence, learners are conscious to the fact that cultures differ, and so does the behavior of its people; each culture stems from a unique source, no culture is superior to another, and each one has its positive as well as its negative traits. Viewed from this perspective, cultural sensitivity is enhanced and ethnocentric ideas are suspended; learners reach a state of cultural awareness and empathy towards the other, and uproot faulty judgments and stereotypes. In fact, Wu and Stephens believe that the learners' errors “stem from their lack of cross-cultural awareness rather than weakness in knowledge of language” (cited in Taibi, 2002, p.28). Pulverness (1995) ,on the other hand, views that it is the teacher's responsibility to develop culturally aware learners: “ The challenge to those teachers who are interested in transcending the often narrow limits of language teaching

is to make cross cultural awareness a central issue in teaching at the same time as developing students' linguistic competence” (p. 5).

Furthermore, foreign language teaching should set itself the goal of rendering learners as competent speakers, who employ language in its appropriate context, and who actively participate in cultural, social, economic, or political exchanges with no fear of communication breakdowns or misunderstandings. Put differently, foreign language teaching (FLT) should enable learners to resemble the ideal “intercultural speaker” who, according to Byram and Fleming (1998) is “someone who has knowledge of one or, preferably, more cultures and social identities and has a capacity to discover and relate to new people from other contexts for which they have not been prepared” (p.132).

Finally, previous approaches and teaching methods have long advocated the view of language as a system of codes, and therefore, relied merely, on the imitation and memorization of pure linguistic rules used in the construction of meaning. Culture-integrated language teaching, however, places emphasis on the negotiation of meaning instead of the repetition of linguistic structures.

FL teaching/ learning cannot be deprived of its socio-cultural dimension; language cannot be taught in isolation; language cannot be learnt without culture; culture is deeply embedded in language. Culture if not taught explicitly, it is being so implicitly because simply, as advocated by many scholars, language is the carrier of culture.

#### **1.4.2. The Culture to teach Culture**

Culture constitutes an integral parcel of the FL teaching/ learning process ( Ladu, 1994; Sapir, 1921) .Valdes, therefore, echoes that culture teaching “doubles the

usefulness of the lesson in adding another dimension and making it more interesting, therefore, easier to learn”(cited in Taibi, 2001, p.29). As a result, many theoreticians and EFL practitioners uphold the utility of cultural instruction in EFL classes, and stress the indispensable need to learn and teach about the foreign culture. Faroukh (n.d.) emphasizes that “our role as educators is to teach the culture of the foreign language whether it is included in the official syllabus and ordered through ministerial instructions or not” (p. 585).

The challenges met by instructors when teaching culture, nonetheless, are numerous. It, therefore, becomes of absolute necessity that teachers adhere to a specific pedagogy when transmitting cultural information. Shortage in time and space, overloaded teaching programmes, teacher’s limited foreign experiences, lack of methods and materials, and scarcity of adequate knowledge and training to teach culture are often recognized as inhibitors to culture teaching. Therefore, teachers are required to possess a satisfactory amount of cultural knowledge necessary to lead their learners towards a lucrative formation of an all-inclusive linguistic/ cultural mastery of the foreign language. This view is advocated by Widdowson (1978, p. 242) who states that:

After all, the language teacher always has to know about something other than [the] language he is teaching. Traditionally, this knowledge has been of the culture and literature associated with the particular language in question. Thus, the English teacher is expected to know a good deal about British and /or American institution, social customs, and traditions and so on.

Transmitting cultural knowledge can pose a challenge to language teachers if not handled with tremendous care and consciousness in regard to the learner’s perspectives and predispositions towards the foreign culture. Subsequently, teachers need to deracinate learners’ insecurities, namely those, which arise when they confront a set of norms and beliefs alien to their own belief systems. Hence, strategies used to

enable learners establish an understanding and appreciation towards cultural differences are highly recommended. Moreover, such kind of awareness and understanding is primordial if learners are to yield a bicultural identity.

Cultural instruction is not an arbitrary task, but rather, a systematic one which involves strategic planning and careful selection of materials, topics, and techniques. For some teachers, this would not be easily accomplished, given the fact that culture is a fuzzy and vast concept. However, efforts are required on behalf of teachers to select germane materials, which as Brooks (1975) maintains should be deduced from notions of symbolism, honor, humor, beauty, values, order, and should, as well, reflect other aspects of religion, family, and lifestyle of the target cultural community.

Moreover, the selection of cultural content should adhere to the learner's needs, which may be either professional, vocational, or communicative, in addition to his/her preferences, capacities, and previous knowledge/ experiences in the target culture. Teachers, in fact, need to select materials which stimulate learners to know more about the target community's way of living, outstanding figures, historical events, cultural differences and similarities. Furthermore, authenticity and variation are two central elements which characterize not only a sincere demonstration of the target culture, but also, a straightforward invitation to boost and maintain learners' motivation and interest in the foreign culture ( Plecinska, 2001).

We should note, however, that no conclusive answers were found to the question concerning 'how much culture to teach', as no satisfactory research was able to determine the amount of culture required in EFL contexts.

## **Conclusion**

Culture teaching in EFL contexts is a captivating field of investigation; many scholars attempted to provide a holistic conceptualization to the term culture, but failed to agree on a single one. This fact resulted in a wide accumulation of literature which deals with this subject as each theory stresses a specific aspect from a designated discipline.

As advocated by many researchers and EFL practitioners, learning a foreign language entails learning its culturally-embedded beliefs, values, thought patterns, and conventions. Hence, EFL teaching/ learning is no longer characterized by extensive curricular knowledge; language development instead, is fostered by a more culture-integrated instruction. Culture teaching aims to enable learners surpass linguistic and cultural barriers when involved in cross-cultural interactions. It, furthermore, expands on a more humanistic level to strengthen their cultural awareness, erase prejudices and disbeliefs, and promote a sense of empathy and tolerance vis-à-vis cultural dissonance.

## **Chapter Two: Cultural Barriers and Intercultural Awareness in EFL**

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## **Introduction**

If, as indicated in the former chapter, culture is inevitably an indispensable ingredient to the success of language teaching/learning, the need to shift from a knowledge and language-based instruction to a more culturally-oriented one is essential. It seems, however, that there is more to the question of cultural implementation in the language classroom than recognizing its importance. Transmitting cultural knowledge to EFL learners, who have never experienced living in another culture or even visited one, can in many ways be problematic.

The chapter, put further, highlights some of the perceived cultural barriers recognized as impediments to the process of culture teaching/learning. Moreover, it takes into account the learner's attitudes, factors influencing them, as well as the relationship between attitudes, cultural awareness and language proficiency. Finally, and based on the need to promote learners' cross-cultural awareness, this chapter sheds light on the significant role that cross-cultural awareness can play in eliminating cultural barriers. Thus, it will deal with such matters as definition of cultural awareness, its importance to the language teaching/learning process, in addition to some recommended techniques that have been proven most effective in raising EFL learners' cross-cultural awareness towards the target culture, and enabling them elicit positive attitudes towards the target language, its related culture, and its bearers.

### **2.1.Cultural Barriers**

During the process of language learning, a number of challenges may be encountered by both teachers and learners; some crucial cultural barriers may appear and seriously impede the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Cross-cultural barriers, thereby, if not seriously considered, are likely to cause misunderstandings and conflicts

instead of cultural richness. We, therefore, find it, necessary to define some of those cultural barriers and to show their influence on the learning process.

### **2.1.1. Taboos**

Culture as an all-inclusive system in society possesses a number of guidelines and social rules that are employed to restrict and/or direct individuals' behaviors in various circumstances. As part of their social internalization, therefore, members of a society are mentally, physically, and psychologically prepared to avoid taboos for the purpose of becoming heterogeneous and accepted citizens.

Taboos are beliefs that express cultural, religious, or social prohibitions; people maintain taboos as a means to control, guide and regulate obscene or banned behaviors in society. Douglas (1979) believes that "Essentially the taboo is a ban on touching or eating or speaking or seeing" (p.72). Correspondingly, taboos exist in society with a restrictive tendency rather than a directive one. Though could not be explained by its believers and might rather appear irrational and absurd to outsiders, taboo rules constitute an integral part in society allowing people to avoid harassment dangers, embarrassments, and unpleasant outcomes or illnesses.

Some societies hold taboos as "sacred" guidelines, and hence, impose severe punishments on individuals who deviate from norm expectations, and eventually find themselves facing society's resentments ,which are in turn, expressed by the unpleasant reactions and attitudes of its members . In view of this, Fershtman, Gneezy, and Hoffman (2011)illustrate that "For example, there are laws against trade in human organs; there are laws against underage sex, pornography" (p. 142). In this respect, taboo regulations protect and maintain other people's rights and liberties.

Furthermore, the verbal and nonverbal taboos constitute an important aspect of the individual's social identity as they constitute the absorbed rules of behavior that can mainly function within its social context. Hence, in the context of EFL teaching/learning, knowledge of these "avoidance rules" is paramount, and should particularly be integrated and discussed within the process of cultural instruction. Being able to initiate, hold and maintain successful communication implies knowledge, adherence, and observance of these rules which guarantee pertinent behaviors in society.

### **2.1.2. Stereotypes and Prejudices**

The social identity theory suggested by Tajfel and Turner (cited in Austin and Worchel, 1986) hypothesizes that individuals are categorized into distinctive social groups. Correspondingly, each group maintains significant expectations of its superiority depending on comparisons against other equivalent groups. The central idea of this theory, however, is that individuals are naturally encouraged to construct a positive image with regard to their social identity via comparisons made against differing groups. Prejudices and stereotypes, therefore, are likely to be generated due to a psychological and social need to sustain a positive and satisfying social image.

Stereotypes can be defined as standardized opinions, or conventions which particularly attribute certain characteristics to other social/ cultural groups, or which judge individuals with regard to their membership to those groups. These generalizations are characterized by lack of conclusive evidence as they tend to evolve from minimal knowledge about a group of a designated religious, ethnic, racial, or sexual orientation.

There are many views with response to what causes people to form stereotypes. While some attribute the emergence of stereotypical judgments to environmental factors such as, group conflicts, differences in power, intolerant differences, or even a need for a social identity; others claim that information processing becomes considerably easier to initiate when constructing stereotypes, especially since receivers, when confronted with situations that are likely to cause them form stereotypes, exploit their previous knowledge instead of actually analyzing and evaluating newly received experiences.

Clarke and Clarke (cited in Merrouch, 2006, p.33) highlight three main kinds of stereotypes. Racial stereotypes which link black people to violent intentions and hostile behaviors; Sexist or Gender stereotypes which symbolize women as disdained and irrational beings, view them as inferior to men, and completely deprive them from noteworthy potentials and capacities. Finally, Regional stereotypes which disregard the uniqueness of social groups and classes.

In some cases, stereotypes can easily give rise to prejudices which broadly refer to hostile and irrational attitudes towards individuals, institutions, or social groups based on their race or ethnic orientation. Prejudices result from a combination of poor knowledge and ignorance about the relevant facts, and a lack of empathy, responsiveness, and recognition of cultural and individual differences. To illustrate, a typical prejudice is held against women who occupy roles in society which were traditionally designed for men (Eagly and Diekman, cited in Dovidio, Glick, and Rudman, 2005).

Discriminatory judgments and/or behaviors are said to represent a direct outcome of rigid stereotypes and prejudicial beliefs. People's mental appraisals stimulate their affective responses which, subsequently, elicit their overt intentions

and/or behaviors towards their interaction partners; this can occur via displaying body movements, disrespect, or sarcastic and prejudicial comments. In the language classroom, particularly with response to foreign culture teaching/ learning, prejudices and stereotypes can disrupt effective intercultural communication, therefore, learners should be encouraged to endorse an appreciation of diversity, reduce the extent to which they can subconsciously stigmatize members of differing social and cultural groups, and attempt to find elements of similarity regarding the potentially shared systems of values and beliefs.

### **2.1.3. Ethnocentrism**

Members of a particular cultural group are predisposed to believe that their way of living and/ or behaving is the standard one. Hence, they make judgments regarding other cultural/ social groups depending on their own criteria of what signifies the significance or pettiness of a differing culture. The tendency to postulate that one's own cultural group holds the center of all aspects, and further, interprets and perceives other people's deeds and actions according to his/her own expectations is known as ethnocentrism.

Bennett defines ethnocentrism as “assuming that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality” (cited in The University of Melbourne, 2010, p.1). Ethnocentrism occurs when individuals descend from cultures that are historically, socially, geographically and economically diverse. More specifically, when each individual considers his/her culture or/and language as being superior and civilized to other existing cultures , which in turn, are considered as inferior and primitive. For example, the belief that western cultures and civilizations are attributed with qualities of activity, creativity, integrity, independence, modernity and technological advances,

whereas eastern ones are depicted as being inferior possessing features of passivity, dependence, reliance, and backwardness.

Ethnocentrism is viewed as an obstacle to intercultural understanding and communication. This is mostly evident in situations where individuals misperceive the behavior of others, and permit their prejudices, stereotypes and misconceptions to emerge. Being ethnocentric, therefore, can engender feelings of antipathy, antagonism, and hostility towards “the other”; in view of this Berry and Kalin (1995) advocate that ethnocentrism is “the synonym for general antipathy towards all outgroups” (p.303). Both, further extend, to refer that ethnocentrism is characterized by “a lack of acceptance of cultural diversity, a general intolerance for outgroups and a relative preference for one’s ingroup over most outgroups”(ibid, p. 303) .In this regard, ethnocentrism distorts effective communication by creating borders to new experiences of cultural diversity and richness.

Ethnocentrism, nonetheless, can occasionally signify positive attributes. It can, for instance, express one’s love and appreciation for his/her own group causing him/her to feel “patriotism and willingness to sacrifice for one’s central group”(Neuliep and McCroskey, 1997, p. 389). Moreover, Chen and Starosta (2004) maintain that among the positive outcomes of being ethnocentric is the ability to shape, preserve and maintain one’s cultural identity, and consequently contribute to its survival.

To sum up, ethnocentrism, when grown to an increased level, contributes to creating barriers to successful communication. In the context of learning/teaching the foreign culture (FC), prohibitions like learners’ ethnocentric beliefs are problematic to teachers, significantly, because the learner’s attitudes cannot be immediately observed; only inferred from his/her behaviors. The aim, therefore, is to increase learners’ cross-cultural awareness, reduce their ethnocentric tendencies, promote positive attitudes and

tolerance towards differences, and subsequently assure their ability to maintain intercultural communication.

## **2.2. Cultural Awareness in Foreign Language Teaching/Learning**

The process of learning and/ or acquiring a new language underpins learning/acquiring its culture (Ladu, 1974; Sapir, 1921). Jones (1995) advocates the implementation of cultural content as part of teaching/learning a foreign language. However, he alludes that foreign culture teaching might be a challenging task since culture, in itself, is a complex phenomenon: “[culture is] frequently considered by learners to be something to be observed, exciting solely as a fixed, stable, self-defining phenomenon” (Ibid, p.18). Implied in his definition is the idea that EFL learners might perceive and interpret the target culture with regard to their own cultural stands. A direct outcome that might occur, when learners are introduced to opposing cultural elements of the target culture, namely its beliefs and behaviors, is the generation of stereotypes and prejudices.

These cultural barriers i.e., stereotypes and prejudices which hinder learners’ engagement in the language learning process, and cause fossilization of the second/foreign language, should, therefore, be seriously considered by EFL teachers in order to bring about positive learning outcomes. Set against stereotypes and prejudices, cultural awareness has proved to be an effective tool to downplaying learners’ misconceptions vis-à-vis the target culture and its bearers, hence, enabling them to move steadily and progressively towards understanding cultural differences, as well as the underlying reasons which justify the beliefs, actions and behaviors of the target group.

### **2.2.1. Cultural Awareness Defined**

The concept of cultural awareness has long been an interesting issue evident in the works of many scholars who made an endeavor to define and investigate its importance with regard to the context of foreign language teaching and learning. To mention a few, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004), in their attempt to define the concept, addressed it as consisting of two elements: “Culture” and “Awareness”; they believed that while Culture refers to “the totality of a way of life shared by a group of people linked by common and distinctive characteristics, activities, beliefs, or circumstances (e.g., Australian culture, Arab culture, Liverpool culture)”, Awareness, on the other hand, indicates “beliefs and behavior of a community of people who share inclinations, attitudes, interests, and goals (e.g., pop culture, football culture, wine culture)”(p. 1). In this respect, culture and awareness refer to two distinctive, but related aspects in the sense that they both imply a notion of the shared features among the collective members of society.

Another view links one’s ability to recognize, analyze, and compare his/her own cultural beliefs and behaviors with that belonging to the target culture with his/her awareness. Yassine (2006) claims that cultural awareness takes place when individuals no longer regard their culture as being superlative, and hence, begin to evaluate other perspectives. This view comes to support what has been advocated earlier by Tomlinson (2001): “cultural awareness involves a gradually developing inner sense of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of your own and other people’s cultures, and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ”(cited in Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2004, p.3). A crucial point to consider in the definition stated above by Tomlinson (2001) is the idea that cultural awareness involves recognizing

that “the other” might be culturally or linguistically different , but more importantly , that he/she is considered as **an equal**.

In addition to their role as language instructors, EFL teachers as cultural mediators need to urge their learners to investigate the motives beneath the behaviors and actions displayed by the target community. Raising EFL learners’ cultural awareness is closely linked to developing cultural sensitivity. The latter involves the willingness to accommodate with ethnic, social, or cultural differences, as well as the ability to be more perceptive of others. Cultural awareness then can be viewed as “a range of phenomenon ranging from knowledge about other countries to positive attitudes towards speakers of other languages, to a heightened “sensitivity” to otherness of any kind” (Byram and Risager, 1999, p.4).

One can easily infer that learning a language exceeds gaining knowledge about its linguistic system; it also, surpasses learning about its related cultural facts and beliefs. In fact, learning a language includes a more comprehensive approach to its social and cultural context. Cultural awareness as an integral component of intercultural competence, therefore, can highly be beneficial to the EFL teaching/ learning process because Bennett (1993) suggests that the first outcome in the process of cultural learning is developing cultural awareness.

Correspondingly, teachers can measure learners’ progress depending on the extent to which they display skills of critical thinking and self-reflection; in addition to the extent to which they avoid judgmental evaluations of others and are open-minded to new experiences. Hence, they become, adequately, equipped with positive and objective attitudes, as well competent enough to engage in successful interactions with members of another culture.

## **2.2.2. Cultural Awareness and Attitudes**

Reviewed literature significantly attributes the development of cultural awareness to the degree to which learners experience a change or development of attitudes towards the target language and/or its culture. It is paramount, thereby, to consider the learner's attitudes as an affective factor in their overall learning progress.

### **2.2.2.1. The Learner's Attitudes**

Contemporary cultural instruction involves extraneous efforts, mainly, targeted to develop EFL learners' intercultural skills, and elicit their positive attitudes towards the target culture and its bearers. Byram (1989) confirms that "One of the aims of cultural studies teaching should be to produce changes of attitudes in pupils towards other cultures" (p.22). The teacher's mission, therefore, is to establish a sphere of interculturality inside the language classroom.

Language does not exist solely; it is an integral part of society, a mechanism present in social settings and communication, it therefore, implies the use of feelings, emotions, attitudes and intellect. With regard to the field of language learning, things do not fall short from that as the learner's personal judgments and attitudes about the target language and/or culture will initially influence his/her involvement in the learning process, as well as his/her ability to communicate in the target language (Seliger cited in Bousbai, 2009, p.29).

Success in foreign language learning is highly dependent on the extent to which one can maintain positive attitudes and/ or improve negative ones towards the target language, and inevitably, towards its members. Research in the field of psychology and language teaching revealed that positive attitudes facilitate the process of language acquisition, and hence, help learners achieve language and intercultural proficiency

requisite to favorable communication with foreigners. Whereas negative ones cause learners perception gaps, and prevent them from successful language acquisition.

Mantle-Bromley (cited in Heusinkveld, n.d), however, maintains that despite the fact that, oftentimes, the commencement of a foreign language learning experience might be accompanied with positive attitudes resulting from the learner's intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivation, learners run the risk of adopting and/ or developing negative attitudes. This is due to the fact that when confronted with a new culture, distant from their own, they perceive it as remote. Therefore, learning about the behaviors and beliefs of that culture becomes a challenging experience that becomes associated with feelings of anxiety, insecurity, resistance, negative attitudes, and fear of losing one's identity. The result is most apparent in developing stereotypes and prejudices that are likely to sharpen, leading learners to withdraw from the learning process.

#### **2.2.2.2. Factors Influencing Attitudes**

Attitudes are mental positions or feelings that do not evolve from vacuum. In the field of foreign language learning, several factors can influence learners' attitudes, and hence determine the extent to which they engage in the learning process. The socio-cultural background and environmental factors, for instance, including ideological perspectives, family, nurture, work place, and school all have been proven to have a direct relationship with learners' attitudes.

To illustrate, let us consider the factor of family, particularly parents. In Algeria, for instance, parents and grandparents are said to motivate their children's negative attitudes towards the English-speaking communities; reasons for such recurring situations date back to the underlying beliefs of those countries as colonization forces

loaded with a history of crimes and assassinations. Therefore, viewing those countries as enemies will always contribute to negative attitudes towards the target language, its speakers, and its underlying cultural systems.

Besides the socio-cultural entourage, individual differences are also reported fundamental in the development of positive or negative attitudes along the learning process. Among which are, age, gender, motivation, personality, knowledge of the target culture and/or the world, and cognitive skills. The element of personality, for example, having to include the learner's empathy, tolerance of differences, inhibition and willingness to integrate within the target language community, plays a fundamental role in the adoption of positive and objective attitudes towards the target language/culture.

Another factor that is well worth being mentioned here is the cognitive one. Similarly proven crucial in inferring attitude development or change, the following cognitive elements suggested by Morgan (1993) can impact learners' attitudes. These include their engagement in the teaching/ learning process, the extent to which they can easily perceive instruction in the classroom. The latter, according to her, is dependent on the sequencing of the linguistic or cultural elements, and the language used in the presentation of those elements, in addition to the review of reinforcement. Moreover, cognitive factors including the learner's prior knowledge, experiences and preconceptions, as well as the linguistic and intellectual capacities that would enable them to receive the content presented are also included.

### **2.2.3. Culture Teaching and Learners' Attitudes**

One strategy proven efficient in foreign culture teaching is highlighting the similarities existing among both the native and target culture prior to moving towards

identifying its differences and oppositions. Robinson (cited in Alatis, 1991) confirms that while universal differences among cultures broaden the distance among both, similarities bring them closer, and subsequently, contribute to the development of positive attitudes vis-à-vis the target culture. She believes that learners may erroneously perceive the diversity of those cultures, and exaggerate their interpretations of the target culture, hence, adopt negative attitudes and false stereotypes.

In fact, if learners are encouraged to link aspects of the target culture with those of their own, and attempt to find areas of compliance between the target culture and their native one, they might be able to see what they previously considered as taboo and unacceptable from a dimension that involves more objective and unbiased judgments. The strategy developed by Robinson (ibid) “similarity through analogy” ,which stimulates learners to critically analyze cultural differences, and use analogy to locate shared aspects of thought and behavior among the native and target culture, is envisaged to bring about positive outcomes with regard to facilitating the process of foreign culture teaching/learning.

It is axiomatic to think that any culture endorses its own specific moral standards, recognizing the specificity of each culture and its legitimacy of difference is essential. Unless learners begin to understand that one culture should not be judged by the standards of one’s own; unless being willing to view the world from “the other” ‘s own perspective, positive attitudes towards the target culture are unlikely to develop putting at risk the flexibility and progress of second/foreign language/culture proficiency.

#### **2.2.4. Views on Cultural Awareness, Attitudes, and Foreign Language Development**

With regard to the relationship between attitudes and cultural awareness, there are two distinctive views. The first view, advocated by Byram (1997) in his notion of intercultural communicative competence, maintains that cultural awareness emerges as a result of a positive change in the learners' attitudes. Put differently, when learners establish positive conceptions about the target culture and its bearers, and communicate effectively in various speech situations, skills of intercultural competence, including cultural awareness, are successfully acquired.

The second view suggested by Mc Donough (1981), on the other hand, proposes that success in foreign language learning leads to the adoption of positive attitudes towards the target language communities. Seen from another perspective, when learners achieve promising outcomes in their language learning process, their motivation increases. Hence, they are likely to appreciate the target language, and inevitably its underlying culture; positive attitudes then are fostered. Cultural awareness is realized via an intellectual and emotional change in the learner's attitudes towards the target culture and its representatives. Learners can hardly reach success in their language learning loaded with feelings of intolerance and resistance of cross-cultural differences. Aiming to raise EFL learners' cultural awareness, thereby, is fundamental to their language/culture acquisition.

#### **2.3. Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Communicative Competence**

According to McKay (2002), the insufficient transmission of facts and knowledge about the target culture and its people in the context of ELT (English Language Teaching) ought to be supplemented with a requisite insertion of

interculturality. Viewed from an intercultural dimension, language learning has attributed importance to the learner's attitudes and perceptions of the target language/culture. Consequently, many various language teaching and learning models were established, primarily to develop intercultural users of language who are capable of engaging in interaction with people of other cultures and accepting others with distinctive social identities, beliefs and behaviors.

Identified as one of his most influential works, Byram's model (1997) aims at developing EFL learner's intercultural communicative competence (ICC); the model he developed consists of five elements: "Savoir" refers to knowledge of oneself and others of social groups. "Savoir Comprendre" means developing skills of interpreting events from other cultures and relating them to one's own. "Savoir apprendre" denotes discovery, interaction, and ability to seek knowledge about cultural beliefs and practices. "Savoir S'engager" refers to critical cultural awareness and ability to evaluate critically one's own and others' beliefs and perceptions. "Savoir être", which refers to being open and ready to suspend misconceptions and disbeliefs about other cultures as well as beliefs about one's own culture. Intercultural communicative competence is, by far, a multi-dimensional concept that requires a full mastery of its components.

Other scholars (Rathje, 2007; Mayer, 1991) when defining the concept of ICC, agreed upon its indispensability to the process of foreign language teaching/learning. Fantini (2009) believes it to be "the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p.1). To share Fantini's view, ICC then enables learners to appropriately communicate with members of differing social identities equipped with sufficient foreign/second linguistic, social and cultural knowledge.

The ICC model established by Byram (1997) included the element of critical cultural awareness which in Byram's (2000) view is indicated as being "a more general, non-technical term" (p.161). Moreover, critical cultural awareness plays a central role in the development of ICC, and throughout the process of foreign language teaching/learning as a whole. It is closely linked to a cognitive process in which learners are supposed to compare, analyze, and evaluate their judgments in what concerns both cultures i.e., the native and target one.

Referring to the merits of critical cultural awareness, Byram (2008) upholds that it "explicitly enables learners to question, to analyze, to evaluate and, potentially, to take action, to be active citizens"(p.146). It is vital, thereby, to foster skills of cultural awareness as part of the ELT educational objectives; not only to motivate learners improve their perceptions of the target culture and its people, but also encourage them reflect upon their own culture, to "step outside one's own framework" (Bennett cited in Deardorff, 2009, p.122). This is beneficial given the fact that individuals, in general, tend to generate stereotypes and disbeliefs about others depending on their own standards, and without attempting to make comparisons or logical evaluations.

Byram's idea of ICC appears most relevant in the context of ELT. Gaining factual knowledge about the target culture does not satisfy the communicative needs of learners who are to engage in cross-cultural interactions without encountering cultural conflicts or misunderstandings. In the foreign language classroom, therefore, teachers can foster skills of ICC and critical cultural awareness by devising activities that enable learners discuss and compare both cultures, acquire new cultural knowledge and practices, suspend disbeliefs and tolerate ambiguities and differences.

## **2.4. Methods and Techniques for Raising EFL Learners' Cultural Awareness**

There are many views concerning which techniques and activities are most beneficial in developing EFL learners' cultural awareness. Critical incidents, literature, negative etiquette, cross-cultural assimilators, cultural quiz, and many others all enable learners to observe, discover, and understand the native speakers' perspectives.

### **2.4.1. Critical Incidents**

“Critical incidents” is a method for teaching culture which involves descriptions of infelicitous cross-cultural encounters. Wight ( cited in Atamna, 2008, p. 304) defines it as “[situations] in which there is a misunderstanding, problem, or conflict raising from cultural differences between interacting parties or where there is a problem of cross-cultural adaptation”. The teacher then introduces his/her learners to a brief description of an incident or a problem, one which can be realistic, fabricated or even resulting from a personal experience. The problem could have been engendered from differences in communication, or from differences in cultural values and moral stands. Followed by a number of questions, the teacher, subsequently, invites learners to a class discussion about the potential reasons of such conflict, and asks them to describe what they think should have happened to avoid such misunderstanding, or asks them how they would have behaved in a similar situation.

In fact, teachers can apply this technique in a variety of ways, for instance, they can provide learners with a written or spoken dialogue that delivers the same conflicted situation; he then separates them into small groups and invites members of each group to give a brief summary about the critical incident, reasons leading to such conflict, and their individual decisions on the potential solutions.

Applied differently, teachers can ask learners to role play the incident for a better demonstration of the conflict situation. Teachers, then can generate thought-provoking questions to stimulate their curiosity, arouse affect, and help elicit their analytical thinking. As a consequence, they begin to analyze questions, suggest explanations and solutions, and finally compare them with those made by the native speakers. In this stage, there is a great opportunity for teachers to interfere, and provide learners with feedback on the potential consequences of their decisions. The aim is to enrich their cultural awareness and bring them closer to view things from different cultural standpoints. Merits of such technique, according to Apeidaile, and Schill (2008), lie in its ability of

increasing our awareness and understanding of human attitudes, expectations, behaviors, and interactions. They are intended to engage participants at a meaningful, personal level as they examine attitudes and behaviors that might be critical to their effectiveness in the roles they are already performing or preparing for (in the workplace, in educational settings, and in society at large) (p. 7).

Awareness, in this respect, is essential to achieve pertinent behaviors and effective communication with those who represent different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

#### **2.4.2. Cross-Cultural Assimilators**

“Cross-cultural assimilators” is a technique somehow similar to critical incidents; it presents learners to an interaction between two angry participants witnessing a problematic situation. However, instead of asking learners to discuss and provide solutions to the conflict, this technique requires them to select the most suitable account of the problem from a list of four possible choices about the meaning of the behavior action resulting from the interaction; choices involve three erroneous ones formed based on the learner’s native culture, and only one pertains to the target culture.

If learners fail to select the appropriate choice, they are required to search for further information to arrive at the best possible interpretation.

Moreover, teachers can choose from a variety of topics including, greetings, giving compliments, use of personal space, and other cross-cultural-specific topics. The basic premise of this technique, accordingly, is that learners are asked to select the best solution based on what they know about the target culture. Krasnick (cited in Atamna, 2008) maintains that this activity is “an effective way of teaching individuals to make culturally appropriate interpretations or attributions of the meaning of other behavior” (p.306).

Correspondingly, learners can experience different situations in which cross-cultural misunderstandings are likely to arise; this encourages them to consider these situations from both internal and external points of view. In other words, learners will surpass their ethnocentric perspectives to consider the underlying reasons that urge people to behave and react in such manner. Eventually, learners will better understand the target culture and its bearers and move from negative judgments and stereotypes towards tolerance and emotional empathy of other’s behaviors.

### **2.4.3. Negative Etiquette**

Among other techniques which can be used to teach cultural awareness is negative etiquette; this technique is said to acquaint learners with the native cultural patterns of behavior. According to Roberts, Davies, and Jupp (1992), the technique consists of introducing learners to a list of rules concerning “how not to behave” in certain circumstances. Barrow (2008, para.3), for example, presented a list highlighting a number of dining rules in Britain; the list indicates which behaviors are to be avoided while eating in Britain.

- Don't start eating before everyone has been served.
- Never lick or put your knife in your mouth.
- While eating, never chew with your mouth open.
- Don't put your elbows on the table while you are eating.
- Ask for items to be passed; never reach over someone's plate for something.
- Putting too much food in your mouth is impolite.
- Use your knife to push food onto your spoon or fork; never use your fingers.
- It is impolite to slurp your food or eat noisily.
- Ask for things to be passed on, never take food from your neighbours' plate.
- Never use your fingernails to pick food out of your teeth.

The teacher can invite learners to a group discussion in which they make comparisons between the target cultural patterns of behavior and their own. Negative etiquette technique supplies learners with interesting and crucial cultural insights that would enable them recognize cultural diversities, and manage intercultural encounters in a flexible and effective way.

#### **2.4.4. Literature**

The use of literature in the EFL classroom has always been believed to offer an ideal opportunity to teach and learn about the foreign speakers' way of living, thinking, and behaving, therefore, enabling learners to approach the target culture from a humanistic perspective. According to Cai (2002), the use of literature in the classroom exceeds the achievement of educational goals to include other intellectual, emotional, moral, and cultural ones; literature, hence, motivates learners "to challenge the dominant ideologies, affirm the values and experiences of historically underrepresented cultures, foster acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, develop sensitivity to social inequalities, and encourage transformation of the self and society" (p. 134).

In fact, there are many advantages to the use of literature that embodies the target cultural features. It is worth noting, however, that these benefits should serve

one's intellectual and spiritual growth, prior to developing his/her linguistic skills. A novel, for example, that portrays noble morals and values enables learners to adopt such values and establish positive attitudes towards the target culture and its people, before enabling them to develop their writing skills.

Along these lines, Kramersch (1993) advocates "More than any other text, it is said, the piece of literary prose or poetry appeals to the students' emotions, grabs their interest, remains in their memory and makes them partake in the memory of another speech community"(p.130). Moreover, the literary imaginative and aesthetic pieces of language can urge learners to transcend their stereotypes. Within literature, learners can analyze cultural viewpoints and values, and reflect upon ethnic, religious, and social complexities and conflicts. Hence, they make an endeavor to understand cross-cultural problems and maintain, preserve, and reinforce attitudes of acceptance and appreciation of the diversity of cultures.

The appropriateness of the literary passages selected in the course content is a crucial point to consider for language and culture instructors. They should first correspond to the learner's educational level and background culture. Moreover, they should be thoroughly covered by the teacher, who himself should possess and display skills of cultural awareness and empathy towards differences, in order to avoid transmitting negative stereotypes to his/her language learners. Literature is a powerful means to train learners suspend their disbeliefs and half-truths about the target culture, and critically analyze cultural misunderstandings with the purpose in mind of understanding and embracing cultural diversities.

## **Conclusion**

One of the cornerstones of teaching a foreign culture is the readiness to accept and tolerate cultural differences; the need to surpass cultural borders and move beyond its barriers is paramount. Learners, thereby, need to step outside their ethnocentric views and attempt to interpret the world from other people's standpoints. Cultural awareness is a fundamental factor to the success of the FL teaching/learning process, and particularly to the development of intercultural communicative competence and language proficiency. Being capable of tolerating ambiguities and developing sensitivity towards social inequalities, brings learners closer to the target culture and enables them to efficiently engage in communicative acts with foreigners.

### **Chapter Three: Students and Teachers' Questionnaires**

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## **Introduction**

The first and second chapters of the present research were devoted to the review of literature in relation to three major areas: EFL culture teaching/learning, the cultural barriers identified as hindrances to culture learning, and the role of cultural awareness in minimizing those perceived barriers. Chapter three, on the other hand, concerns itself with the analysis and discussion of data yielded from the teachers and students' questionnaires. First, it introduces the informants representing the sample of this research, runs through the steps undertaken in the administration of the questionnaire, and provides a detailed description on the analysis of data obtained. The chapter, then, concludes with a discussion of the results, and attempts to make a correlation of the findings in relation to the study objectives.

### **3.1. The Students' Questionnaire**

#### **3.1.1. Aim of the Questionnaire**

The student's questionnaire, first and foremost, attempts to investigate their perceptions and attitudes towards the teaching of culture, in addition to the cultural elements they perceive as obstructions to their learning process.

#### **3.1.2. Description of the Questionnaire**

As far as the general layout of the questionnaire is concerned, the latter begins with an introductory paragraph that states the research aims along with some general answering instructions. The 11 items represented in the questionnaire are organized under four major sections and arranged in a logical order from general facts to more precise and in-depth elements. This is because we want to gradually familiarize students with the research topic and eventually enable them at providing the specific

information that serves the study objectives. The following is a short description of each section:

**Section One:** Factual Information (1-3)

In this section, respondents were required to provide some identifying information about their sex, age and purpose of learning English. The reason behind such questions is to check the group homogeneity so that extraneous variables of personal differences within participants are controlled.

**Section Two:** Cultural Learning (4-6)

Questions addressed in this section aim at identifying students' opinions with regard to culture teaching and learning, as well as which cultural elements they believe should , primarily, be explored about the target culture. Questions (5-6) are significantly essential for this study as they aim at identifying the extent to which these students enjoy courses of literature and civilization, in addition to the aspects they believe these courses helped them develop, thus, helping us discover their perceptions and attitudes towards literature and exposure to the English culture.

**Section Three:** Cultural Barriers and Attitudes towards the English Culture (7-10)

Questions of this section were primarily devised to help us either confirm or reject the research hypothesis. These questions attempt to reveal the students 'reactions and attitudes towards the cultural differences of both cultures, specifically those that arise during class time instruction, and, hence, identify the impact of the cultural barriers perceived as impediments to their learning process.

**Section Four:** Further Suggestions (11)

The final section provides the respondents with a free space in which they are invited to append further comments or suggestions. The question formats in this questionnaire range from closed-ended questions in which students are restricted to

select an option from a number of choices (a, b, and c), to open-ended questions where the respondents are asked to choose an option from a number of alternatives and clarify the reason behind such a choice. On the other hand, some questions as (Q.10) used a four-point likert scale requiring respondents to reveal the degree to which they agree or disagree with direct statements, while others (Qs. 4, 8, 9) implied a “yes” or “no” answer.

### **3.1.3. Piloting of the Study**

Piloting the questionnaire was of great relevance, since it allowed us to bring some paramount changes, particularly in the students’ questionnaire. The latter, was piloted by a randomly selected group of four students who have the same characteristics of the study population. Their comments reported some difficulties in understanding some questions. As a result, we attempted to bring some changes and substitutions with regard to some question statements so as to serve the clarity of meaning.

### **3.1.4. The Sample**

Conducting a research within the field of Human and Social Sciences generally requires selecting a sample from the population to which the findings of the study can be generalized. Selecting participants for the present study, however, did not call for the use of sampling procedures as the population initially embodied a relatively small number of students. Therefore, in the current investigation, we opted for the whole number of students as they occur in nature.

A total of 42 second year master literature and civilization students enrolled at the Department of Foreign Languages, Section of English, University of Biskra, took part in this study. These students were selected because they have been dealing with

courses of literature and civilization for the past three years, and therefore, are more likely to express their attitudes towards the effect of the English culture, as well as the cultural barriers which might impede their learning process. Initially, the sample involved a total of 44 students, yet two of them were not present during the distribution of the questionnaire. Hence, the remaining 42 students formed the actual sample of the study. Their sex distribution is of 29 females and 13 males; their age ranges between 22 and 35 years old, and they all share the same educational background since they have been studying English for more than five years.

### **3.1.5. Administration of the Questionnaire**

At the beginning of the academic year 2014/2015, participants were initially asked if they would willingly consent to take part in the current investigation. After expressing their agreement and having completed the construction of the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the setting and timing of the questionnaire administration: following their second pre-viva sessions that took part at the beginning of April, 2015. Before the distribution of the questionnaire, we assured the confidentiality of answers as no name or distinctive mark (number or code) was required. Furthermore, participants were notified both orally and in written about the way questions should be answered; they were also informed that they could ask for explanations in case they encountered a problem understanding a question. Finally, each and every participant was allowed the necessary amount of time needed to answer the questionnaire.

### 3.1.6. Analysis Procedure

Following the collection of questionnaires, each answer was assigned a specific code; data was calculated manually as the small number of respondents made that plausible. The study relied solely on descriptive statistics, and the findings were tabulated and reported in percentages. It is worth mentioning that the manual accumulation of data enabled us highlight areas of similarity and difference, and identify the collective beliefs and opinions of teachers and students, hence, draw conclusions relevant to the issue addressed by the present research.

### 3.1.7. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

#### Section One: Factual Information

#### Item 01: Gender

	Number	Percentage
Male	13	30,95%
Female	29	69,04%
Total	42	100%

**Table 1:** Students' Gender

As shown in the table above, the leading majority are female students whose number (29), approximately, constitutes twice the number of males (13).

#### Item 02: Age

Age	22	23	24	25	26	29	35	No answer	Total
Number	03	20	06	05	04	01	01	02	40
Percentage	7.14%	47.61%	14.28%	11.90%	9.52%	2.38%	2.38%	4.76%	100%

**Table 2:** Students' Age

According to table (2), the respondents' age ranges from 22 to 35 years. This reflects the growing demands to study the English language by a wide spectrum of people.

**Item 03:** What is your major purpose in learning English?

- a. to know about the target language/culture.
- b. to get a job.
- c. to go for further studies.

Options	a	b	c	ab	ac	abc	Total
Number	15	13	10	01	01	02	42
Percentage	35.71%	30.95%	23.80%	2.38%	2.38%	4.76%	100%

**Table 3:** Purpose of Learning English

Table (3) demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of informants (35.71%) learn English because of their willingness to approach the language and know more about its culture. Whereas (30.95%) of the respondents learn English in order to get a job; (28.80%) of them plan to pursue their further studies via the study of English.

**Section Tow:**Cultural Learning

**Item 04:** The necessity of studying about the target culture

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	42	100%
No	00	00%
Total	42	100%

**Table 4:** The Importance of Learning the Target Culture

The answers to this question item, as shown in the above table, revealed that all respondents agree upon the indispensability of learning the culture of the English speaking community.

- If yes, which aspects would you like to explore most?

- a. Beliefs and values.
- b. Literature (literary trends, movements, writers, genres, etc).
- c. Daily life and routines.
- d. Others, please specify

Options	a	b	c	ab	ac	bc	abc	Total
Number	09	18	01	04	06	02	02	42
Percentage	21.42%	42.85%	2.38%	9.52%	14.28%	4.76%	4.76%	100%

**Table 5:** Aspects of Target Culture Learning

As was expected, Literature (b) was mostly selected with a percentage of (42.85%), this perfectly fits the respondents' field of study, i.e. literature and civilization. 'Beliefs and values' (a) comes second with a proportion of (21.42%); only (2.38%) were interested in knowing about the 'daily life routines'(c) of the target language community. The remaining percentages, on the other hand, are distributed among those who have chosen to combine more than one aspect.

**Item 05:** To what extent do you like British/American Civilization and/or Literature courses?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Much</b>	31	73.80%
<b>Little</b>	09	21.42%
<b>Not at all</b>	02	4.76%
<b>Total</b>	42	100%

**Table 6:** Students’ Appreciation of British/American Civilization and Literature Courses

From the obtained results, it is evident that the respondents display a great interest to the modules of British/American Civilization and/or Literature, representing around (73.80 %) of the overall percentage. This reflects to a certain extent the degree of motivation and interest they pay to these modules. On the hand, 9 (21.42%) informants seem to attribute little importance to these modules, whereas, the remaining 2 (4.76%) totally dislike them.

### **5.1-Explain Why?**

The majority of students who opted for “Much”, attributed such appreciation to studying modules of British/American Civilization and/or Literature to the achievement of personal, spiritual and intellectual growth. Others believe that studying a foreign language, inevitably, implies learning about its cultural and historical trends, therefore, their appreciation stems out from their curiosity to know more about these people’s ways of living, beliefs, values, and daily routines. Eleven students, on the other hand, stated that these modules lie at the core of their interest area, adding, that they constantly feel motivated and inspired to pursue further studies in those modules. Similarly, two students credit their positive attitudes in studying these courses to their willingness to compare their own culture with the target one, and explore areas of

difference and conformity. One exceptional answer, though, was suggested by a male student who believed that his appreciation derives from the striking political, economic and world power that English speaking countries continue to possess nowadays. As for the nine students who opted for “Little”, studying courses of British/American Civilization and/or Literature is a demanding task as it often requires regular research and inquiry, let alone the huge amounts of time spent to read a book and summarize its content. The remaining two students opting for “Not at all” clearly stated their lack of interest in these modules, justifying so by their readiness to study about the native culture instead of the Anglo-Saxon one.

**Item 06:** Advantages of studying courses of British/American Civilization and/or Literature

- a. Exploring aspects of the English culture encapsulated by English literature.
- b. Enjoyment and pleasure in studying some of the greatest literary works and ancient civilizations.
- c. Improving your language writing skills (i.e., vocabulary, style, grammar, spelling, and punctuation).
- d. Expanding the horizons of your thinking and acquiring skills of analytical thinking and critical awareness of other cultures.
- e. Refining your judgments with regard to the target culture, and develop empathy for those different than us.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>a</b>	07	16.66%
<b>b</b>	10	23.80%
<b>c</b>	02	4.76%
<b>d</b>	02	4.76%
<b>ae</b>	01	2.38%
<b>ac</b>	03	7.14%
<b>bd</b>	03	7.14%
<b>ab</b>	01	2.38%
<b>de</b>	01	2.38%
<b>bcd</b>	02	4.76%
<b>bce</b>	01	2.38%
<b>acd</b>	02	4.76%
<b>cde</b>	01	2.38%
<b>ade</b>	01	2.38%
<b>acde</b>	02	4.76%
<b>abcde</b>	02	4.76%
<b>No answers</b>	01	2.38%
<b>Total</b>	42	100%

**Table 7:** Advantages brought by Studying Courses of British/American Civilization/Literature

Table (7) is particularly relevant to table (6) since it aims at identifying respondents' motives to study courses of British/American Civilization and/or Literature. Statistically speaking, 'Enjoyment and pleasure' is the advantage that (23.80%) of the informants believe courses of literature and civilization offered them; another (16.66%) of the respondents believe that they were able to explore new aspects of the target culture via these courses. As for improving language writing skills and developing critical thinking, (9.52%) of the participants acknowledged courses of literature helped them develop. The remaining students representing a total of (49.98%) have chosen to combine between two or more advantages according to their personal interests and needs to study these courses.

### Section Three: Cultural Barriers and Attitudes towards the English culture

**Item 07:** When teachers generate topics related to aspects of alcoholism, atheism homosexuality, and premarital relationships. Do you

- a. Participate freely in discussions.
- b. Wish that the teacher skips that point and shifts to another one.
- c. You already know the course content in advance, and prefer not to attend.
- d. You do not take part in discussion because of your insufficient linguistic competence.

Options	a	b	d	bd	Total
Number	24	12	05	01	42
Percentage	57.14 %	28.57 %	11.90 %	2.38 %	100 %

**Table 8:** Students' Reactions to Taboo Topics identified as Cultural Barriers

According to the answers obtained,(57.14 %) reported facing little difficulties when the teacher raises issues of alcoholism, or atheism during class instruction. This is because they feel free to participate, comment, ask and answer questions. Half that number, however, stated the opposite, wishing that the teacher would overpass those topics and shift to further ones. Others, around (11.90 %) acknowledged that their insufficient linguistic competence did not permit them to engage in such discussions.

**Item 08:** Taboo topics (atheism, sexual abuses, HIV, etc) cause learners perception gaps

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	52.38%
No	19	45.23%
No answer	01	2.38%
<b>Total</b>	42	100 %

**Table 9:** Taboo Topics as Impediments to Students' Understanding of the Course

In line with table (9), more than half the respondents (52.38%) confirm that taboo topics hinder their assimilation of the course, while (45.23%) of them do not perceive them as obstacles to their overall understanding of the course content.

**Item 09:** Learners' prejudices and stereotypes have a negative impact on their overall understanding of the course content.

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	28	66.66 %
No	14	33.33 %
<b>Total</b>	42	100 %

**Table 10:** Prejudices and Stereotypes as Impediments to Students' Understanding of the Course.

Aligned with table (10), (66.66 %) of the participants agree that prejudices and stereotypes, held on the target culture and its speakers, weaken their overall comprehension of the course content. (33.33 %) of them, on the contrary, disagree.

**Item 10:** The representation of the English speaking countries as imperialistic forces poses a threat to the learner’s native cultural identity, and generates negative attitudes towards the target culture and its people.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>agree</b>	<b>Neither agree or disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	12	20	06	04	42
<b>Percentage</b>	28.57 %	47.61%	14.28%	9.52%	100%

**Table 11:** English Speaking Countries as a Threat to the learner’s Native Cultural Identity

A careful reading of the figures in table (11) gives us the idea that more than (76.18%) of the informants’ perceive the English speaking communities as a threat to their cultural identity. Whereas, (9.52%) of the respondents maintained that they do not feel intimidated to learn about those countries, and certainly do not perceive them as threat to their native cultural identity. The remaining (14.28%), on the other hand, preferred to opt for the neutral option.

**Section Four:** Further Suggestions/comments

**Item 11:** Are there any further comments or suggestions that you would like to append?

Students' Suggestions/ comments	Number	Percentage
1- "The significance of studying courses of British/ American civilization and/or Literature."	04	9.52%
2- "Studying about the foreign culture entails finding a way to link it to our culture."	01	2.38%
3- "The need to understand cultural differences so as to overcome perceived cultural barriers."	03	7.14%
4- "The fundamental role EFL teachers play in minimizing the effect of cultural barriers."	01	2.38%
5- "The need to raise awareness on the effect of these cultural barriers so as to facilitate the learning process."	02	4.76%
6- Irrelevant.	17	40.47%
7- No answers.	14	33.33%
Total	42	100%

**Table 12:** Students' suggestions

### **3.2. The Teachers' Questionnaire**

#### **3.2.1. Aim of the Questionnaire**

One of the primary aims of this research is to examine the teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the role of culture teaching within EFL classrooms. More importantly, their views about learners' attitudes towards the English culture, as well as some inhibitors and impediments to culture teaching. We, therefore, opted for the questionnaire to generate data considered necessary for the attainment of the study objectives.

#### **3.2.2. Description of the Questionnaire**

Fifteen items arranged under five main sections put together the teacher's questionnaire. The latter is a mixture of different types of questions; to mention a few:

closed-ended questions, yes/no questions whereby respondents are supplied with a free space to provide explanations or suggest other alternatives, true/false questions; as well as some direct statements in which they are asked to reveal the degree of agreement or disagreement. As anticipated, all of the aforementioned questions were contributory to the fulfillment of the study objectives. The following is a detailed description of each section:

**Section One: Qualifications and Experience (1-3)**

This section comprises three items, all aiming to investigate the number of years and experience of teaching at the university, as well as teaching modules of culture, literature, and civilization.

**Section Two: The Role of Culture Teaching (4-6)**

In this section, an investigation is held on the teachers' understanding of culture teaching; whether foreign language learning implies foreign culture learning (Qs.4/5), and how culture should be taught (Q.6).

**Section Three: Cultural Barriers and Attitudes towards the English Culture (7-10)**

Devised in consistency with the former chapters, this section lies at the core of our research. It is intended to help us test the hypothesis in determining the teachers' perceptions with regard to the cultural barriers encountered during class instruction. That is to see whether the learner's prejudices affect their learning process (Q.7); if learners perceive the foreign culture as a threat (Q.8); learners' attitudes towards taboo topics (Q.9), and if avoiding such topics would facilitate the learning process (Q.10).

#### **Section Four: Culture Teaching and Cultural Awareness (11-14)**

This part of the questionnaire is particularly related to section three, the purpose being to discover teachers' opinions on the incorporation of both native and target cultural elements in the syllabi (Q.12), whether courses of "cultural awareness" should be implemented to help learners receive foreign cultural content (Q. 13); and special culture teaching techniques (Q.14).

#### **Section Five: Further Suggestions (Q. 15)**

The final segment offers teachers a free space in which they can add any comment or suggestion. Worth noting is that a number of questions (Qs. 4, c / 9, c / 13/ 14) included particular terminologies. Explanations, therefore, were appended as part of the questions to ensure a full understanding of the intended meanings.

#### **3.2.3. The sample**

Preliminarily, the questionnaire was addressed to English language teachers at Biskra University who specifically teach modules of British and American literature. The target population was selected because we felt the need to explore the perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards the incorporation of culture in the language classroom. The teachers' views on the inhibitors and impediments of literature teaching/learning are of extreme importance to the study objectives. Again, no sampling techniques were used with respect to the selection of teacher participants as the initial number of participants was relatively small.

### 3.2.4. Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was handed in person to five teachers, who already taught modules of general culture, literature and civilization, or are currently teaching them for the academic year 2014-2015. All teachers took the necessary amount of time needed for the completion of the questionnaire. As a result, the return rate of the questionnaire was 100%.

### 3.2.5. Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

#### Section One: Qualifications and Experience

Given their work experience at the university level which; approximately, exceeds fifteen years, 60% of the participant teachers have an experience in culture teaching that ranges from 3- 35 years; whereas, the remaining 40% have never dealt with culture teaching. When asked about their experience in teaching modules of British/American literature and/or civilization, all teachers replied by more than 20 years of expertise in dealing with these modules.

#### Section Two: The Role of Culture Teaching

**Item 4:** Do you believe that learning/teaching a foreign language necessitates learning/knowing about its culture?

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	05	100%
No	00	00%
Total	05	100%

**Table 13:** Including Foreign Culture Instruction within Foreign Language Learning

With regard to this study, and as stated in chapter one (p.24) that culture constitutes an integral parcel of the FL teaching/learning process, thus, teaching a language equals teaching its related culture. From the results obtained in table (13), we can say that the respondents' answers (yes with 100%) totally consent with the idea that learning and teaching a FL includes learning / teaching about its corresponding culture.

-If yes, is it because

- a. Language and culture are intertwined.
- b. Culture teaching/learning develops critical thinking.
- c. Cultural teaching raises learners' cultural awareness.
- d. Cultural teaching maintains learners' motivation.
- e. Cultural teaching enables learners to produce culturally appropriate language.
- f. Others, please, specify.

Options	Number	Percentage
a	01	20%
c	01	20%
abcdef	02	40%
abcef	01	20%
<b>Total</b>	05	100%

**Table 14:** Justifying the Incorporation of the Foreign Culture in Foreign Language Learning

Table (14) shows that most teachers have different interpretations with regard to the reason culture should be included. Two of them agreed upon one choice (abcdef with a percentage of 40%), whereas the remaining three opted for separate options. Three teachers, on the other hand, had further comments to add (f). For one of them culture should be included because “Culture and language are intertwined. Teaching language without culture is inaccurate and incomplete”, whereas the second teacher

explained that “pupils develop specific positive attitudes while discovering other cultures”. Because “Culture makes the learning process amusing and attractive” added the third teacher.

**Item 5:** What does culture teaching mean to you?

- a. Presenting learners to the system of thoughts and behaviors of the target culture.
- b. An opportunity to promote positive attitudes vis-à-vis the target culture/community.
- c. Enabling learners to use the target language in appropriate contexts.
- d. Others, please, specify.

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>a</b>	01	20%
<b>c</b>	01	20%
<b>ac</b>	01	20%
<b>cd</b>	01	20%
<b>abc</b>	01	20%
<b>total</b>	05	100%

**Table 15:** Teachers’ Perception of Culture Teaching

As can be noticed from the table, none of the five teachers seem to agree on a common option. This entails that each one of them perceives culture teaching in a different way. One teacher added: “using culture to make the language clearer”.

**Item 6:** With response to your teaching experience, culture teaching is best recognized if taught

- a. Implicitly
- b. Explicitly
- c. Both

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>a</b>	01	20%
<b>c</b>	04	80%
<b>Total</b>	05	100%

**Table 16:** How Culture should be taught

As for how culture should be taught, the overwhelming majority of teachers (80%) said that culture teaching is best realized if taught in both explicit and implicit manners. Only one teacher (20%) believed that the optimal method of culture teaching is the implicit one.

**Section Three:** Cultural Barriers and Attitudes towards the English Culture

**Item 7:** Does the learner’s prejudices and stereotypes towards the target culture and its people hinder the learning process?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	05	100%
<b>No</b>	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	05	100%

**Table 17:** Learners’ Prejudices and Stereotypes as Impediments to Learning

Corresponding to what has been, previously, advocated in chapter 2 (p.35), all five teachers (100%) agree that learners ‘prejudices and stereotypes towards the target culture and its people are likely to disrupt the learning process.

**Item 8:** Learners perceive the foreign culture as a threat to their native cultural identity

<b>Options</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	02	03	05
<b>Percentage</b>	40%	60%	100%

**Table 18:** The Foreign Culture as a Threat to the Learner’s Native Cultural Identity

40% of the respondents seem to agree with the idea of Phillipson (1992) that English linguistic imperialism poses a threat to the indigenous cultures (Chapter 1, p. 19). The remaining majority of teachers (60%), however, do not view that learning about a foreign culture constitutes a threat to one’s identity.

**Item 9:** When presenting lectures of British/ American literature and/or civilization which might generate topics related to issues of alcoholism, atheism, homosexuality, etc. Do learners

- a. Participate in interactions with their classmates and the teacher.
- b. Ask questions and discuss the related issues.
- c. Display negative attitudes.
- d. Make prejudices about the target culture and its people.
- e. Prefer to remain silent and not take part in discussions.
- f. Abandon the course, and withdraw the learning process.
- g. Others, please, specify.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>c</b>	01	20%
<b>e</b>	01	20%
<b>ce</b>	02	40%
<b>abg</b>	01	20%
<b>Total</b>	05	100%

**Table 19:** Learners’ Reactions to Taboo Topics Recognized as Cultural Barriers

This question is somehow similar to question (7/section 3) in the students’ questionnaire .We felt the need to compare both viewpoints concerning this aspect, given the fact that both questions intend to serve the same objective. From the obtained results in table (19), we can deduce that most teachers have, indeed, noticed learners’ negative attitudes towards the generation of taboo topics in the class. This is, particularly, evident in their responses where (20%) of them reported both options of (c or e); while the other two (40%) opted for (c and e) together. Interestingly, only one teacher (20%) found that students were very receptive to these topics because according to him “Learners are completely immersed and are easily influenced by the target culture. [Learners] develop self-hatred attitudes because they think that their culture is backward and [, hence, they] feel inferior.” Hence, learners are unlikely to judge or criticize aspects of alcoholism, and atheism.

**Item 10:** Do you believe that avoiding these kinds of topics helps you as a teacher to maintain the flexibility of teaching?

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	00	00%
No	05	100%
<b>Total</b>	05	100%

**Table 20:** Teachers' Perceptions on Eliminating Taboo Topics from the Course Content

Though, as shown in table (19), the overwhelming majority of teachers (80%) have noticed students' negative attitudes towards the use of taboo topics, table (20) reveals that all five of them (100%) refuse to eliminate these topics from the course content. The following is a summary of teachers' justifications on item (10):

Teachers	Justifications
<b>Teacher 01</b>	"By exposing students to such topics, we enable them to break the ethnocentric feeling, and melt with universals to learn the foreign language with all its facets."
<b>Teacher 02</b>	"Avoiding these topics means providing for incomplete information to students specialized in that language."
<b>Teacher 03</b>	"Flexibility requires teaching various themes of different cultures. In EFL, the situation is more exigent. The teacher has to refer to all these cultural differences for better awareness."
<b>Teacher 04</b>	"We have to inform our learners about everything in the target culture. More than this, I personally see that learners <b>must</b> visit English speaking countries to discover the reality."
<b>Teacher 05</b>	No answer.

**Table 21:** Teachers' Justifications on the Elimination of Taboo Topics

#### **Section Four: Culture Teaching and Cultural Awareness**

**Item 11:** If learners are given freedom to select content topics, they would only choose those that do not oppose their culture

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>True</b>	04	80%
<b>False</b>	01	20%
<b>Total</b>	05	100%

**Table 22:** Learners' Selection of the Course Content

As can be read from table (22), the leading majority of teachers (80%) agree that learners, if given the opportunity to select content topics, would subsequently select those that conform to their culture. In contrast, only one teacher (20%) believes the opposite.

**Item 12:** Preparing Syllabi which incorporate both elements of the Anglo-American culture and the learners' native culture would benefit their understanding of lectures.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	02	02	01	05
<b>Percentage</b>	40%	40%	20%	100%

**Table 23:** Teachers' Opinions of the Cultures to be Included

In table (23), the largest number of teachers advocates the idea of combining both elements of the native and target culture in the teaching/learning syllabi (40% in both options of 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree'), the purpose being to facilitate the

assimilation of courses. Opting for ‘Strongly Disagree’ was a single teacher with a percentage of (20%).

**Item 13:** EFL learners should be prepared in advance to receive foreign cultural content via courses of cultural awareness

<b>Options</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	04	01	05
<b>Percentage</b>	80%	20%	100%

**Table 24:** The Implementation of Cultural Awareness as part of Culture Learning

In conformity with what this study attempts to highlight, and in line with what has been mentioned in (chapter 2, p. 37) on the benefits of increasing EFL learners’ cultural awareness, (80%) of teachers advocate EFL learners’ needs to courses of cultural awareness. One single teacher, alternatively, believed that courses of cultural awareness are of no significance to the EFL learner.

**Item 14:** Which techniques do you use to help learners develop a more profound understanding of the foreign culture and of cross-cultural differences?

- a. Comparing cultures.
- b. Group and classroom discussions.
- c. Cultural Incidents.
- d. Cultural Quiz.
- e. Cross-Cultural Assimilators.
- f. Negative Etiquette.
- g. Others, please, specify.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>c</b>	01	20%
<b>b</b>	02	40%
<b>a</b>	01	20%
<b>acdg</b>	01	20%
<b>Total</b>	05	100%

**Table 25:** Techniques Used by Teachers to instruct about Culture

Results delineated in table (25) confirm that techniques of ‘Group and classroom discussions’ were mostly selected with a percentage of (40%). Whereas, techniques of ‘comparing cultures’ and ‘cultural incidents’ were less chosen with an equal percentage of (20%). A sole teacher representing a percentage of (20%) stated that he/she combines all three techniques of ‘cultural incidents’, ‘cultural quiz’, and ‘comparing cultures’. He/she also added a fourth technique which is “making research under the teacher’s guidance”, the purpose being “to develop their curiosity to know more about the foreign culture”.

**Section Five:** Further suggestions/ comments

**Item 15:** Are there any further comments or suggestions that you would like to add?

Teachers	Suggestions/ Comments
Teacher 01	“The teaching of a foreign language should be bicultural; we can help learners understand the other culture, not to accept it, but to consider it as being different, and carrying both positive and negative aspects as the local culture does”
Teacher 02	“Culture of the language should make part of all the items of the syllabus, and go along with the EFL teaching and learning process”
Teacher 03	“The teacher’s remarks and comments play a fundamental role in directing students’ feelings and perceptions towards the target culture”
Teacher 04	“The more we discover foreign cultures and languages, the more we are tolerant. The foreign culture is best taught via its corresponding language”
Teacher 05	The final teacher preferred to provide some general comments on the type of questions and general layout of the questionnaire.

**Table 26:** Teachers’ Suggestions

### 3.3. Discussion of the Results

The results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire will be presented by sections.

#### 3.3.1. The Students’ Questionnaire

##### Section One

What can be inferred from the results obtained in this section is the fact that we are dealing with “homogeneous” classrooms in terms of gender and age. Concerning students’ purposes in learning the English language, the leading majority expressed their readiness to come within reach the language and its culture. Pertaining to the study, this reflects students’ positive attitudes towards the study of English as a foreign language.

## **Section Two**

The responses provided by the respondents in this section reflect their awareness of the significance of culture teaching and the compact bond that associates culture and language. Students, further, indicated that literature, beliefs, and values are among the most preferred areas of the target culture they wish to explore. In light of these results, we can say that these culturally loaded aspects, students wish to discover, are of tremendous importance, since they enable them to submerge in the target culture, understand cultural differences and tolerate ambiguities. However, learners' answers to question (6) revealed that they show little willingness to use these heavy cultural aspects, inevitably reflected in courses of British/ American civilization and literature, in refining their judgments and developing empathy towards cultural differences. Apparently, student's wish to study about these cultural' beliefs and values stems out from their sense of curiosity and/or search for amusement.

## **Section Three**

The third section, driven by the learners' responses, lays out many conclusions relevant to the present study. The first conclusion concerns their attitudes towards the generation of taboo topics in the classroom. Surprisingly, more than half the informants do not perceive those topics as inhibitive to their learning; this is most evident in their answers to question (7). At the same time, however, the findings of the study, led by the learners' answers to question (8), confirmed that these topics hinder their assimilation of the course content. Moreover, when asked whether prejudices and stereotypes held on the target culture have a negative impact on the course assimilation, the leading majority replied positively. In an attempt to explain this contradiction, we are led to think of two possibilities. The first is that the amount of time and/or quantity of taboo

topics these learners were exposed to in the classroom was relatively small; the teaching/learning materials, perhaps, used in literature/ culture teaching did not overtly cover those taboo areas. The second factor might be that teachers, due to the socio-religious factors, felt prohibited to elaborate on such themes. This explains to a certain extent why learners' answers confirmed these inhibitive barriers (i.e., prejudices, stereotypes, and taboo topics) as impediments to their language learning, but felt quite unperturbed when dealing with those topics in the classroom ( table 8 /p.58) . Furthermore, the study, as was expected, revealed that learners indeed perceive the English speaking countries as a threat to their native cultural identity, which is believable to encourage them elicit negative attitudes towards the target culture and its people.

#### **Section Four**

For the development of their language proficiency and cultural acquisition, students stress upon the importance of studying courses of British/ American civilization and/or Literature as an effective way to approach the target culture. More importantly, they maintain the role of teachers in minimizing the effect of cultural barriers.

#### **3.3.2. The Teachers' Questionnaire**

##### **Section Two**

Foreign language teaching in Algeria was implemented at the tertiary level with the exclusive purpose of enabling learners acquire the target language and ameliorate their technical expertise in light of modern-day technological advances. All teachers surveyed, however, were quite unified in agreeing upon the absolute necessity of not only teaching about the language, but more importantly, teaching it in light of its corresponding culture. This highly indicates that teachers are cognizant of the recent

developments made in the field of FL teaching/learning which indisputably stress the inseparability of language and culture.

Questions in this section were carefully designed and ordered to serve specific purposes. For instance, questions (4-5) show that despite the teachers' responses to (Q.4) in which they opted for all the advantages cited about culture teaching, especially those that stress upon the importance of culture in raising students' cultural awareness, the impression given by their answers to question (5) that investigates their own perception on culture teaching reveals, however, that 80% of them do not use culture teaching as a tool for promoting positive attitudes towards the target culture and its bearers. Considering the above mentioned facts, we are led to assume that teachers only thought well of the concept of "cultural awareness", but did not consider involving it as part of their culture teaching practices.

### **Section Three**

In section three, we purposefully devised similar questions to the students' questionnaire in order to compare both teachers and students' viewpoints with regard to certain facts in line with the study objectives. Teacher respondents were of the same opinion as their students when they positively agreed that cultural barriers of prejudices and stereotypes about the target culture and its people are likely to impede the learners' achievements. Paradoxical to learners, 60% of the teachers do not consider foreign cultures as jeopardizing the learner's cultural identity. This can be attributed to the fact that teachers have the general assumption that learners feel a sense of inferiority towards the target culture, and as such are completely immersed in that culture and do not feel intimidated when exposed to foreign cultural contents.

Furthermore, as seen by their teachers, most learners display negative attitudes when introduced to topics related to alcoholism, atheism, homosexuality, and other socio-cultural taboos (teachers' answers on question 9). Based on this, we can deduce that: first, participant teachers were quite cognizant of those cultural barriers (i.e., taboo topics) presumed to impede culture and literature teaching. Second, participant students take an ethnocentric perspective in dealing with such topics. Reasons for this, apparently, have to do with the cultural and religious beliefs of learners that come in direct opposition with the content and themes addressed in such taboo topics. The aforesaid facts bring us to an important conclusion; students' negative response to these foreign cultural features is a direct outcome of their ethnocentrism; the latter, in its role, motivates their prejudices and stereotypes towards the target cultural community and causes their poor learning performances.

Despite the teachers' acknowledgments of their learners' 'negative attitudes towards these topics, they, however, intensively refuse to eliminate such topics from their courses, stressing upon the need to expose learners to every facet of the target culture.

#### **Section Four**

Teachers' answers to the questions of section four bring about two major conclusions. First, teachers' positive responses to question (11) indicate that learners, if given freedom to select content topics, they would choose those that do not oppose their culture. This proves that learners are, evidently, intolerant to cultural differences. Secondly, there is a need to blend both elements of the local and foreign culture in the course syllabus. This particularly conforms to what George (1981) stated that:

If EFL instruction in non-English-speaking countries is to become effective and realistic, care must be taken by the ministry of education of each country not to let it either turn into a tool of Anglo-American sociocultural domination, or take on ethnocentric features in order to isolate itself from such domination (cited in Cem and Alptekin, 1984, p. 18).

More importantly, is the teachers' agreement on the idea of preparing learners to receive foreign cultural input via courses of cultural awareness and cross-cultural sensitivity. It is also apparent that none of the techniques presumed to raise EFL learners' cultural awareness was used by the respondent teachers; their answers to question (14) revealed that most of them favor the technique of 'group and classroom discussions'.

## **Conclusion**

The data gathered from the two questionnaires, the one administered to teachers of literature and civilization and the other one to second-year master students, allow us to confirm the research hypothesis in that the students' level of cultural awareness is not sufficient to enable them surpass barriers of ethnocentrism, prejudices and stereotypes. Hence, it becomes essential to highlight the real existence of these inhibitive barriers to culture and literature teaching/learning in EFL classrooms, and take the initiative to enhance the learners' level of cultural awareness, being a key element in the success of cross-cultural understanding and communication.

## **General Conclusion**

As elaborated in the literature review sections, there is a widespread consensus upon the high connection between the foreign language and its corresponding culture. In other words, teaching a foreign language is teaching its relevant culture. Contemporary research in the field of EFL teaching/ learning, therefore, strongly advocates the need to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence and cross-cultural skills as part of their language learning.

This research work, in its preliminary attempt, investigated the major cultural barriers deemed as impediments to effective culture and literature teaching/learning at the Department of Foreign Languages, Section of English, University of Biskra. Moreover, this study aims to examine the potential positive effects of raising EFL learners' cultural awareness on eliminating cross-cultural barriers, hence, enabling them reach a stage of cross-cultural understanding and empathy vis-à-vis cultural differences.

The concern lying behind this research is the need to shed light on the issue of cultural barriers, and the significance of eliminating attitudinal inhibitors to culture and literature teaching/learning. Thus, it becomes of paramount importance to devote a separate module for the skill of cultural awareness; the latter being a key instrument in directing learners through a process of stepping outside their own cultural shell, and viewing unfamiliar cultures with a critical eye, hence, embracing ambiguities and developing empathy and tolerance.

As far as the results obtained from the data analysis, it has been inferred that the learners' rigid and negative attitudes towards some religious and socio-cultural restricted themes is an overt indication of their ethnocentric tendencies. This situation leads learners to misunderstandings, and urges them to develop stereotypes, negative attitudes and judgmental evaluations towards what is culturally divergent, or to what

seems unintentionally provocative and offensive. Moreover, the findings also revealed that these barriers of stereotypes and prejudices, indeed, hinder learners' assimilation of the course content and cause them perception gaps.

These findings, therefore, come to corroborate the aforementioned hypothesis in that the learners' inadequate awareness of cross-cultural differences, in addition to their failure in retaining skills of intercultural understanding, played a less supportive role to their effective culture/literature learning. For this reason, it becomes essential to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence and intercultural cognizance, for it is now commonly believed that the latter highly promotes positive attitudes and openness towards the others and their cultures, and effectively helps in dispelling stereotypes and prejudicial judgments.

Despite the fact that the present study has yielded the results needed for the confirmation of its hypothesis, we can, nevertheless, acknowledge some limitations met in the course of this investigation. First, the current study was conducted over a space of one semester; as the study was not longitudinal, we did not manage to treat the problem in a satisfactory manner, and grant it due time and effort. Any conclusions, therefore, cannot be taken as conclusive descriptions of the problem. Second, with regard to the research participants, only a minority of teachers accepted to take part in this investigation. The remaining teachers have overtly expressed their refusal to cooperate for reasons that remain ambiguous to the present moment. Finally the findings of the study can only be regarded as illuminative, since they, particularly, concern the situation of culture and literature teaching at the Department of Foreign Languages, Section of English, University of Biskra. The extent to which we can generalize the findings, therefore, certainly calls for further research where replication and extension on large-sized samples are both required.

For further inquiries, we propose to investigate the issue of assessing the Algerian learners' intercultural communicative competence, and see how the latter can help in tracking learners' progress in learning English as a foreign language.

### **Pedagogical Recommendations**

Driven by the discussion of the findings, we find ourselves motivated by the will to provide some pedagogical recommendations proven useful for the development of learners' intercultural communicative competence, in general, and intercultural awareness specifically. As maintained earlier, language and culture should not be treated as separate entities in the language classroom, thereby; the focus should be on both developing learners' linguistic and cross-cultural knowledge.

Having put this in mind, teachers need "to develop skills, attitudes, and awareness of values just as much as to develop knowledge of a particular culture or country" (Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey, 2002, p. 13). The responsibility to develop learners' cultural awareness, therefore, rests within the hands of the language teacher. This can be realized if learners were, first, helped to develop an awareness of their native culture, i.e., making them cognizant of what sets them apart from the target community. And second, if they were supplied with knowledge that objectively reports the target cultural viewpoints, values, and behavioral practices. These steps pave the way for learners to understand cross-cultural differences and tolerate ambiguities.

In view of this, discussions and debates about the peculiarities of both cultures i.e. the local and target cultures in the classroom are highly recommended; the more there is openness and meaning negotiation of differences and similarities, the less likely it is to encounter barriers of cross-cultural misunderstandings and communication. Furthermore, it is of great benefit for learners to invest in reading all kinds of authentic

materials; the purpose being to boost their motivation and curiosity towards the target culture and establish a clear link between the cultural knowledge they receive in the classroom and the realistic image of the western world cultures.

Moreover, the absence of a special mode of instruction for raising the element cultural awareness calls for the need to provide learners with courses that prepare them receive foreign cultural content. Cultural awareness courses are likely to assist learners develop an awareness of their own identity, step outside their ethnocentric feelings and attempt to understand the reasons lying behind the beliefs and actions of the target cultural group. What is more is that learners, during these courses, are always encouraged to seek knowledge and compare both cultures, hence, embrace cross-cultural variations.

In the same vein, teachers need to remold their culture/ literature teaching practices in such a way that takes into account both cultures; that is to say the local culture as well should be emphasized in the course of learning; the purpose being to assure learners' right to maintain their heritage and not feel overwhelmed by the target culture. Additionally, teachers are recommended to plan and implement instances of intercultural interactions and facts through techniques of cultural assimilators and cultural incidents. These two techniques can enrich learners' bulk of knowledge and increase their cultural awareness.

Summing up, it is worth noting that learners are not to be blamed for their negative attitudes towards what is culturally invoking and different. At the same time, we cannot eschew the fact that learners need preparatory courses that systematically prepare them to successfully attain intercultural communicative competence.

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## **Appendices**

- 1. Teachers' Questionnaire**
- 2. Students' Questionnaire**

**Teacher's Questionnaire**  
**Moving Beyond Cultural Barriers**

*Dear Teachers,*

You are kindly invited to take part in this research work aiming at identifying some of the cultural barriers recognized as impediments to English language teaching/learning, and the impact of cultural awareness in minimizing perceived cultural barriers. Please have the kindness to provide us with the necessary answers to the following questionnaire either by ticking the appropriate boxes /✓/, or by making full statements whenever required.

Thank you

**Section One: Qualifications and Experience**

- 1- Number of years teaching at university .....
- 2- Experience in teaching culture to EFL students ..... years
- 3- Experience in teaching modules of American/ British Literature and/or Civilization..... years

**Section Two: The Role of Culture Teaching**

4- Do you believe that learning/teaching a foreign language necessitates learning/knowing about its culture?

Yes  No

-If yes, is it because

- a. Language is the carrier of culture (i.e., language cannot be taught without reference to its culture) , hence, both are indispensable to the learning process
- b. Culture teaching/learning elicit skills of critical thinking and increases learner's world knowledge

- c. Cultural teaching plays a significant role in raising EFL learners' cultural awareness (i.e., being aware of what sets apart one's own culture from others ; being aware of cultural differences, hence developing positive attitudes, empathy and tolerance towards others)
- d. Cultural teaching is vital to maintain learners' motivation in learning the target language
- e. Cultural teaching enables learners to perceive and produce utterances that are appropriate to the particular cultural contexts in which they occur
- f. Others, please, specify.....  
.....

5- What does culture teaching mean to you?

- e. Presenting learners to the system of thoughts, behaviors, values , and norms of the target culture
- f. An opportunity to promote positive attitudes vis-à-vis the target culture/community
- g. Enabling learners to use the target language in appropriate contexts
- h. Others, please, specify.....  
.....

6- With response to your teaching experience, culture teaching is best realized if taught

- d. Implicitly
- e. Explicitly
- f. Both

**Section Three: Cultural Barriers and Attitudes towards the English Culture**

7- Does the learner's prejudices and stereotypes towards the target culture and its people hinder the learning process?

Yes

No

8- Learners perceive the foreign culture as a threat to their native cultural identity

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Disagree

Neither agree or disagree

9- When presenting lectures of British/ American literature and/or civilization which might generate topics related to issues of alcoholism, atheism, homosexuality, etc. Do learners

**h.** Participate and engage in interactions with their classmates as well as the teacher

**i.** Ask questions and discuss the related issues

**j.** Display negative attitudes and adopt an ethnocentric reaction (i.e. judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture)

**k.** Make prejudices and negative generalizations about the target culture and its people

**l.** Prefer to remain silent and not take part in discussions

**m.** Abandon the course, and eventually withdraw from the learning process as a whole

**n.** Others, please, specify.....

.....

10- Do you believe that avoiding these kinds of topics helps you as a teacher to maintain the flexibility of teaching?

Yes

No

-Clarify your answer, please.....

.....

.....

**Section Four: Culture Teaching and Cultural Awareness**

11- If learners are given freedom to select content topics, they would only choose those that do not oppose their culture

True

False

12- Preparing Syllabi which incorporate both elements of the Anglo-American culture and the learners' native culture would benefit their overall understanding of lectures

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Disagree

Neither agree or disagree

13- EFL learners should be prepared in advance to receive foreign cultural content via courses of "cultural awareness" (i.e., learning how to compare one's own culture with that of others, hence, recognize and understand cultural differences) and "Cross-cultural Sensitivity" (i.e., gaining knowledge, awareness and developing acceptance of other cultural groups)

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree   
Neither agree or disagree

Strongly Disagree

14- Which techniques do you use to help learners develop a more profound understanding of the foreign culture and of cross-cultural differences?

- a. Comparing cultures
- b. Group and classroom discussions
- c. Cultural Incidents (i.e., presenting a situation on cross-cultural miscommunication, and asking learners about how would they have behaved)
- d. Cultural Quiz
- e. Cross-Cultural Assimilators
- f. Negative Etiquette
- g. Others, please specify.....  
.....

**Section Five: Further Suggestions**

15- Any further comments or suggestions you would like to add

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

**DRISSAT Abir  
Department of Foreign Languages  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Mohamed Kheider-University of Biskra**

## Students' Questionnaire

### Moving Beyond Cultural Barriers

*Dear students;*

This research work aims at identifying some of the cultural barriers recognized as impediments to English language teaching/learning, and the impact of cultural awareness in minimizing perceived cultural barriers. We sincerely appreciate your cooperation in providing answers necessary to the following questionnaire either by ticking the appropriate boxes /✓/, or by making full statements whenever required.

N.B: We rely on your collaboration as far as your honesty.

Thank you for your attention to this matter

#### **Section One: Factual Information**

1-Sex:

♂ Male

♀ Female

2- Age: .....

3- What is your major purpose in learning English?

a.To know about the language and the culture of its speakers

b. To achieve mastery required to obtain a job

c.To pursue further studies

#### **Section Two: Culture Learning**

4- Do you believe it necessary to study about the culture of the English-speaking people?

- Absolutely, yes

- No, not really

-If "No", state your arguments.....

.....

.....

- If yes, which aspects would you like to explore most?

e. Beliefs and values

f. Literature ( literary trends, movements, writers, genres, etc)

g. Daily life and routines

h. Others, please specify.....

.....

5- To what extent do you like British/American Civilization and/or Literature courses?

Much

Little

Not at all

- Explain Why? .....

.....

.....

6- Studying courses of British/American Civilization and/or Literature has brought you significant advantages in terms of

f. Exploring aspects of the English culture encapsulated by English literature

g. Enjoyment and pleasure in studying some of the greatest literary works and ancient civilizations

h. Improving your language writing skills (i.e., vocabulary, style, grammar, spelling, and punctuation)

i. Expanding the horizons of your thinking and acquiring skills of analytical thinking and critical awareness of other cultures

j. Refining your judgments with regard to the target culture, and develop empathy for those different than us

**Section Three: Cultural Barriers and Attitudes towards the English culture**

7-When teachers generate topics related to aspects of alcoholism, atheism (i.e., a disbelief in the existence of God), homosexuality, and premarital relationships. Do you

- e. Participate freely in discussions
- f. Wish that the teacher skips that point and shifts to another one
- g. You already know the course content in advance, and prefer not to attend
- h. You do not take part in discussion because of your insufficient linguistic competence

8- Taboo topics (atheism, sexual abuses, HIV, etc) cause learners perception gaps

Yes  No

9- Learners' prejudices and stereotypes have a negative impact on their overall understanding of the course content

Yes  No

10- In your opinion, the representation of the English speaking countries as imperialistic forces poses a threat to the learner's native cultural identity, and generates negative attitudes towards the target culture and its people

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Section Four:Further Suggestions**

11- Any further comments or suggestions you would like to add

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

**DRISSAT Abir  
Department of Foreign Languages  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Mohamed Kheider-University of Biskra**

