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THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND ON

DEVELOPING EFL LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE.

Case Study: Second year LMD students of English at Mohamed Kheider

University of Biskra.

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Dedication

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

I dedicate my modest work to my dear parents (Ahmed & Aicha)

My father (the man of principles and morals)

Mom (the unique human being of all times)

To my two sisters and my two brothers in law (Saadouda & Imad/Fouzia & Mizou)

To my nephews (Djebril&Iyad) and my niece (Rym)

To both families Harzallah & Benachour

To my dear uncle and aunt (Mohammed&Messouda)

To all my teachers who taught me since primary school till today

Especially my first teacher (DJAMILA CHAWKI)

To my cousins (Samia, Ratiba, Nour, Ilham, Hadda, Sakhria,Yasmine, Widad, Djimi,

Nouha, Marwa)

To my friends (Soumia, Fella, Hiba, Basma, Achwak, Mouna, Djazil, Badis, Hanan,

and Souad, kouka mourouj)

To all people I just mentioned I hope you know that the love I have for you is granted.

Thank you.

Declaration

I Houda Harzallah do hereby solemnly declare that the work I have presented in this dissertation is my own, and it has not been submitted before to any other institution or university for a degree.

This work has been carried out and completed at MOHAMED KHEIDER University of BISKRA,ALGERIA.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Teaching and learning foreign languages is not limited solely to mastering the linguistic manifestations. EFL Learners tend to have major communication problems when it comes to conducting successful conversations in the target language, mostly because they have little knowledge about the different aspects of culture of the target language. Our research is presented to raise that sense of awareness of the importance of having a socio-cultural background among EFL Learners. It is a fact in the field of learning and teaching languages that culture and language are inseparable aspects; however, students at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra especially the case of second year LMD English students seem to face communication's breakdowns, and they fail to conduct successful conversations. We hypothesise that if learners are highly exposed to the foreign language culture, they will be able to communicate effectively. In addition, if they were aware of the varieties of the socio-cultural norms of the Target Language, they would be able to communicate with native-like skills successfully. This research used a descriptive study as an approach to acquire and gather data for this dissertation. In addition, it is led through students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews as a gathering data tools. As a result of this study, students showed their interest and tendency in learning about the target culture, and their positive attitude toward cultural differences was encouraging. Moreover, this study presents that students have confusion about the aspect of culture and its relation with language learning, they need to have an idea about the different aspect of the target culture. In addition, it conveyed students frustration about the atmosphere in which the module of culture of the language is presented (time and setting).

Key Terms: Culture, Communicative Competence, Socio-Cultural Background.

List of Abbreviations

LMD: Licence Master Doctorate.

EFL: English as Foreign Language.

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Chapter one: language and culture.

Introduction

Culture is perceived as a very complex term to define. Scholars find it a vast concept in terms of definition, because it includes various identifications. Rymond (2001) states that "culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in English language.'' (Thanasoulas, 1976. Cited in, Rymond, 2001, p.87). Culture was seen from different angles and it has been defined with such diversification by scholars throughout the years. This chapter is intended to demonstrate a cultural awareness to EFL Learners by defining culture at first, then providing an example of how culture and language are interrelated. Moreover; it will provide a hint about the importance of teaching culture among EFL classes.

1.1. Different perspective about culture

1.1.1. Theories about culture

1.1.1.1. Culture as distinct from nature

Anthropologists over the last decade have suggested a set of models of how culture is conceived. This theory views culture as distinct from nature "A common view of culture is that of something learned, transmitted, passed on down from one generation to the next, through human actions." (Durante, 1997, p. 24) this theory views culture as a matter of adaptation of habits, rituals, philosophy and life style of the society we live in, scholars such as Oswald (1986, p. 25) stated that people practice a kind of imitation and they receive a sort of heritage when it comes to accumulation of culture. For example a child separated from his blood relatives and brought up in a society different, from the one in which he was born, will grow up to be a member of the culture of his adoptive parents.

Oswald confirmed with this example that people are melt in the society they live in , and that allows them to adopt the shared behaviors, beliefs, and even the smallest details of the daily life. All these components can be transmitted from relatives, and members of the community, as well as other materials such as the media. Oswald also stated that people are not born with culture, but definitely they have the ability to acquire it (Oswald, 1986, p.25). Moreover, this view emphasizes that culture is a social heritage, and it can be acquired from the social environment. Bennett (1968) pointed out that "culture is the mirror that reflects the social behaviors". So, from a sociological point of view, culture is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately using common rules that the individuals of a group community must know to accomplish and maintain good rapports with people of their society.

1.1.1.2. Culture as communication

Culture is viewed as a communicative system that allows individuals to express their perspectives. Duranti stated that:

> To say that culture is communication means to see it as a system of signs. This is the semiotic theory about culture. In its most basic version, this view holds that culture is a representation of the world, a way of making sense of reality by objectifying it in stories, myths, descriptions, theories, proverbs, artistic products and performances. (Durante, 1997, p. 33)

This theory states that the cultural components are being communicated; it means that people acquire these rituals, habits and so on through communication. Furthermore, these concepts and traditions are passed on by representations such as stories that are told by grandparents and myths. These stories hold the essence of culture; somehow they represent a specific life style to a specific group of community. According to Thompson(1990) (cited in Hinkle,1999, p.77), "Culture is the pattern of

meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs."

In addition Greets (1973) claims that culture is not limited only to person's conceptions, but it is the significance of meanings that are shared and acted out publicly among those who belong to the same speech community.

1.1.1.3. Culture as knowledge

Authors presume that culture is learnable, and it is the accumulated model for perceiving, relating, and interpreting the acquired social norms."If culture is learned, then much of it can be thought of in terms of knowledge of the world. This does not only mean that members of a culture must know certain facts or be able to recognize objects, places and people." (Duranti, 1997, p. 27). The cognitive perspective about culture, where scholars such as Goodenough believe that culture is more than physical inherited things across generations, but it is embedded also in the way of thinking in general among a group of people, psychologists claim that culture is a set of perspectives, thoughts and models of how a community or certain societies, perceive and interpret people's behaviors, emotions and the way they deal with one another (Goodenough, 1957).

Recent works by cultural psychologists show that culture is the shared attitudes and reactions toward different life situations within the same society. Furthermore, researchers think that culture does not really differ from one person to another, and somehow people of the same speech community have a similar way of thinking (Jean-lave, 1988). The cognitive view of culture states that culture is seen as knowledge

rather than actual behavior and practice. In other words, culture is a matter of knowledge that exists in people's minds which enables them to interact appropriately.

Goodenough(1964, p.36) argues that culture is the knowledge that one has to possess in order to deal with members of his society effectively; he also added that culture is a set of perceptions, reactions and interpretations that one makes based on that knowledge.

1.2. Components of culture

The term "culture" usually previewed as a collection of beliefs, values, customs, products and different set of interacting skills in a specific group community (Cohen et al, 2003). [National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project] NSFLEP (1999, p.47) provides foreign language students with integrative tools to help them blend in among the target societies, and adopt its philosophical perspectives, its concrete and abstract realizations, also to acquire their behavioral practices. These standards are identified as the three Ps:

Perspectives and Practices (which represent the abstract part): Perspectives are the cognitive attitudes of members of a given society. Practices are the interacting skills that members use to communicate with one another.

Products (the concrete part of culture) such as technology, music, art, food, literature and so on. These are the things that members create, share and passed on across generations (Duranti, 1997).

1.3. Types of culture

The concept of culture has been classified by scholars differently throughout the years according to a set of characteristics. The following classification of culture

demonstrated in our research is chosen among many types of culture set by scholars. Yet, this passage is focusing on two distinguished types of culture in which they are: Epidemiological and evoked cultures. The first refers to values and conventions that oneself believes in, while the second refers to general consensus that are shared in a society , and specific only to that speech community; this latter can be learned or acquired from environment (Cosmides and Tooby, 1992).

Culture diversifies as mentioned before, and that is due to its vague and vast nature and the differences that humans encounter in terms of habits, rituals, beliefs, and singular interpretations. Trumball et al (2006) propose that culture diversity comes in two levels:

➢ Individualistic: cultures in this view come in an individual level, where people are different in their ways of thinking, and each one has his own assumptions.

➢ Collectivistic: scholars preview that this type of cultures comes in a collective level, where every speech community possesses a set of common rules and conventions that are acknowledged only to that society.

1.4. Culture transmission

Scholars demonstrated in several inquiries that culture is passed on from generation to generation. According to Costro and Toro (2004), culture is inherited and passed on among generations from parents to children. They stated that " cultural transmission in our species works most of the time as a cumulative inheritance system allowing members of a group to incorporate behavioral features not only with positive biological value but sometimes also With a neutral or even negative biological value." (Costro and Toro, 2004, p. 60).

The quotation denotes that the common features between the animal's social system inheritance and human culture transmission lies in the fact that human rules and preferences are inherited (Basin and Verdier, 2005 cited Rezig, 2015).

In addition, Levine (1973) views that the transmission of culture lies in communication. In other words, he stated that the cultural inheritance is communicated among generations through messages that people receive daily from environment, and the transmission of culture is a matter of reflecting, internalizing, and configuring these messages, and adopting them to build one's cultural character

1.4-1 Through imitation

According to Richerson and Boyd (2005), human cultural transmission is relatively rich and quickly transmitted, and that is why children adopt the rules and behaviors of their social group in a very young age. Boyd and Richerson believe that fast transmission or adoption is due to the fact that newborn babies are equipped with a learning bias.

Richerson and Boyd identified the learning bias as the ability that one possesses to acquire, adopt and assimilate the rules and behaviors from his environment. They view that:

> The learning bias is explained as a natural selection when a baby is prepared to learn his social culture, which leads us to conclude that the above mentioned studies are attributing to social transmission a natural selection aspect on the basis that the group culture starts natural traits like preferences and beliefs that may be inherited.'

(Boyd, Richerson, 2005, cited in Rezig, 2015)

Humans often learn behaviors through different forms such as imitation, which is presented as the main mechanism of learning and acquiring rules and behaviors in a given social group (Rezig, 2015).

Heyes (1994) and Tomasello (1999) agree that imitation is the easiest way to acquire social norms and behaviors. However; Triandis (2002) argued that imitation hinders the process of creativity among individuals, because they assimilate these rituals, habits, behaviors and social rules blindly without reinventing them. Eventually, imitation is seen as one of the most important canals of cultural transmission.

1.4.2. Through language

According to Schuman (1978, p. 60) "Language has three broad functions: a communicative function, an integrative function and an expressive function". In other words; language helps us to transmit information, enforcing membership to a specific speech community, and express emotions, ideas, and personality. Schuman believes that culture and language are strongly linked. Furthermore, language is a culture carrier, our thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are expressed in our linguistic manifestations. Our cultural notions are embedded in our speech. It is implicitly planted in the language we use. Baker and Jones (1998) stated that language expresses its culture and undertakes the role of explaining it. In other word, language works as a carrier of culture, and it is a vital component in the cultures of societies.

Norezay (2006) confirmed that the most of social norms that constitute the individual's environment are transmitted through language. Scholars studies on possible means of cultural transmission agree on the fact that to assimilate a foreign

language culture, the learner has to interact with native speakers of this language and imitate them.

1.5. Language and context

Linguists define context as a dynamic situation where words are uttered and their meanings are determined according to a set of parameters. Saville-Troike (2006, p.187) states that "knowledge based on what has already been read or heard in a specific text or situation, as well as an understanding of what the writer's or speaker's intentions are, and the overall structure of the discourse pattern being used".

Cook (2003) suggested a set of parameters that should be taken into consideration when analyzing language in use i.e. analyzing it in its socio-cultural context. He presumes that the tone of voice and facial expressions, the relationship between speakers, the age, sex and social status, the time and place, and the degree to which speakers do or do not share the same cultural background ,all these parameters play a great role when configuring and analyzing communicative events.

1.5.1. Types of Context

Kramsch (1998) and Yule (2006) suggested that there are three types of context: linguistic context, physical context and socio-cultural context.

-A- Linguistic context: This context is concerned only with the denotations of words and patterns, and it does not view language out of the sentence meaning. "It is defined as a set of words in particular phrase or sentence, and the explicit meaning of those words is mainly the basic concern of the linguistic analysis." (Yule, 2006. Kramsch, 1998. Cited in Harzelli, 2013, p.23).

-B-Physical context: This context denotes the physical setting where the discourse took place, i.e.the"where" (place) and the "when" (time).

"It is called situational context which is related with the properties ''Here'' and ''Now''. It refers to place and time in given context. Consider the following example:

A: When do you come back home?

B: At eight, and you know how the air traffic looks like.Here the common features of context are: time (at eight); place (at home), and person (woman and her husband). ''. (Yule, 2006. Kramsch, 1998. cited in Harzelli,2013, p.23).

 -C-Socio-cultural Context

This type of context is the most critical kind, because it addresses the socio-cultural aspect straightforwardly of a given speech community. For example, tribal, economic aspects, social organization, family relationships (relatives), rituals, concept of time and space and so on. According to Yule and Kramsch the communicative events or conversations cannot be interpreted without referring to the social aspects, the social context (Yule, 2006. Kramsch, 1998. Cited in Harzelli, 2013, p.23)

Yule (2006) and Kramsch (1998) also added "the Psychological context concerns the speaker' state of mind and his intention in each context which is very difficult to be analyzed in a certain conversation." (Cited in Harzelli, 2013, p.23) i.e. communicative events are highly difficult to be interpreted in terms of the psychological context which is related to individuals' state of mind and intentions.

1.6. The relationship between language and culture

Language and culture are unique to human beings, and both are inseparable. As mentioned before, language is a carrier of culture; it is the primary means to express one's personality and cultural norms. Risager (2006) stated that language is considered

the most fundamental and vital component in culture. In the same context Byram (1989) declared that language is always embedded in culture, and it embraces the cultural norms and concepts of humans, as well as it represent their identities.

Moreover, the applied linguist Politzer (1959, Cited in Rezig, 2012) emphasized that language cannot be taught in isolation without its culture, otherwise it would be a matter of teaching meaningless symbols to which the learners attach the wrong meaning to it. Brown (2000, p. 177) added that "language is a part of culture and culture is part of language and both are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture". And Kluckhonn (1944) adds "human without human language is unthinkable" (as cited in Merrouche, 2006, p.12).

Researchers in various disciplines like anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc, emphasized to what extent the cultural dimension is important to learning a language.

Conclusion

This chapter serves as a cultural awareness to EFL Learners. It discussed different aspects such as the various definitions of the term culture, and how it is perceived by different scholars and in different disciplines. We mentioned only three theories that define culture as (communication, knowledge, and as distinct from nature). Furthermore; this chapter discussed many titles about culture such as the components of culture, types of culture, culture transmission, and the relationship between culture and language. The main aim of this chapter is to raise EFLs' cultural knowledge, besides emphasizing on the importance of knowing about the Target Culture when learning a foreign language.

Chapter three: Field work

Introduction

The main objective of this investigation is to have a clear idea of how EFL Learners conceive the concept of knowing about the target culture in language learning. It also aims at presenting the teachers' thoughts about the impact of teaching culture in improving EFL Learners' communicative competence.

In this chapter, we will be presenting two parts which are **"Students' questionnaires"** and **"Teachers' interview"**.

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

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

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

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

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

➢ Type of the interview.

➢ Aim of the interview.

➢ Description of the interview.

➢ Analysis of the interview (analysis of teachers' responses).

3.1- Methodology

3.1.1 Approach/ overall Method

The methodology adopted in this dissertation is the descriptive approach. Since it is considered a suitable method for human sciences researches, the description and results of the collected data will be more valid. This research is qualitative because it is the most appropriate type to describe the two research tools that are used in our study. Another reason for choosing this method was due to the short period of time; that is why we will not able to conduct an experimental study.

Moreover, we need to derive information from any material relevant to our subject of interest. In addition, we will use the questionnaire and the interviews to cater for both theoretical and applied research. The results of the questionnaire and the interviews will be included in the dissertation.

3.1.2 Population and sampling

The case study of this dissertation is second year LMD students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. The main reason for choosing this population is that students of the second year are supposed to know about the two major aspects of the language which are its structure (code, grammar rules and lexicon) and its function (the use of the language, communication). However, it is for a fact that students fail when it comes to the second aspect (communication), EFL students seem to be unable to perform speech acts and hold conversations appropriately and effectively. Another reason for choosing this population is that this study will provide a cultural awareness for them and emphasize the importance of knowing about the socio-cultural background of the target language, and this will pave the way for them when they are presented to the course of pragmatics and discourse analysis in the next years. In this

study, we have dealt with two samples (students' sample and teachers' sample). This sample is selected randomly; it is the case of Second Year LMD Students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. We chose only 80 students from the total number of the population. The choice of the sample was random mainly because we want to have different opinions and perspectives from the case study. The sample of the teachers consisted of four teachers who have dealt with the course of culture of the language and pragmatics. Due to the long experience of these honoured teachers, their information and suggestions will be of a high value.

3.1.3 Design (data collection methods)

3.1.3.1 Teachers' Interview

Aim: the teachers' interview is designed to collect deeper insights from the specialized teachers on the subject that is under investigation.

Structure: this interview is a semi-structured interview; it was handed to four teachers from the division of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. It contained two parts (background information and four other questions concerning the subject matter.)

Questions to answer: the first two questions are related to personal information. They were about the teachers' educational level and whether they have been in an English speaking country. The other four questions were related to our subject under investigation. In Q3, the teachers were asked to give their opinions about how much is it important to know about the target culture in learning a foreign language and why. In Q4, they were asked about the difficulties that face EFL Learners in comprehending cultural content and whether it is due to their lack of cultural knowledge. In Q5, the teachers were kindly asked to give us their views about to what extent knowing about

the target culture influences learners' communicative competence. In Q6, they were asked to give suggestions of how it is possible to be culturally and communicatively competent.

3.1.3.2 Students' Questionnaire

Aim: the aim of this questionnaire is to gather data for this research and to have an idea about students' perceptions about the subject.

Structure: the questionnaire i**s** semi-structured (both closed ended and open-ended questions), it contained three sections. Section one it entitled "**General Information"** it presented personal information about the learners, Q1 requested the age, Q2 the gender, Q3 the learners were asked to say why they chose to study English (options were given to choose from), and Q4 the student were asked how they evaluate their level in English (also options were provided). Section two is entitled "**Language Learning"** it contained five questions. In Q5, students were asked about their perceptions of how they learn language (is it by mastering its components or its functions). In Q6, they were asked if they face difficulties in understanding when they are exposed to communicative events; it was a "yes" or "no" question and they were asked to explain the reason why they fail in understanding. While in Q7 and Q8 students were asked about how they perceive culture and how they define it. They were also asked to give their opinions of how teaching culture can develop their communicative competence. In Q9, students were asked if they think the time allocated to the course of culture of the language is enough for them to cover all cultural aspects. Section three entitled "**Cultural Learning"** it contained four questions about learning cultural content. In Q10 and Q11, students were asked if they think that learning the target culture is important in the language learning process, and if they can develop communicative

competence without the cultural dimension. While in Q12 and Q13, they were asked about their reactions toward cultural differences, and how they can be culturally competent (choices or opinions were given, and they were asked to give suggestions).

3.1.4 Data Analysis procedures (tables and percentages, types, purpose)

3.2.1 Students' Questionnaire Data Analysis

Section One: General Information

Item1: Age

Age	Number of students	Percentage
19	2	4%
20	3	6%
21	18	36%
22	16	32%
23	5	10%
24	5	10%
25	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Table01: Students' age.

Item2: Gender

Sex	Number of students	Percentage
Female	44	88%
Male	6	12%
Total	50	100%

Table02: Students' Gender Distribution.

This table indicates that 44 of students (88%) are female; this shows that girls are more interested in studying English; whereas, the number of males is 6 (12%), which means that males show less interest in specializing in foreign languages.

Item3: you chose to study English because

      a- It was your favourite language?

      b- It seemed to be easy to acquire?

      c- It was imposed on you though you wanted to study something else?

      d- It is a lingua franca (international) and you are interested to know more about the culture of its natives?

      e- Other answers, please specify.

Answers	Number of students	Percentage
a	32	64%
b	12	24%
c	6	12%
d	0	0%
e	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table03: Students' choice to study English.

This table indicates that the majority of students (32, 64%) chose to study English because it was their favourite language, and 12 students (24%) thought it is easy to acquire. While 6 students (12%) said that it was imposed on them. The rest of the choices have (0%) no one answered them.

Choices	Number of students	Percentage
a	16	32%

b	32	64%
c	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Item4: How would you evaluate your level of English?

Table04: Students' evaluation of their level (s)

This table indicates that the majority of students (32, 64%) say that they have average level in English. While, (16, 32%) students say that they have good level, and only 2 students (4%) say that they have bad level in English. Maybe this evaluation is due to their grades in exams.

Section Two: Language Learning

Item5: what is your most preferable way to learn the language:

a- Master its grammar and linguistic components?

b- Master pronunciation to achieve fluency?

c- Gather some cultural knowledge and know about the target society?

d- Accumulate words as much as possible and their meanings?

e- All of these.

Option	Number of students	Percentage
a	5	10%
b	8	16%
c	3	6%
d	2	4%

e	32	64%
Total	50	100%

Table 05: Students' most preferable way to learn English.

This table indicate that the majority of students (32, 64%) chose the answer (all of these) as the most preferable way to learn English; it means that they try to give importance to the linguistic structures and functions of the language as well. While, (8, 16%) said that they want to learn pronunciation to achieve fluency. Whereas, (4%) and (6%) respectively of the students say that they prefer to know about culture and the denotations of words as a way to learn language.

Item6: Do you often face difficulties in understanding when you are exposed to communicative events (classroom discussions, chatting with natives, discussing foreign with friends...etc)

a- No

b- Yes

Choice	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	26	52%
No	24	48%
Total	50	100%

Table06: Students' difficulties in understanding communicative events.

This table indicates that more than half of the students (52%) say that they do face difficulties in understanding when they are exposed to communicative events such as discussing foreign topics or having conversations with classmates. Whereas, (48%)

of students say that they do not encounter challenges when they are exposed to communicative events.

If yes, is it because

a-   The lack of vocabulary.

b-   The lack of linguistic competence.

c-   The lack of cultural knowledge.

d-   You are not familiar with some authentic expressions.

e-   No answer.

Choices	Number of Students	Percentage
a	9	34.6%
b	1	3.8%
c	6	23.07%
d	6	23.07%
e	4	8%
Total	26	100%

Table07: Reasons behind students' misunderstanding.

This table indicates that most of the students (34%) who answered "yes" think that misunderstanding is due to the lack of vocabulary; they think that if they cannot understand some words in conversation, they fail in understanding the whole meaning. While, (23.07%) of the students say that misunderstanding is due to the lack of cultural knowledge and ignorance of authentic expressions. Whereas, (3.8%) answered that they

face challenges in understanding because they lack linguistic competence. (8%) of the students gave no answer. Maybe because they could not diagnose this problem.

Item07: How do you perceive culture? (Understand)

a- A set of beliefs, customs, patterned ways of life.

b- A system of value, thoughts, assumptions.

c- Literature and fine arts.

d- Others, specify

Choice	Number of students	Percentage
a	27	54%
b	13	26%
c	10	20%
d	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table09: Students' perception culture.

This table displays that more than half of the students (54%) perceive culture as a set of beliefs and a life style; while, (26%) of them define culture as thoughts and assumptions specific to a given society. The table also illustrates that (20%) of students see culture as literature and arts. Whereas, (0%) of the students gave their own thoughts about how they perceive culture.

Item08: Do you agree that teaching culture helps you develop your communicative competency?

Choice	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	40	80%
No	2	4%
I have no idea	8	16%
Total	50	100%

Table10: Students' thoughts about communicative competence.

The table indicates that the majority of students (80%) do believe that teaching culture helps develop their communicative competence. While, (4%) of students say that teaching culture has nothing to do with developing communication skills. Whereas, (16%) of students could not make up a decision of whether teaching culture can develop communicative competence or not.

Item09: Do you think that the time allocated for teaching culture is sufficient to cover most of the cultural aspects needed to develop your communicative competence?

    a- Yes

    b- No

    c- I have no idea

Choice	Number of students	Percentage
a	12	24%
b	24	48%
c	14	28%

Total	50	100%

Table11: Students' thoughts about the time allocated for the course of culture

This table illustrates that (48%) of the students say that the time allocated for the course of culture is not sufficient to cover all aspects needed. While, (28%) said that they have no idea; they did not put much thought into the subject. Whereas, (24%) think it is enough for them and there is no need to add additional sessions for the course of culture.

Section Two: Cultural Learning

Item10: Do you think that it is important to know about the culture of native speakers, their behaviours, life style...etc?

a- Yes

b- No

c- Not sure

Choice	Number of students	Percentage
a	31	62%
b	7	14%
c	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Table12: Students' views about the importance of knowing about culture

The table indicates that (62%) of the students think that it is important to know about the target culture in language learning, but (14%) of them think that it is not important for them to learn about the target culture; they think that language learning is not necessarily linked to learning its culture. Whereas, (24%) are confused about the relationship of language learning and learning culture; they answered (I have no idea)

If yes, why?

Students wrote the following answers:

- **To integrate in the target society.**

- **To be able to communicate with native speakers.**

- **It helps in the language learning process.**

- **To facilitate communication.**

- **Knowing about the English culture helps me, so I won't be conceived rude or inappropriate.**

- **Knowing about their culture enables me to be easily fitted in their society.**

Item11: Do you think that communication can be developed independently out of its cultural context?

Choice	Number of students	Percentage
a	29	58%
b	9	18%
c	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Table13: Students' views about developing communicative competence.

This table displays that most of the students (58%) think that communicative competence can be developed independently out of its cultural context. This shows that students have little awareness about the cultural aspects and their relation with developing communicative competence. While, (24%) say that they have no idea about this relation; maybe, they are confused about these two concepts. Whereas, (18%) of the students answered "no".

Item12: How do you react when facing cultural differences?

Choice	Number of students	Percentage
a	36	72%
b	1	2%
c	13	26%
Total	50	100%

Table14: Students' thoughts about cultural differences.

The table displays that the majority of students (72%) say that they accept and respect cultural differences and they feel flexible toward them. While, (26%) react neutrally against cultural differences, and (2%) only of the students say that they do not accept these differences and they reject them.

Item13: What do learners need to master to be culturally competent?

choice	Number of students	Percentage
a	9	18%

b	17	34%
c	24	48%
d	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table15: Students' thoughts about cultural competence.

This table illustrates that the majority of students (48%) suggest that to be culturally competent we should focus on various uses of the target language. While, (34%) say that it is a matter of mastering various functions to be culturally competent, and (18%) answered that they should master various structures of language. Whereas, (0%) of the students gave their opinions about this subject.

3.2.2 Teachers' Interview Data Analysis

Item 01: What scientific degree do you hold?

Teacher One: "I hold a PHD degree."

Teacher Two: "I hold a Magister degree."

Teacher Three: "I hold a PHD degree."

Our interviewed teachers hold highly sophisticated scientific degrees, which indicate their experience and invaluable opinions.

Item 02: Have you ever been in an English speaking country?

Teacher One: "I have never been to a foreign country."

Teacher Two: "I have never been to a foreign country."

Teacher Three: "Yes, I have been to several foreign countries."

The answers displayed that one of the teachers have been in an English speaking country; while, two of them have never been abroad.

If yes, did you face problems there? Are they because of cultural differences (I.e. they have beliefs, behaviors and life style different from yours)?

Teacher Three: "Well, I do not recall that I had cultural challenges, mainly because I have acceptance and flexibility toward cultural differences."

The teacher insisted that the difficulties concerning cultural differences are mainly related to the person's personality, if he is tolerant to these differences he will not have challenges.

Item 02: Do you think that it is important to know about the culture(s) of English native speakers, their beliefs, behaviors and life style? Why?

Teacher One: "Yes, it is too necessary to have an idea about all of these because culture and language are really related to each other and we can never disassociate between them."

Teacher Two: "Yes, I do think it is very important; because, culture is an essential part of language. Many words cannot be taught without its cultural reference. The cultural context is needed to deduce the intended meanings."

Teacher Three: "Yes, I do believe that it is important to know about the target culture because language and culture cannot be separated. They are interrelated, I usually say that to my students; mastery of the linguistic aspect alone is not enough, we should also master the much more important side which is concerned with the culture and the norms and the socio-cultural aspect of the foreign language society."

All the above answers clearly show the necessity of learning culture as part of foreign language teaching, because as interviewee (3) states that learning grammar

rules and vocabulary are not enough, it should accompanied with learning the socio-cultural aspect of the speech community, and this cultural aspect can be helpful for students to learn the foreign language effectively, and specifically to improve their communicative competence.

Item 03: Do you think that the difficulties that face EFL learners; especially misunderstanding are due to the lack of cultural knowledge?

Teacher One: "I strongly agree. They cannot grasp the foreign language fully without learning about its culture."

Teacher Two: "Yes, culture is of a high importance. I do believe strongly in that aspect because students at the level of English department they have that big problem which is breaking down communication and sometimes they do not know what to say to check the communication and to communicate effectively. I mean sometimes the linguistic aspect is present but when it comes to cultural knowledge, they failed to do that. So, communication may be cut."

Teacher Three: "Largely yes. Actually knowing about the target culture is crucial in EFL field; because, it helps configure meanings."

We can say that the majority of the respondents are strongly insisted about the necessity of having the socio-cultural aspect as a key variable to hold communication inside EFL classroom. They argue that the linguistic skills are not sufficient to avoid breaking down communication and the misunderstanding that exist among the majority of those students.

Item 04: To what extent does culture influence the learners' communicative competence?

Teacher One: "Communicative competence presuppose a good mastery /or knowledge of native peoples' culture. It greatly helps language learners' communicative competence."

Teacher Two: "To a great extent. Cultural knowledge gives them self confidence, motivates them to discuss more topics, and allows them to learn from the differences and similarities between the foreign culture and the mother one."

Teacher Three: "Yes, having a socio-cultural background about the target culture allows learners to develop their communicative competence and that because this knowledge will integrate them or involve them into more conversations and communicative events. Learners will feel less pressured of the possibility of being conceived as rude or inaccurate, because they already learned the codes and rules of the target society."

Our interviewees insisted that communicative competence is developed through having a cultural knowledge, and they gave several reasons, for example because it will enable learners to integrate in the target society; in addition, having this kind of knowledge will lessen the pressure of being misunderstood.

Item 05: How is it possible to be culturally and communicatively competent?

Teacher One: "If we learn about it implicitly, for example in literature, history, civilization and so on."

Teacher Two:

- "Through reading authentic materials."

- "Through diversifying reading authentic materials."

- "Through listening and watching movie, news, songs and so on."

- "Interacting with native speakers if possible."

Teacher Three: "Mastering the target language, and then introduce basic cultural concepts including civilization."

Our interviewees illustrated a set of suggestions about how to be culturally developed; the main answer was to be more exposed to the target culture, by reading authentic materiel, interacting with native speakers if possible, and listening and watching movie, news, songs and so on.

Conclusion

This chapter was devoted to describing the data gathered from the field work. It was constructed from two main parts that held a full description of the results obtained from the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview. The analysis of the result reveals that the majority of the students have an average level in English. Furthermore, we noticed that second year students do not give much importance to the aspect of culture. Most of the responses displayed that students cannot associate the concept of culture with the concept of communication. All answers about the importance of culture in developing communicative competence are negative; it means that most of students said that it is not necessary to know about the target culture to communicate effectively. In addition, we have deduced from the teachers' interview that EFL Learners are unable to communicate effectively due to the lack of automaticity in searching for social background of their interlocutors. It is a fact the social context, the degree of literacy, the psychological status, and the social norms plays a great role in determining the efficacy of the conversations held by students. Our interviewed teachers recommend integrating teaching pragmatics and discourse analysis in early stages of the language learning, since language is a means of communication, EFL Learners should be aware of these aspects in order to develop communicative competence

Pedagogical Implications

- Culture should be taught into TDs of individual groups to avoid crowded classes and the heavy atmosphere of the amphitheatres.

- Culture should be given a priority within foreign language curricula.

- The schedule of the course of culture should be changed in terms of temporal and physical settings.

- Teachers should integrate authentic materiel and role plays to immerse students in the language learning process.

- Students should make more efforts to search and intellect themselves about the English culture.

- Students should not rely only on teachers to give them information, instead they should be autonomous.

General Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, our main concern was the importance of having soci-cultural background in developing EFL Learners' communicative competence. Our case study was second year LMD students of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. This research serves to raise students' awareness to have a cultural knowledge about the target language.

This dissertation is constructed of three chapters, two theoretical chapters that were entitled **"Language and Culture"** and **"Communicative competence and Intercultural competence"**, these two chapters represent a theoretical background to our study, it described significant elements concerning our subject of interest, it is an attempt to clarify certain aspects that the researcher thought it is necessary for the students to know about it.

However, chapter three entitled **"Field Work"** it was mainly devoted for the data analysis of the two data collection tools which are **"Students' Questionnaire"** and **"Teachers' Interview".** The data that were collected from students' questionnaire reflected learners' thoughts, viewpoints and attitudes towards the aspect of culture and its relation with language learning. Also it was a reflection about students' ability to analyze spoken discourse and whether they can perform speech acts effectively and appropriately. As a final remarks deduced from this tool is that students have ambiguity about the relationship of language learning and culture; they tend to neglect the cultural dimension in learning the language, because as far as the results of the questionnaire have shown us is that students do not consider the aspect of culture fundamental, and they are not aware of the importance and interrelation of culture in the concept of

communication. It is a fact that students do believe that communication is restricted to only mastering the linguistic structures, where in fact that interlocutors need to have a socio-cultural background about one another including (social status, religion, degree of literacy, beliefs, traditions, norms, and so on) to be able to transmit and decipher messages, and express oneself appropriately. However, we deduced from teachers' interview that students need to be aware of the cultural aspects of the target language. Teachers emphasised that it is an important task to integrate cultural knowledge in EFL curricula, and make learners aware about the necessity of culture in developing communicative competence. Teachers also argued that the difficulties that face EFL Learners in interpreting communicative events, and communicating effectively is due to the lack of cultural background. In addition, this research display that the main reason for communication's breakdowns among second year students is their ignorance of the interrelation of communication and culture. Since language is a mean of communication it is a must to inform language learners in early stages about how to be pragmatically competent, and the first step to do that is to be culturally competent.

الملخص :

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على مدى فاعلية تكنولوجيا الإعلام والاتصال في تطوير ملكة اللغة ومهارات النطق والاكتساب اللغوي عند طلبة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. فقد ساعد التطور التكنولوجي بشكل كبير الطلبة على إتقانها بسهولة وذلك من خلال ابتكار طرق مختلفة وإدخال مفاهيم جديدة في عملية التدريس. إلى جانب دور المعلم في تفعيل مشاركة المتعلمين في القسم من جهة وذلك من خلال التحفيز والتشجيع وتقييمهم باستمرار من جهة أخرى.

وتجدر بنا الإشارة إلى أن استخدام الوسائل التعليمية المتطورة لها فاعلية كبيرة في لفت انتباه وتركيز المتعلم مثل أجهزة العرض الضوئية والأشرطة السمعية البصرية والحاسوب والتي بدورها تنشط عملية اكتساب اللغة.