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THE EFFECT OF CULTURAL INTERFERENCE ON THE EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILL:

A CASE STUDY OF MASTER TWO STUDENTS IN THE BRANCH OF ENGLISH AT BISKRA UNIVERSITY

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements of the Master Degree in Science of the Language

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Dedication

✻In fond memory of my *Uncle*.

✻ This dissertation is dedicated to you my parents. You have taught me to fight,

to win, to enjoy the taste of success, but never to give up. For you, I say:

"To the one who taught me the meaning of patience

To the wonderful woman in this world

My dear Mother

To the person who always makes me proud of my works

To the most respected man in this world

My dear Father"

I ask ALLAH to make you happy, make you smile, guide you safely through

every mile, grant you wealth, give you health, and most of all grant you PARADISE.

✻ They say: a friend gives hope when life is low, a friend is home when you

have nowhere to go, a friend is honest, a friend is true, and I say: a friend is precious, a

friend is you *Hadjira*. This dissertation is dedicated to you my darling.

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Fatima and her family, Messaoud and his wife, Halima, Saliha, and Abd

Rahmane

✻I am really lucky to have such good friends as:

Ilham, Kamulia, Manel, and Selma.

To these special names in my life I dedicate this work.

Messaouda

Dedication

Firstly I dedicate my work to the ***My dearest parents***

To the candle that still burn in order to light my way

To the angel that paradise is under her feet

To the dearest woman that gives without price

My Mother

To my model in this life

To whom I am proud of being his daughter

To the man who made me a strong woman

My Father

To the dearest friend that does not only share with me five years, but in fact she shares with me all my life. She has changed many things in my life to the best. Thanks my dear: ***Messaouda***

To the sweetest kids: ***Nour El-Houda, Nadjah, Lobna, Mohamed Islam, Ayat, Nariman, Fatima, Mohamed,*** and ***Ilham.***

To my ***sisters, brothers,*** and both ***Mebrouki*** and ***Mecheri family***

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"general knowledge about other cultures is the first key to knowing a completely new culture. Without this key, we are sure to judge and understand the foreign culture from our own point of view, which is bound to cause communicative failure. On the other hand, over-generalized knowledge can also hinder our understanding and communication because individual differences exist within all cultures. For full understanding, it is necessary to break apart simple cultural stereotypes with the depth of our learning and to form a kind of sensitivity to nuances in cultural differences. Together with tolerant attitudes towards foreigners and certain communicative strategies, such deep learning helps to avoid misunderstandings and even more serious conflicts in intercultural communication."

(Wei, 2009)

Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the effects of cultural interference on the foreign language learners' speaking skill. EFL learners think in Arabic when they use English that is why their English sounds like Arabic. Since speaking a foreign language is the students' aim in EFL classrooms, the importance is given to eliminating the problem of Arabic cultural interference in speaking English as a foreign language. Therefore, we hypothesize that if Arab learners are aware of the socio-cultural differences between the mother tongue and the target language, this will reduce the cultural interference that they generally exhibit. Throughout this study, we want to investigate the causes behind cultural interference in EFL classrooms in Algeria and thereby propose solutions to this phenomenon. To accomplish this study, we designed a questionnaire which was administered to second year master students (M2) at the branch of the English language at Biskra University. We also conducted an interview with a number of teachers who teach in the same institution. These teachers are the most knowledgeable about the difficulties that these learners face. After the analysis of the data collected and the results obtained from both the questionnaire and the interview, we arrived to confirm the hypothesis of this research and we tried to put forward some pedagogical recommendations, as how to find appropriate remedies that would eventually help learners to cope with the interference of their native culture while using the target language.

List of Abbreviations

CC: Communicative Competence

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FL: Foreign Language

ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence

ID: Intercultural Dimension

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LMD: License, Master, Doctorate

M2: Second Year Master Students

MT: Mother Tongue

NL: Native Language

SL: Second Language

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TL: Target Language

List of Tables

List of Figures

Content

General Introduction

Part One: Literature Review
Chapter One: The Speaking Skill

Chapter Two: A Cultural Insight in EFL Classrooms

Chapter Three: Cultural Interference: A problem in Learning Foreign Languages

Part Two: Field Work
Chapter Four: Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Questionnaire

Chapter Five: Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Interview

Part One:

Literature Review

General Introduction

<center>**General Introduction**</center>

1. Objectives

Our research aims firstly to understand why EFL students in the Algerian universities still confront difficulties in using English because of the influence of their own culture. Secondly, in order to overcome the actual problems of cultural interference, we shall propose possible solutions and some remedial works.

2. Statement of the Problem

In all kinds of communications (verbal and non-verbal), people transmit messages that are understandable to the group they belong to. They can create effective communication depending on the underlying knowledge which they have inside their minds. This knowledge constitutes the socio-cultural conventions they agree about in their community. Thus, the language people use is merely a tool to display these conventions. This leads us to say that whatever the language people use, it always remains a carrier of culture. Since our language reflects our own socio-cultural identity which is not the others', we sometimes face miscommunication. Miscommunication may occur between people with similar or different cultural background. It can be intended as well. Miscommunication appears largely in contexts where cultures differ and when meanings are used indirectly (implicitly conveyed).

The fact that if cultures differ, miscommunication may happen, has opened the door for foreign language teachers and specialists to concentrate their efforts on the area of culture in foreign language teaching, so as to develop the learners' proficiency when communicating in the target language. One of the constraints that learners encounter when using the target language is when the nature of the target language contradicts

with the nature of their native language. Consequently, they refer to their native language, which results at the end in interference. Interference between languages is a linguistic phenomenon which occurs in situations where there are languages in contact (Odlin, 1989). It is an obstacle in the learning process, since the learner transfers either consciously or unconsciously and inappropriately the elements of the mother tongue to the target language. The level of the learner determines what type of interference he may confront. In other words, beginners may experience phonetic, phonological, syntactic, or lexical/ semantic interference; i.e., they may have interference at the level of the linguistic structure of the language, while advanced learners may suffer at the cultural level of the language.

As a matter of fact, foreigners who receive formal instruction in the FL in their hometown (learners) are less lucky than those who live abroad (immigrants). The difference occurs in the use of the foreign language in real situations. While learners struggle between accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness, immigrants achieve near native fluency and intuitively recognize when and how to use all the structures of the foreign language. Such difference is attributed to the huge influence of the socio-cultural norms of the FL for immigrants and the native language for learners. Logically speaking, immigrants are exposed to the FL in every interaction daily. Controversy, the problem goes for the learners who do not have the opportunity to be exposed enough to the natural use of the FL in their hometown; that is why, most of foreign language learners become astonished when they go abroad. As a result, real-life communication helps the learner to experiment a wider range of tasks of the FL. The question that has to be answered, here, is: If we cannot evoke an ideal environment of the FL, what can we do for the FL learner?

In order to answer the above question, we have devoted this study to the investigation of the cultural interference and its influence on the Arabic speakers who are learning English as a foreign language. We have observed that learners in EFL classrooms in the Algerian universities use the elements of the Arabic language while speaking and writing in English. In fact, cultural interference occurs clearly in the oral and the written expression courses in EFL classrooms, where learners use the English language in an Arabic mould. For example, they may perform a play in English about a social phenomenon spread in Algeria. Furthermore, when they engage in a conversation, they formulate and interpret messages based on their own culture. The judgments they make can be positive as they can be negative. Supporting this point, Odlin (1989, p. 38) says: "Native language structures can influence the interpretation of target language messages, and sometimes that influence leads to learners inferring something very different from what speakers of the target language would infer."

3. Background of the Study

Names such as Charles Fries and Robert Lado are considered as the American pioneers in the history of transfer research in the 1940s and 1950s. Then, other researchers studied transfer and especially negative cultural transfer because of the importance that was given to the role of culture in FL teaching at the time. At the time of Hymes, it has been proved that successful use of the TL in FL classrooms is not confined to the mastery of the formal structure of the language; rather, the influence of culture has to be taken as an important factor. According to Lado, transfer from the native culture is considered as a hindrance in second language learning (Wei, 2009). In the twentieth century, much more importance was given to the study of transfer in this

area. The major work that occurred in this period is the work of Weinreich (1953/1968); in which the word 'interference' was used to describe all kinds of transfer (Odlin, 1989).

4. Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to EFL learners in the branch of English in Biskra University. It should be noted here that those learners receive only formal instruction in English, which will be more appropriate for the subject of this research that stresses the importance of culture in EFL teaching.

5. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

➢ Does the Algerian learners' knowledge of the English culture help them or not?

➢ What are the causes behind cultural interference in EFL classrooms in Algeria?

➢ Would the knowledge of the socio-cultural differences between Arabic and English reduce the degree of cultural interference in English? and what are these differences?

➢ How can we overcome cultural interference from Arabic into English?

6. Hypothesis

The present study is about cultural interference in EFL learning and its influence on the Arab learners' proficiency in the target language. The hypothesis we have proposed is the following:

- If students are aware of the socio-cultural differences between Arabic and English, they will not fall in cultural interference.

This hypothesis implies that if the socio-cultural components of the two languages, Arabic and English, are dealt with jointly in EFL classrooms in Algeria, or if students try to look for these differences, they will not experience cultural interference.

7. Significance of the Study

This study will be of great help for both teachers and students of EFL at the branch of the English language in Biskra University, since we have brought the issue of cultural interference and its influence on EFL learners' speaking skill to the context of EFL teaching in Biskra University for the first time.

8. Research Methodology

8.1 Choice of the Method

This research will be conducted through the descriptive method since it is the suitable method for the aim of the research, the type of the data needed, and the population under investigation. This study is divided into two main parts: part one is called literature review and part two is called field work. The description of the theoretical framework of the proposed topic will be in the first part (literature review) and the analysis of the learners' responses to the questionnaire and the teachers' responses to the interview will be in the second part (field work).

This study will be qualitative because of the nature of the subject itself. The subject of cultural interference has not been widely dealt with in previous researches, thus in this research, we shall investigate this problem and everything related to it to fully understand the nature and quality of the subject.

8.2 Population

The populations of the study are the second year master students and the teachers of the English language in the branch of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra.

8.2.1 Students' Sample

We have chosen to work Master two students in Science of the Language enrolled in the accademic year 2011/2012. These students are aging between twenty-two and twenty-four years old. Their exact number is ninety. They are all Algerians, Arabs, and Muslims which means they share the same cultural background. This leads us to expect that they will exhibit nearly the same reactions towards the TL culture. EFL learners in the Algerian higher educational system receive much more formal instruction in English.

8.2.2 Teachers' Sample

This study concerns also the English teachers who are currently teaching EFL in the branch of English in the department of foreign languages at Mohamed Kheider University. Their number is five (four males and one female). They have been chosen because they have taught the M2 students, the fact that they will be the most knowledgeable about these students' difficulties in English. They are all Arabs and Muslims which indicates that they are all non-native speakers of English.

8.3 Data gathering Tools

To collect data, we are going to use two main instruments: a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire will be administered to students while the interview will be conducted with teachers.

8.3.1 Students' Feedback Questionnaire

The choice of the questionnaire fits this research because it is quicker to administer, gives more information, and can be distributed to a large population at the same time. The ultimate goal of using the questionnaire in general is to obtain data about the interference of the MT culture in English and its causes.

8.3.2 Teachers' Feedback Interview

Because of the difficulty of the subject under investigation, we cannot just rely on students' responses, yet we need to speak and listen to the teachers. Since we are interested in interference, teachers specialized in linguistics will be of great help to this research.

9. Structure of the Dissertation

Within the limits of the effect of cultural interference on the learners' speaking skill, we organized this dissertation into two parts, namely, literature review and field work. Literature review includes three chapters while the field work includes two chapters. The content of each chapter is as follows:

The first chapter is devoted to the speaking skill. We stress the importance of this skill, especially in EFL classrooms and the difficulties that EFL learners are faced with when the speak English.

The second chapter is entitled 'A cultural insight in EFL classrooms'. It discusses the importance of teaching culture in EFL classrooms and the problems that these learners encounter because of culture difference.

The fact that cultural diversity causes cultural interference led us to devote the third chapter to discuss the problem that EFL learners are faced with because of cultural interference.

Chapter number four contains analysis and interpretation of the students' questionnaire in addition to the description of the sample and the structure of the questionnaire.

The fifth chapter contains analysis and interpretation of the teachers' interview in addition to the description of the sample and the structure of the interview.

Chapter One: The Speaking Skill

Chapter One: The Speaking Skill

Introduction

In foreign language teaching, the four skills of language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) must be learned, developed, and enhanced equally because they are interrelated. Most of the time has to be devoted to the receptive skills first, and then care shifts increasingly to the productive skills. Our interests are put around the productive skill, speaking since being able to speak a language is the crucial aim for students in foreign language classrooms (Broady, 2005). This skill requires from them two things: being knowledgeable of the specific elements of speech and being successful in practising these aspects in real communication. In this chapter, we shall discuss these two points in some details. We are going to explore the nature of speaking including its specificity, and the right way to oral fluency. Besides, we shall shed light on foreign language classroom oral skills, oral interaction activities, and learners' needs and speaking difficulties.

1. Definition of the Speaking Skill

"[L]anguage exists to satisfy the communicative needs of its users." (Meyer, 2009, p. 16), thus all our daily-life communication depends on the capacities we have and which enable us to talk, transmit messages, and fulfil our needs. These capacities constitute what we call 'the speaking skill'. According to Mc Namara (2000), the speaking skill is the ability to use a language. It comprises two points: First, being knowledgeable of the aspects of the language; second, being able to practise these aspects in real-life communication successfully.

Based on Thornbury's quotation (2005, p. 11) which says: "Being skillful assumes having some kind of knowledge base." we can say that the speaking skill refers to the knowledge of speaking. It is the knowledge of the language features and the knowledge of the socio-cultural context where language is used. According to Thornbury (2005, p. 11), the first knowledge is called 'the linguistic knowledge' whereas the second knowledge forms 'the extra-linguistic knowledge'. In the linguistic knowledge, we are supposed to know the four components of language: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. In the extra-linguistic knowledge, the knowledge of the topic of the conversation, the culture of participants and society are required. Extra-linguistic knowledge plays an important role in breaking down the communicative barriers.

In fact, speaking is an interactive process that involves receiving, processing, and then producing information (Brown 1983). It is ephemeral, often informal, and usually unplanned. It is a very important skill in FL classrooms (Ur 1984).

2. Features of the Spoken Language

Expressing oneself in a foreign language requires knowing certain elements that are needed for speaking. Speech elements are in many ways different from the written code of the language. That is why, most of the time EFL students face problems when it comes to speaking although they might be good writers. Therefore, it is necessary for each of them to know how to perform the specific elements of spoken language.

Based on the contradiction between the spoken and the written systems, we can derive the general characteristics of the spoken language. They can be summarized on three points depending on what is discussed in Mc Carthy's (1998) *Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics*:

- No exact use of the grammatical rules.

- Variable roles in conversations.

- No clear boundaries that should explain shifts between topics.

If we go more deeply in order to describe the spoken language, we find that all the features of speech can be grouped as follows: connected speech, expressive devices, special lexis, a different grammar, a system of pronunciation, and a negotiation language. (Harmer, 2001). In addition to that, we may add accuracy and fluency.

2.1 Connected Speech

In addition to the capacity to perform the different elements of speech, the speaker must be able to find out the connections between each element of speech. Unlike writing, in speech some sounds change their nature (e.g. assimilation), some others even disappear (e.g. elision), others occur at certain levels (e.g. linking), and most of them may become weak or strong depending on stress placement.

2.2 Expressive Devices

Native speakers use different devices to express in their language in order to indicate different attitudes or to implement and to ensure meaning. Those devices include paralinguistic features (e.g., gestures, eye contact, nodding, etc).

2.3 Lexis

What distinguishes speech form writing is the extended use of lexical phrases. This emerges in certain situations; for example, when expressing a shock, a surprise, or an approval.

2.4 Grammar

When we speak, we do not obey to the grammatical rules of the language, the fact that makes our speech characterized with a specific grammar that differs from the grammar we use when writing. Thornbury (2005) draws the distinction between written grammar and spoken grammar in the following table:

Written grammar	Spoken grammar
- Sentence is the basic unit of construction	-Clause is the basic unit of construction
-Clauses are often embedded (subordination)	-Clauses are usually added (co-ordination)
-Subject +verb + object construction	-Head + body + tail construction
-Reported speech favoured	-Direct speech favoured
-Precision favoured	-Vagueness tolerated
-Little ellipsis	-A lot of ellipsis
-No question tags	-Many question tags
-No performance effects	-Performance effects, including: * hesitations * repeats * false starts * incompletion * syntactic blends

Table 01: Differences between Written Grammar and Spoken Grammar
(Thornbury, 2005, p. 21)

From the table, it appears that there are many differences between the two types of grammar. We take, for instance, the feature of incompletion. In spoken grammar, we are free to stop in the middle of the conversation, whereas, in written grammar, this is not tolerated.

2.5 Pronunciation

Phonology plays an important role in the speech performance, especially in English foreign language learning. Much more the speaker's pronunciation is correct, very easily he/she will be understood. According to Thornbury (2005), it is very easy for native speakers to distinguish foreigners. Foreigners fail to perform certain aspects at the level of speech; such as, stress, rhythm, and intonation.

2.6 Negotiation Language

Negotiation language refers to the expressions we use to look for clarifications, or with which we show the structure of our speech.

a- If we want to seek clarification, we use expressions like:

- Excuse me, what do you mean?

- I'd understand you…

b- If we want to structure our speech, we use expressions like:

- In simple terms, I want to say…

- Beginning with…,

2.7 Accuracy

Speakers have to use correct speech structures with less errors. That is why English language learners have to develop their accuracy as much as possible. This development has to be proved through some tests that show the ability of the learner to achieve accuracy when speaking. In the same direction, Hughes (2002, p. 88) says: "Candidates are awarded marks for the accurate and appropriate use of syntactic forms and vocabulary in order to meet the task requirement at each level." For Hughes, accuracy can be tested, which enables learners to see whether they are accurate speakers or not. Furthermore, they can improve their accuracy with the help of these tests.

2.8 Fluency

There are many definitions for the term fluency, and all of them "include references to flow or smoothness, rate of speech, absences of excessive pausing, absence of disturbing hesitation markers, length of utterances, and connectedness." (qtd. in Luoma, 2004, p. 88). In the same path, Hedge (2002, p. 261) says: "Fluency means responding coherently within the turns of the conversation, linking words and phrases, using intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation, and doing all of these without undue hesitation."

Fluency is not an easy task for EFL learners because the English phonological system has different rules of pronunciation. In English foreign language classrooms, teachers can help students to be fluent. According to Pye and Greenall (1996), teachers have to produce organized speech characterized by good speed, rhythm, and few hesitations.

3. Functions of the Spoken Language

The function of vocabulary in a conversation varies according to the purpose of the interlocutor, and based on that we differentiate between two functions of speech: interactional function and transactional function (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Mc Carthy, 1998; Thornbury, 2005).

3.1 Interactional Function

Interactional speech is what has been created for the service of establishing social relations. Speech that might serve as an interactional function is an interpersonal speech; it may appear in informal situations; such as, a conversation with a friend, or a debate between a couple, etc. (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Mc Carthy, 1998; Thornbury, 2005).

3.2 Transactional Function

Transactional speech serves in business relations and requirements. It is created for exchanging goods, information, and other services that overlap with business. One of the characteristics of transactional speech is that it occurs in a formal situation; for instance, in a company to organize a meeting or in a hotel to book a room. (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Mc Carthy, 1998; Thornbury, 2005).

4. Speaking in FL Classrooms

Speaking in EFL classroom is different from daily speech because the classroom is a formal place created for learning. This specificity requires from the learners to be more organized when speaking. It is known that in the EFL classroom, emphasis is

often put on the development of the speaking skill since the core of foreign language teaching is to make students able to use the target language. This skill can be developed in the "Oral Expression" course where students are asked to develop their oral performance using different skills in different activities.

4.1 Exploring Classroom Oral Skills

Classroom oral skills can be divided into two main skills: motor-perceptive skills and interaction skills (Bygate, 1987).

4.1.1 Motor-perceptive Skills

According to Bygate (1987, p. 5) "motor-perceptive skills involves perceiving, recalling, and articulating in the correct order sounds, and structure of the language". In the process of learning, learners start to learn basic structures from the easiest to the most difficult. The same thing for the motor-perceptive skills in which students learn grammatical rules, vocabulary, the right use of sounds and stress in order to be able to produce meaningful utterances.

4.1.2 Interaction Skills

In interaction skills, learners must be able to use the target language in different contexts. To do so, learners have to interact with each other using the target language and they have to know what to say and how to speak. In conversations, learners are speakers and listeners at the same time because they are exchanging turns. In this point, McKay (2006, p. 180) claims: "conversation is a 'dialogue' in nature, people take turns, finish off each other's utterances and build on each other's ideas." "[W]hat to say,

therefore, is dependent on an understanding what else been said in the interaction."
(Widdowson, 1978, pp. 58-59).

4.2 Oral Interaction Activities

Teachers of oral expression use a variety of activities to reach their objectives. These activities are classified by different specialists into four groups: Littlewood's classification, Harmer's classification, Rivers and Temperley's classification, and Ur's classification (Bygate, 1987).

4.2.1 Littlewood's Classification

Littlewood divides interaction activities into two sets of activities: functional communication activities and social interaction activities. Functional communication activities deal with communication of information and they include four types of activities:

- **Sharing information with instructed co-operation**: This type contains different activities; such as, identifying one picture from a set, discovering missing information, etc.

- **Sharing information with uninstructed co-operation**: The activities that can be included in this type are like discovering differences between several pictures.

- **Sharing and processing information**: The teacher may use activities like reconstructing story sequences.

- **Processing information:** In this type, there are many activities the teacher may use and all of them are about problem-solving tasks.

In the second set of activities, there are two types: the classroom as social context and simulation and role- playing. In these activities, students use their prior knowledge of the target language to communicate, discuss, and perform plays.

- **The classroom as social context**: Such as conversations, discussions, and dialogues.

- **Simulation and role-playing**: This kind is mainly based on role-playing which is controlled through dialogues, information, situation, and goals.

4.2.2 Harmer's Classification

Unlike Littlewood, Harmer makes a distinction between two sorts of activities: oral practice activities and communicative activities.

- **Oral practice activities**: These activities include oral drills, information-gap activities, games, personalization and focalization, and oral activities.

- **Communicative activities**: In this type, we find different activities; for example, communication games, problem solving, story construction, etc.

4.2.3 Rivers and Temperley's Classification

Rivers and Temperley have created what is called Fourteen Categories of Use. Depending on the learners' needs, Rivers and Temperley classified oral interaction activities. Among these activities, we find: short dialogues, interviews, surveys, spelling mistakes, situations requiring reaction to TV shows, etc.

4.2.4 Ur's Classification

The last classification Bygate mentions is Ur's classification. Like the others, Ur has her own way to classify interaction activities; she put them into three main parts:

- **Brainstorming activities**: Such as: guessing games, finding connections, and ideas from a central theme.

- **Organizing activities:** Such as comparison, detecting differences, and layout problems.

- **Compound activities**: Such as composing letters, debates, surveys, and planning project.

4.3 Learners' Needs

Whatever the kind of the course in foreign language learning, it always aims to develop the learners' capacities in using the target language. The "Oral Expression" course as well attempts to meet the learners' needs to develop their speaking ability through interacting verbally with their teachers, classmates, friends, or even native speakers. Learners' needs in the "Oral Expression" course are:

- To be motivated by teachers who must make challenging tasks to encourage the learners' engagement in the lesson.

- To be assessed correctly and gradually; for instance, using formative assessment because it is used to inform and to develop learners' understanding of the subject.

- To be active in their learning, to work alone, in pairs, or in groups, so teachers have to vary the content of the course.

- To ask freely any question they want because effective questioning challenges them to develop their thinking skills.

These needs come to be realized only by practice with the help of teachers in addition to the students' efforts to meet their objectives. Students' main objectives in English foreign language classrooms may be summarized as follows:

- Independent oral exchange and conversation with the teacher and classmates using correct grammatical rules and lexical structures.
- Knowledge of appropriate discourse format and style and employing them in presentations, discussion and conversations, so that students become competent in all types of discourse.
- Interest and knowledge of situations and of the corresponding oral discourse including, for example, hotel and airport jargon.

4.4 Learners' Speaking Difficulties

When learners try to speak a foreign language, they find it somehow difficult because they have to use the language appropriately in its context and to put different words together using correct rules. They may also be afraid of making mistakes or simply failed to find the suitable words and expressions. Learners' speaking difficulties in EFL classroom appear because of two problems: psychological and linguistic.

4.4.1 Psychological Problems

4.4.1.1 Anxiety

Anxiety is a serious problem facing students in using the foreign language. Many researchers have shown that anxiety in the foreign language classroom is a real communication barrier, and any student who has experienced anxiety, he/she will have poor class participation or even refusing to speak in front of audience in the classroom.

4.4.1.2 Shyness and Fear of Making Mistakes

Although foreign language learners, at a certain level, are good achievers and can express their ideas in the target language, they may feel themselves linguistically inferior and ashamed to talk. This is because of the fear of making mistakes in front of their teachers and colleagues. These students prefer not to speak at all and remain silent despite their interests (Segueni, 2005).

4.4.1.3 Lack of Interest

Learners sometimes do not like to speak because of many reasons. One of these reasons may be that the teacher does not present the lesson well, or the lesson is very difficult to be grasped. The role of the teacher here is to facilitate the tasks for his/her students and to help them to overcome feelings of insecurity and lack of interest. The teacher can reach that by creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom and telling students that we learn from our mistakes. Littlewood (1981) says in this domain: "this atmosphere depends to a large extent on the existence of personal relationships which do not create inhibition, but are supportive and accepting." (pp. 93-94).

4.4.2 Linguistic Problems

4.4.2.1 Lack of Adequate Vocabulary and Grammar

The learners' ability to speak comprehensibly in the target language is certainly influenced by the knowledge of English vocabulary and the knowledge of the rules which govern words' combination. It is very important to have a luggage of lexis in the learner's linguistic repertoire, but what is more important is to have the capacity to put these words together in a combination that enables the speaker to convey the intended

meaning. Therefore, Littlewood (1981, p. 6) says: "The learner must attain as high degree as possible of linguistic. That is, he must develop skills in manipulating the linguistic system, to the point where he can use it spontaneously and flexibly in order to express his endeared msg."

4.4.2.2 Pronunciation Problems

There are many factors that contribute to the learners' mispronunciation of words. Some of these factors can be the influence of the mother tongue or even the teachers' mispronunciation. (Segueni, 2005). Many learners have developed habitual errors; such as, in the word love, they pronounce it /lɒv/ instead of /lʌv/ or the word honest which is wrongly pronounced /hɒnest/ instead of /ɒnist/, or they misplace stress, misuse intonation and rhythm. Thus, learners' confidence decreases, which restricts their interaction and their participation in the classroom. Their ability to express themselves diminishes, but with careful preparation and more practice, their pronunciation will improve.

4.4.2.3 Poor Listening Practice

Successful speaking depends on effective listening. Thus, poor listening practice leads to down processing of the speaking skill in the foreign language and vice-versa. Anderson and Lynch (1988, pp. 1-2) say about the importance of the listening skill: "For L2 learner to be a proficient partner in a conversation, he needs to be skilled as both speaker and listener."

Conclusion

In this chapter, we tried to cover all the aspects of speaking English as a foreign language, starting with its nature, functions, features, and finishing with an overview on FL classroom speaking. In addition to that, we dealt with the main difficulties that learners mat encounter and their essential needs.

At the end of this chapter, we reached the following important conclusions:

- Knowing the language and speaking it are not the same; knowing the language is only a part of the speaker's competence and what comes in the realization of this competence is the speech performance.

- Being knowledgeable about the foreign language, learners need to be aware of formal and informal language and practise at choosing appropriate language for different situations.

- Practising different interaction activities makes the learners get enjoyed and benefited in the classroom.

- Learners face serious problems which can hinder their learning process. As a result, teachers must do their best to motivate them and offer all the materials they need to learn.

- No doubt that listening plays an important role in developing the learners' speaking skill. The logical way to meet oral fluency is to take into account the kind of input and the learners' ability to listen.

Chapter Two: A Cultural Insight in EFL Classrooms

Chapter Two: A Cultural Insight in EFL Classrooms

Introduction

After having dealt with the speaking skill in the first chapter, we are going in this chapter to discuss a current issue in FL learning, which is culture. Culture is a new concept that came to the field of applied linguistics and then to the teaching-learning process. It is of a great importance in applied linguistics and in foreign language learning. In order to understand the subject of cultural interference, we are going in this chapter to discuss culture as a concept, its role in EFL classrooms, and its importance in the process of teaching a foreign language.

1. The Concept of Culture

In the past, linguists did not give importance to the socio-cultural aspect of the language; i.e. they looked at language as a system of grammatical rules, but nowadays, many issues have been raised because of the different views of language. Culture is one of the new issues that are included in current studies. Hinkel (1999) and Bauer (2007) see that language cannot be considered as a strict grammar; rather, it is also a social fact which is created because of the need for communication. The importance that was given to society has been transcended to culture. Kramsch (In Simpson, 2011, p. 306) says "Culture was to make its way to applied linguistics through the study of language as discourse."

Culture "is derived from the Latin "colere" which means to cultivate." (Kramsch, 1998, p.3). In our daily life we mean by culture many things. As Oxford Word Power defines it, culture is considered as "customs, ideas, civilization, etc of particular society or group of people" (culture, 2006. p. 191). This definition of culture

is called "achievement culture" and symbolized as "Big C". It refers to the ways of life, history, geography, literature, art, music, etc. This symbol is used to differentiate the above concept from the ability to act linguistically and socially in a culture or the ability to express beliefs and perceptions through language, which is called "behavior culture" and symbolized as "Little c" (Tomalin & Stempleski,1993, pp. 6-7). This means that we can define culture according to the angle from which we view it.

Culture cannot stand without language and society. It is shared knowledge by people who belong to the same speech community as Yule (2006, p. 216) states: "[Culture refers] to all the ideas and assumptions about the nature of things and people to what we learn when become members of social groups." People from the same speech community can understand each other and interpret messages correctly, yet this is not always ensured. Because culture differs from one speech community to another, we can assume that culture represents identity. Pascoe and Pennycook support this view. Pascoe (2003, p. 6) says: "Culture is somehow tied up with our sense of identity and our roots", while Pennycook says "[Culture is a] process by which people make sense of their lives" (qtd. in Nunan & Choi, 2010, p. 3).

1.1 Language and Culture

"A language is a part of culture, and a culture is a part of language… so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture." (Brown, 2007, p. 189). Culture never exists without language and even language never exists without culture and we cannot separate each one from the other. We transmit our culture with the use of language, verbally and non-verbally, and we produce a language that reflects our cultural identity. To understand this fact, we shall explain two similar situations. The first situation is stated by Brown (1986), which is: "Eskimo tribes have

as many as seven different words for *snow* to distinguish among different types of snow …, while certain African cultures in the equatorial forests of Zaire have no word at all for snow." (In Merrill, 1986, p. 45). The second situation is stated by Yule (2006, p. 216) and which is: "In native cultures of the Pacific, there were no horses and, not surprisingly, there were no words for them". These two situations show the great relationship between language and culture. If there is something that does not exist in one culture, there will not be a word in its language that expresses this thing and vice-versa.

1.2 Culture and Communication

As we have seen in the previous section, language and culture are inseparable and since a language is "a set of signals by which we communicate" (Todd, 1987, p. 6), the three concepts, language, culture, and communication, are extremely interrelated. Bonvillain (2003, p. 1) says: "Speakers use language to convey their thoughts, feelings, intentions, and desires to others." The relationship between language, culture, and communication, here, quietly appears. It is meant by "speakers" and "to others" communication and by "thoughts, feelings, intentions, and desires" the one's culture. The quotation means that in communication, language is used to express culture and language is just a tool to convey culture. If participants share a number of conventional thoughts, communication will be successful, if not, communication will be broken down. Without a shared culture between participants, interaction between them will not be, so there will be no communication. As a general fact, "Communication, language, and culture cannot be separated" (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, p. 105).

1.2.1 Culture and Non-Verbal Communication

Meaning cannot only be conveyed through spoken language, but also with different language features (Lynch, 1996). These features do not belong to the linguistic system of the language (sounds, words … etc), that is why they are called paralinguistic or non-verbal features. Paralinguistic features are very important segments in the speaker's message (Bonvillain, 2003). Non-verbal features of language constitute another area where culture occurs.

Here, it is important to differentiate between signs and gestures. Yule (2006, p. 172) makes the deference as follows: signs stand lonely "instead of speaking", while gestures are used while speaking; i.e. "The gestures are just part of the communicative act being performed." Harmer (2001) classifies non-verbal aspects of communication into two main types: Vocal paralinguistic features and Physical paralinguistic features.

1.2.1.1 Vocal Paralinguistic Features

Vocal features refer to the different voice tones made by the speaker to indicate different attitudes and effects. Vocal paralinguistic features include whispering, breathiness, huskiness, nasality, extra lip rounding, and others. The following table summarizes the interpretations of some vocal paralinguistic features suggested by Harmer (2001).

Vocal Paralinguistic Features	Their interpretations
• Whispering • Breathiness • Huskiness • Nasality • extra lip rounding	• Need for secrecy • Deep emotion/ sexual desire • Unimportance/ disagreement • Anxiety • Great intimacy especially with babies

Table 02: Most Important Vocal Features and Their Interpretations

1.2.1.2 Physical Paralinguistic Features

Physical paralinguistic features, or as they are called body language, are also used to express different intents. When we talk, our bodies move to punctuate what we are saying and sometimes to contradict with our words. The words we say are reinforced with the emotions conveyed through our bodies. The interpretations of body movements differ from culture to culture. In body language, we may use face, gestures, and proximity.

a- Facial Expressions

In face to face communication, face is the most important sign of one's state of mind. Facial expressions can be smile, eye contact, biting the lip, compressing the lips, or clenching the teeth (Harmer, 2001). Different facial expressions lead to different interpretations. The following table exemplifies this fact:

Facial Expressions	Their interpretation
- Smiling - Eye contact - Biting the lip - Compressing the lips - Clenching the teeth	- Pleasure/ Welcome - Surprise/ Interest/ Extreme anger - Thought/ Uncertainty - Decision/ Obstinacy - Anger

Table 03: Some Facial Expressions and Their Interpretations

b- Gestures

In addition to facial expressions, other parts of the body like heads, arms, hands, and fingers may serve in non-verbal communication. When we use these organs, we make gestures. The interpretations of gestures differ from one culture to another. Gestures have a great role in conveying meanings, but only if the participants share the same culture. People in different communities may misunderstand each others because of the diversity of cultures which leads merely to the variety of interpretation of non-

verbal behaviour (Bonvillain, 2003). In many interactions, gestures are a source of communication problems. Bonvillain (2003) explains two cases of these problems. In the first case, the gesture exists in the culture of one of the participants and not in the other, which leads to miscommunication. In the second case, the gesture exists in the two cultures, but it indicates different meanings, which leads to misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the message of communication. In this case, we may expect serious problems, since a permissible gesture in one culture can be an insult in other.

The following examples are all about the different interpretations of hand movements which are called by Bonvillain (2003, p. 30) "manual language".
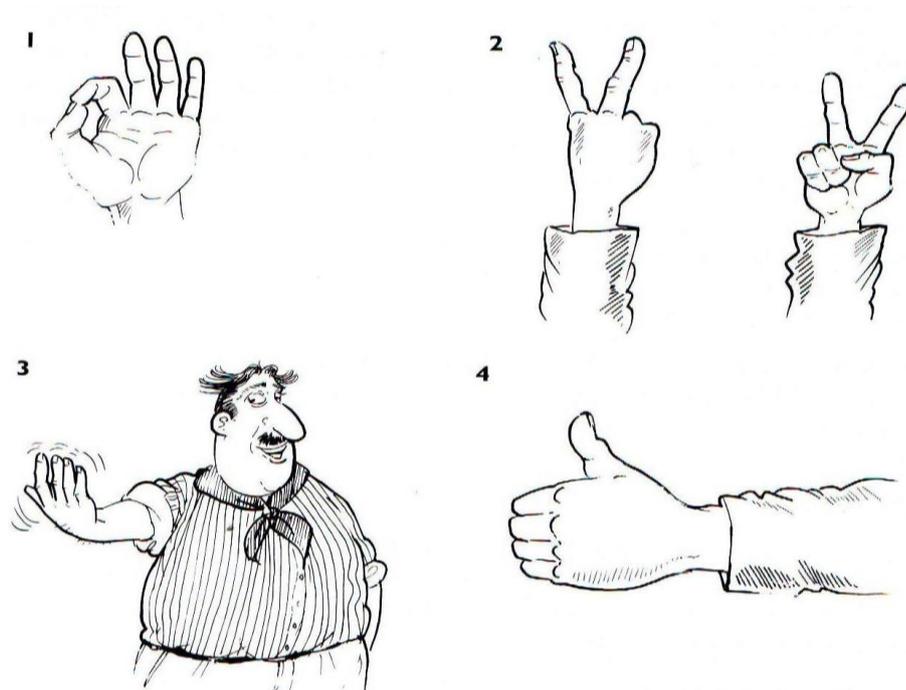
Figure 01: Some Examples of Gestures (Gibson, 2000, p. 28)

Each one of the examples above has its interpretation in different cultures. The following table shows some interpretations of the above gestures suggested by Gibson (2000):

Gestures	Their interpretations
1	-In USA: OK -In France: Zero -In Japan: Money -In Arab countries: I will kill you
2	-In German: Two or Victory -In Britain: backhand: Victory Front hand: Rude gesture
3	-In Greece and Italy: Good bye -In USA: come here
4	-In many countries: Everything is fine -Nigeria and Australia: Rude gesture

Table 04: Some Gestures and Their Interpretations

c- Proximity

Proximity refers to the distance or space that is left between participants while speaking (Harmer, 2001). Distance differs from one culture to another. Social distance between participants, as Morain (1986) states, "varies depending upon the nature of the social interaction." (In Merrill, 1986, p. 72). For instance, distance between friends is not the same as between boss and employees. Holmes (2001, p. 374) explains this fact saying: "How well you know someone … [affects] the way you talk to them." In all cultures, we can distinguish four categories of distance or space which are suggested by Hall (1966). The four categories of space are: intimate distance, personal distance, social distance, and public distance. Distance changes from one society to another. Hall gives an example of middle-class Americans in each category with the space they leave between them while speaking (qtd in Morain in Merrill) . They are as follows:

-Intimate distance: from body contact to eight inches (with lovers)

-Personal distance: from one-half to four feet (with friends)

-Social distance: from four to twelve feet (with strangers or in business meetings)

-Public distance: from twelve to twenty-five feet (with audiences in one-way communication)

This is an example of proximity for middle-class Americans which may be unsuitable for others. In some cultures, participants need to be closed to each other when speaking, whereas Americans feel discomfort when others come closer to them when speaking (Nolasco & Lois, 1987). Privacy, thus, is highly valued by Americans.

2. Teaching Culture in EFL Classrooms

Teaching language is teaching its culture. Thus, the role of teachers in EFL classrooms is not to teach only the language but also its culture, since culture and language cannot be separated. Teaching a foreign culture is teaching the four components of culture which are suggested by Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990) (McKay, 2002). These four components that comprise culture are explained as follows:

-*The aesthetic sense*: It includes literature, film, and music of the target language.

-*The sociological sense*: It includes customs, institutions of the country of the target language.

-*The semantic sense*: It includes how a culture's specific features take meanings in language.

-*The pragmatic sense*: It is concerned with the impact of the cultural norms on the choice of language for each context.

Teaching the culture of the foreign language is not an easy task. In order to make this task less difficult, teachers have to emphasize the cultural differences between the native language and the foreign one to make learners think, compare, and evaluate at the same time for better processing of the TL.

2.1 Goals of Teaching Culture

Foreign language teachers never teach from scratch and never teach for none. According to Allwright and Bailey (1991, p. 99), "One of our goals as [foreign] language teachers is to help our learners ... getting closer and closer to the target language norms". These norms can be linguistic and socio-cultural. Linguistic norms of the target language are always present in FL classrooms and any process of teaching a FL starts with the linguistic elements. However, even though the socio-cultural norms influence the process of FL learning, they still receive less importance in FL classrooms because culture is very sensitive subject. When teaching culture, teachers should take into account the learners' NL culture or their assumptions of the TL culture. Vallette (In Merrill, 1986) suggests four goals of teaching culture which come as follows:

-Developing a greater awareness of broader knowledge about the target culture.

-Acquiring a command of the etiquette of the target culture which is the knowledge of the appropriate behaviours in the target culture.

-Understanding differences between the target culture and the students' culture.

-Understanding the values of the target culture. When we know the values of the target culture, we can interpret the different behaviours of the members of the target culture.

These goals are further explained by Ned Seelye who suggests seven goals of teaching culture which are modified later by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, p. 8) as follows:

-"To help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviours.

-To help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and places of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.

- To help students to become more aware of the conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture.

-To help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.

-To help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.

-To help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and recognize information about the target culture.

-To stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people."

2.2 Techniques for Teaching Culture

Successful foreign language teaching needs to follow specific techniques. Teaching culture has also techniques to follow in order to achieve the above goals. Hughes (In Merriell Valdes, 1986) states eight techniques for teaching culture, which are:

-Comparison method: The teacher presents some items of the target culture with their equivalent items in the native culture. The importance is given to the differences between the two cultures in order to know the areas in which the problem may appear.

-Culture assimilators: It is a description of the interactions that are supposed to be misunderstood by students.

-Culture capsule: It is a technique of giving differences between the target culture and the native culture, but with illustrations and visual materials. It also includes some questions to initiate a classroom discussion.

-Drama: In this technique, the teacher chooses students to perform as they are members of the target culture. The misinterpretation of some events should be explained and clarified.

-Audio motor or Total Physical Responses: The teacher tends to know how much students have experience in the target culture. It can be an exercise about listening to questions and students have to answer them.

-Newspapers: The task of the students is to compare two newspapers. One presents the target culture, while the other presents the native culture. Newspapers contain many aspects of culture.

-Projected media: In this technique, films which reflect the target culture presented with different activities.

-The culture island: Pictures and other materials are used to attract students' attentions of the target culture.

We observe that most of these techniques are based on the comparison between the native culture and the target one. The comparison is the key to successful teaching of a foreign culture.

3. The Role of Culture in EFL Classrooms

The problem in EFL classrooms is that language is taught without its culture or simply without contextualization. In addition to the knowledge of the linguistic aspect of the language, learners in EFL classrooms need to have knowledge about the real use of language. The knowledge of the target culture can make teaching a language meaningful and beneficial. Robert Polizer (1959) says:

> As teachers we must be interested in the study of culture… not because we necessarily *want* to teach the culture of other country but because we *have* to teach it. If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols.
>
> <div align="right">(qtd. in Brooks in Merrill, 1986, p. 123).</div>

This means that teachers in EFL classrooms are obliged to teach culture. Knowing culture means knowing the real context in which the target language is used, i.e., the knowledge of the rules that governs the language of native speakers. These rules can make learners like native speakers or simply make them communicatively competent in the target language.

3.1 Communicative Competence

Research in language teaching is always centred on the best approaches and methods to make students able to use the TL successfully. The most significant research in this field took place in the late sixties and the beginning of the seventies (Davies & Pearse, 2000) in Britain, when it is proved that language learning relies on communicative proficiency rather than depending on teaching just the formal structure of the language (Richards, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002). This view was introduced by the emergence of 'Communicative Competence'.

3.1.1 Definition of Communicative Competence

For better understanding the concept 'Communicative Competence', it is necessary to recognize what we mean by the two terms which comprise it, 'communication' and 'competence'. The term communication means interaction between at least two participants. People can communicate effectively only if they share the same code and a number of conventional thoughts. Concerning the second term, Chomsky was the first linguist who has used the term competence to distinguish between competence and performance; i.e, "the distinction between language and its use" (Chomsky, 2009, p. 118). He means by Competence the knowledge that ideal speaker-hearer have about his/ her first language (Rickheit and Strohner, 2008), whereas Performance is the actual realization of the language in real situations. Smith (1999) and Brown (2007) define competence as the underlying knowledge about language.

The idea of communicative competence began when Hymes criticized Chomsky's definition of competence; in the sense that Chomsky neglected the external factors that may breakdown communication. Dell Hymes (1972) was the first who used the term communicative competence (Brown, 2007). He believes that "the knowledge of grammatical rules is not sufficient for speaking a language and for communicating." (Rickheit and Strohner, 2008, p. 15), Hymes sees that communicative competence refers to the knowledge of language rules and its use in real context, and he defines it as "that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts." (Brown, 2007, p. 219). From this definition, we can say that Communicative Competence refers to the ability to use the language appropriately to communicate.

After Hymes, many applied linguists have worked on communicative competence. For example, Saville-Troike (2006, p. 100) sees that it involves "knowing not only the vocabulary, phonology, grammar, and other aspects of linguistic structure … but also when to speak (or not), what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation." In the same path Yule (2006, p. 169) gives importance to the use of language through his definition of communicative competence. He says: "Communicative competence can be defined as the general ability to use language accurately, appropriately, and flexibly." So, communicative competence, for Saville-Troike and Yule, is the ability that we need to communicate efficiently or the capacity to interact with others correctly and appropriately within a given context.

3.1.2 Components of Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is classified into a number of components. The most known classification is the one of Michel Canale and Merrill Swain (1980) who distinguish between three components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). This classification has been further modified by Canale (1983) who added another component which is discourse competence. This component was formerly included in the sociolinguistic component. (McNamara, 2000; Brown, 2007).

3.1.2.1 Grammatical Competence

It includes the knowledge of the linguistic aspect of the language; i.e., the knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Grammatical competence refers to the mastery of the linguistic rules in order to be able to produce correct forms

of language. Grammatical competence is all about the accurate use of words and structures.

3.1.2.2 Discourse Competence

It is the ability to combine words, sentences, or utterances with each other to have a meaningful discourse, whether written or spoken. It has a great deal with the knowledge of cohesion and coherence. These two terms imply that "what is said or written will make sense in terms of [humans] normal experience of things." (Yule, 1996, p. 84). Cohesion is the logical relationship between words or sentences through the use of transitional signals, whereas coherence is the logical relationship between utterances or passages to give a single interpretation. The importance in discourse competence is the ability to make the whole of what is said meaningful (Brown, 2007) or "the ability to deal with extended use of language in context" (Mc Namara, 2000, p. 18). The following example is suggested by Hedge (2000) to explain discourse competence. Two groups of students listened to a conversation. The first group listened from the beginning, while the second group did not. The result is that the first group are able to give the right interpretation of the conversation, whereas the second group have not understood the message that is conveyed. This example shows the relation between words, sentences, and passages to convey a meaningful utterance; if we lose a part of this discourse, it will not be interpreted correctly.

3.1.2.3 Sociolinguistic Competence

It includes the knowledge of the socio-cultural norms of a certain speech community. In this regard, Savingnon says: "[Sociolinguistic competence] requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used." (qtd. in Brown, 2007, p.

220). This leads us to say that it takes into account many variables like participants and their shared knowledge. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the knowledge of the social norms for the interaction between individuals. According to Harmer (2001, p. 269), "the ability to speak fluently presupposes not only knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process information and language on the spot." Sociolinguistic competence can be defined also as "[The] knowledge of rules of language use in terms of what is appropriate to different types of interlocutors, in different settings, and on different topics" (McNamara, 2000, p. 18). This means that social norms are important to create successful communication. Foreign language learners, then, have to be socially competent in order not to fall in problems of communication.

3.1.2.4 Strategic Competence

Language users, and especially foreigners, sometimes fail to reach their purposes in conversation. This problem goes back to many reasons, such as missing a word, poor experience in language fields, or a lack of the competence in the language itself. Therefore, speakers tend to use some strategies in order to solve these problems and express themselves; for instance, they replace a word by its synonym, make a return to their native language, or use a facial expressions. These examples constitute what is called 'strategic competence'. Strategic competence is the ability to overcome potential communication problems in interaction, as Canal and Swain say: "[Strategic competence is] the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns communication." (qtd. in Brown, 2007, p. 220). From this definition, we can say that strategic competence is the ability to use both verbal and non-verbal language in order not to breakdown communication.

Canal and Swain Model of communicative competence had been modified many times by different linguists and the most known model is the one presented by Bachman (1990). Bachman renamed and replaced some components of the previous model. He renamed 'discourse competence': 'textual competence'. Then, he added it to the 'grammatical competence'. This combination became to be called 'organizational competence'. He also renamed 'sociolinguistic competence': 'pragmatic competence' and he divided it into two subcomponents: 'illocutionary competence' and 'sociolinguistic competence'. According to Bachman, illocutionary competence is the ability to send and receive intended meanings, and sociolinguistic competence is all about the cultural aspect of the language (Brown, 2007).

Canal and Swain (1980)	Canal (1983)	Bachman (1990)
Grammatical Competence	Grammatical Competence	**Organizational Competence** Grammatical Competence Textual Competence
Sociolinguistic Competence	Sociolinguistic Competence	**Pragmatic Competence** Illocutionary Competence Sociolinguistic Competence
	Discourse Competence	
Strategic Competence	Strategic Competence	Strategic Competence

Figure 02: Comparison and Contrast between the Major Known Models of Communicative Competence

3.2 Cultural Awareness

Foreign language learners should be aware of the TL culture when interpreting and using the foreign language. Pachler (1999, p. 78) says: "In order to be proficient target culture speakers ... learners need to be aware of the cultural dimension of language." This awareness is called cultural awareness. Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, p. 5) see that cultural awareness is "used to describe sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behaviour on language use and communication". This awareness includes both verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Cultural awareness begins with the awareness of the cultural differences between the first language and the target language (Shaheen).

3.3 Culture Shock

One of the phenomena that occur when EFL learners are subjected to the TL culture is culture shock. Culture shock is also called cultural adjustment. This notion was introduced by the anthropologist Oberg in 1954. Culture shock happens when the TL culture differs from the learner's native culture. It manifests through five stages: Honeymoon stage, Hostility stage, Home stage, Assimilation stage, and Re- Entry Shock stage.

- **Honeymoon Stage**

At this stage, the EFL learner becomes fond of the TL culture. At the beginning, he finds everything exciting and attracting, so he begins to imitate English people when they speak, eat, greet, joke, etc.

- **Hostility Stage**

After being excited about the TL culture, the EFL learner starts to discover little by little the differences between the TL culture and his own culture. He will find some behaviours unusual, undesirable, or even rude. At this stage, the EFL learner begins to face difficulties in using English.

- **Home Stage**

At this stage, the EFL learner starts to understand the TL culture, hence he becomes "culturally stable" (Vásquez, Hansen & Smith, 2010, p. 28); what makes him achieve a kind of emotional balance.

- **Assimilation Stage**

Here, the learner discovers the positive side of the TL culture. He will have understood that there are many positive features of the TL culture.

- **Re-Entry Shock Stage**

A re-entry shock happens when the learner returns to his native culture and notices the big differences between his culture and the new culture.

According to Vásquez, Hansen, and Smith (2010, p. 29), stages of cultural adjustment are not fixed in order and length. "[S]ome ELL s may completely skip stages. They may even exhibit affective behaviours characteristic of more than one stage."

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we come to the conclusion that culture has a great importance in teaching a foreign language. Teaching a foreign language goes hand in hand with teaching its culture. For teaching culture, the teacher needs to set goals first and then to be knowledgeable about the different techniques of teaching culture. For FL learners, knowing the culture of the target language gives them information about how some words and expressions are used in real situations. If learners are supposed to go abroad to an English-speaking country, cultural knowledge can reduce some problems they may face, that is why the target culture should be learnt with the target language. These problems will be discussed in the coming chapter, which will be devoted to cultural interference and its influence in the process of FL learning.

Chapter Three: Cultural Interference: A Problem in Learning Foreign Languages

Chapter Three: Cultural Interference: A Problem in Learning Foreign Languages

Introduction

The culture of English can be influenced by the culture of Arabic. This influence touches the English language in many aspects: in the expressions of politeness, use of idioms and proverbs, etc. What manifests at all the levels of the English language because of this influence is called cultural interference. Cultural interference is just one type of linguistic interference, so it is logical to talk first about interference in general, and then to move to cultural interference in particular. In the coming points of this chapter, we are going to start by the relationship between intercultural communicative competence and foreign language teaching, and then we shall speak about interference in foreign language learning. After that, we shall talk about cultural interference as a handicap in the learning process. Under this title, we shall mention some important points, like origins and causes of cultural interference in EFL classrooms for Arab learners.

1. Intercultural Communicative Competence and FL Teaching

In reference to Rickheit and Strohner (2008, p. 221), "Successful language use requires a variety of skills and knowledge above and beyond basic syntactic and semantic competencies. Language users must know what actions can be performed with words and how to go about constructing utterances to perform those actions." Rickheit and Strohner believe that knowing the formal structure of language is not sufficient to be a successful communicator. However, there are other elements that occur beyond this formal system and which play the most crucial role in breaking down communication

barriers. These elements belong to another dimension of communicative competence. This dimension is called the "Intercultural Dimension" (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002, p. 7). The intercultural dimension refers to the missing part between L1 and L2 that allows the FL learner to construct a solid knowledge base in L2. This knowledge helps him/ her to achieve a high performance in the TL. Intercultural communicative competence has a great role in FL learning, as it is illustrated in the following figure, where 'ID' stands for intercultural dimension and ICC stands for intercultural communicative competence.
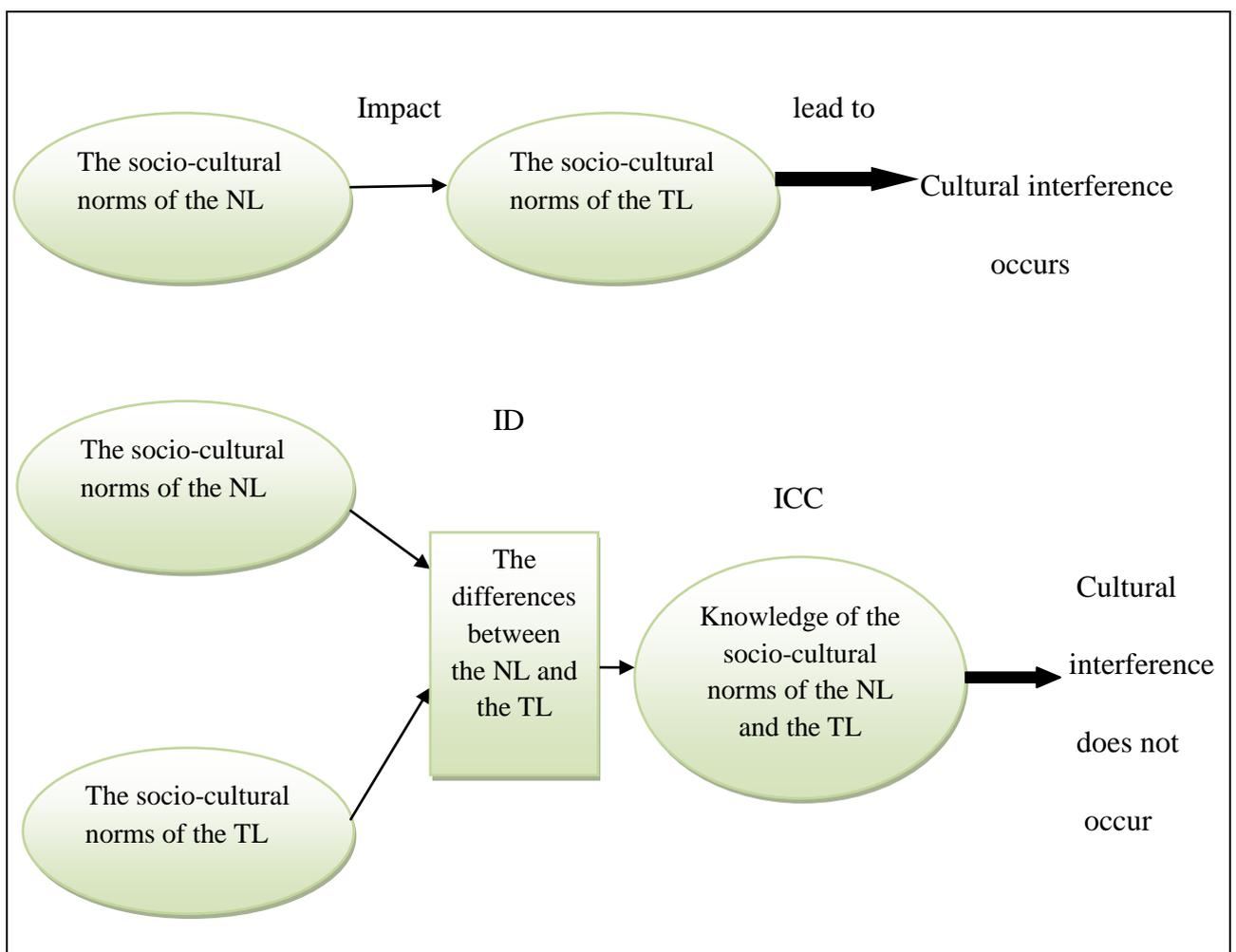
Figure 03: The Role of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Foreign Language Learning

The most important objective in teaching a foreign language in general is to make the FL learner able to use the TL appropriately in any socio-cultural context. That is to say, when the FL learner bridges the intercultural dimension between his/ her first language and the TL, he/ she will have then developed an intercultural communicative competence in the foreign language. According to Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002, p. 7), developing the intercultural dimension "help[s] language learners to interact with speakers of other languages on equal terms, and to be aware of their own identities and those of their interlocutors."

1.1 Definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence

According to Kramsch, the concept of intercultural communicative competence was first coined by Byram (1997, 2003), then it has been studied by Byram and Fleming (1998), then Guilherme (2000) (In Simpson, 2011).

Intercultural communication is defined as communication which occurs between people from different cultural background (Kramsch, 1998; Gibson, 2000; Grundy, 2008). Thus, intercultural communicative competence is the knowledge of the socio-cultural norms of other cultures. It includes the knowledge of the social and the cultural values of other speech communities for the appropriate use in their languages.

1.2 Components of Intercultural Communicative Competence

According to Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002), intercultural communicative competence encompasses four components: attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness.

1.2.1 Attitudes

The learner has to be ready to accept that his own culture, including values and beliefs are not the ideal ones in the world. He has to expect different opinions and points of view concerning his culture. What can be correct for him, it could appear wrong for someone else (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002).

1.2.2 Knowledge

After being curious and open-minded towards the disparate attitudes of other people, the learner has to be knowledgeable about these differences. This includes the knowledge of other social groups and all what belongs to them; say, their products, and patterns of interaction.

1.2.3 Skills

In order to be a successful intercultural communicator, the learner has to be skilled in two areas: in comparing and interpreting and relating his cultural beliefs with the target language cultural beliefs (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). First, the learner has to compare meanings of his own culture with those of the TL to discover how much his culture is different from the TL culture. Second, he has to interpret these socio-cultural differences from all the perspectives in relation to his own culture.

There is another type of skills which are called: "**Skills of discovery and interaction**" (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, p. 13). The learner has to discover the target culture within the limits of the interaction he/ she is involved in.

1.2.4 Critical Cultural Awareness

Critical cultural awareness component implies the ability to critically evaluate perspectives and behaviours in one's own and others' culture.

1.3 Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence in FL Classrooms

Teaching intercultural communicative competence is not pouring information about the target culture in the students' heads, but rather it is meant to help students:

-"to understand how intercultural interaction takes place,

- how social identities are part of all interaction,

- how their perceptions of other people and others people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication,

- how they can find out for themselves more about the people with whom they are communicating." (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, p. 14).

What is new about including the intercultural dimension in FL teaching is focusing on how culture specific knowledge impacts the correct use of the FL. In other words, it explores the relationship between what is specific to the NL culture and less likely to be transferred to the TL culture and language. Idioms are one class of language that cannot be transferable because they are not universal and their meanings differ from culture to culture.

2. Interference in Foreign Language Learning

Interference in FL learning is a widespread phenomenon. When learners fail to bridge the intercultural gap between the NL and the TL, they fall in interference. Due to this, they begin to face serious hindrances in using the TL. Therefore, it is very important to study interference.

2.1 The Concept 'Linguistic Interference'

Linguistic interference is variously termed "L1 interference" or "negative transfer" (Parker & Riley, 2005, p. 216; Johnson, 2001, p. 60). In order to understand the concept 'linguistic interference', we have to understand transfer, first. We say "transfer" or "cross-linguistic influence" as Odlin (1989, p. 1) mentions in his book *Language Transfer*. Arabsky (2006, p. 12) defines language transfer as the following: "A term used in APPLIED LINGUISTICS to refer to a process in foreign LANGUAGE learning whereby learners carry over what they already know about their first language to their performance in their new language." Transfer is a linguistic phenomenon that occurs in the context of FL learning. It is characterized by the use of the old rules of the native language to account for the rules of the target language; i.e., the learner uses the L1 rules while speaking and writing in L2 (Corder, 1993; Yule, 2006).

The complication in transfer is that the old first language structures interfere with the process of foreign language learning, either helping or inhibiting it. We agree with Odlin who says (1989, p. 27): "Transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired." If structures in the second language are similar to those of the first language, then learning will take place easily; however, if

structures are realized differently in the first and the second language, then learning will be difficult (Ellis, 1985; Ellis, 1997; Ellis, 2008; Johnson, 2001). In simple terms, Parker (2005, p. 216) states:

> The language learner may exhibit either **negative transfer** (also known as **interference**), in which some property of the L1 impedes acquisition of the L2, or **positive transfer** (also known as **facilitation**), in which some property of the L1 promotes the acquisition of the L2.
>
> Therefore, we can assume that the interference is the difficulty which learners in

FL classrooms encounter and the errors which they commit in the L2 because of the influence of the L1 or other previous languages.

2.2 Factors Affecting Transfer

There are several factors that affect the likelihood of transfer. Odlin (1989) classifies these factors into two kinds: structural factors and non-structural factors.

2.2.1 Structural Factors

Structural factors leading to both types of transfer include those similarities and differences which occur at the level of the formal structure/ the linguistic system of the two languages. As we have seen, when there are many similarities between L1 and L2, positive transfer occurs and when there are fewer similarities, negative transfer occurs.

2.2.2 Non-structural Factors

Non-structural factors include all the variables outside the linguistic system of the language. According to Odlin (1989), non-structural factors can be categorized into three groups: individual variation, age of acquisition, linguistic awareness and social context.

2.2.2.1 Individual Variation

Learners are not alike in learning the FL. Some learners succeed in using the TL rapidly and some others spend a long time learning how to pronounce a word because "[n]o two people speak exactly the same: differences in voice quality, intonation, and vocabulary choice are among the most common distinguishers of individual speech" (Odlin, 1989, p. 130). These differences are regarded in terms of the learner's ability and aptitude to learn the FL. One of the types of individual variation is the "aptitude for phonetic mimicry" (Odlin, 1989, p. 130).

- **Aptitude for Phonetic Mimicry**

In order to master the sounds of the foreign language, learners must have two abilities: a 'phonetic coding ability' and an 'aptitude for phonetic mimicry'. The first ability as Carroll (1981) defines, is "an ability to identify distinct sounds, to form associations" (qtd. in Odlin, 1989, p. 132). It is the listener's ability to break down the connected speech in smaller units. The second ability refers to the ability to imitate the FL sounds. If FL learners cannot imitate the FL sounds, they keep the use of the sounds of their first language. According to Odlin (1989, p. 132), "individuals with little aptitude for mimicry are likely to show the effects of phonetic and phonological influence from their native languages."

2.2.2.2 Age of Acquisition

Adults experience both types of transfer because they have developed a solid system in their L1 that could influence their learning of L2. Meanwhile, "Transfer occurs less frequently among children whose L1 system is not yet strong enough to influence the new L2 structures. Young learners, especially children before puberty,

naturally acquire a second language without much influence from L1."(Arabsky, 2006, p. 14).

2.2.2.3 Linguistic Awareness and Social Context

Linguistic awareness and social context are among the factors which lead to transfer. Learners who are aware of the linguistic structure of their L1 and the TL would know where the difficult areas are and they would have been able to avoid interference. Concerning the influence of social context, the FL learner would learn better if he is brought to the context of the FL, although he may transfer items from the FL to his NL; otherwise, he will experience the reverse of this process; i. e., transfer may occur in the use of the FL.

2.3 Linguistic Interference in EFL Classrooms

Linguistic interference in EFL classrooms appears because of the influence of the Arabic language on English. We say there is interference when a learner uses one of the linguistic elements of the Arabic language or one of the traits of the Arabic culture to act in English. Interference occurs largely if the learner has a limited knowledge in the English language.

2.3.1 Types of Linguistic Interference in EFL Classrooms in Algeria

When an Arab learner wants to express himself/ herself in English, he/ she tries to convey his/ her message, but since the system he has developed in English is incomplete, the learner makes turns to the rules of his/ her native language in order to fill the empty parts in his/ her speech or writing. Therefore, Arabic language

interference occurs at all the levels of the system of English: phonetics, syntax, semantics, and also culture.

2.3.1.1 Phonetic Interference

Interference from the native language may occur at the phonetic level of the target language, especially when the TL shows a different phonetic and phonological system from that found in the NL. In this situation, the L2 learner will have difficulties in acquiring the L2 sounds (Odlin, 1989). He may remain silent or try to pronounce the (new) L2 sounds using the rules of his L1. In simple words, he keeps using the sounds and the phonological rules of his first language and he continues to use them when he speaks the TL. This is what gives him an accent and probably he will not produce correct English. Odlin states (1989, p. 115): "Although cross-linguistic differences in phonetics and phonology have important consequences for perception and comprehension, the most salient consequences of linguistic differences are production errors which result in pronunciation patterns that diverge from those found in the target language."

Phonetic interference in EFL classrooms occurs when the learner uses one of the sounds of Arabic while speaking in English. If he does, there are two types of errors which may emerge: segmental and supra-segmental errors (Odlin, 1989). Segmental errors are those errors which contain vowels and consonants, whereas supra-segmental errors include patterns like stress, tone, intonation, rhythm, etc. In EFL classrooms, learners may experience the two kinds of these errors.

- **Segmental Errors**

When there is a difference in the phonemic "inventories" (Odlin, 1989, p. 116) in the two languages (Arabic and English), learners substitute the new phoneme with a phoneme from their L1. Parker says (2005, p. 220): "One situation in particular in which L1 influence is noticeable is when the L2 makes a phonemic distinction that does not exist in the L1." For instance, EFL Arab learners may have problems in distinguishing the sound /p/ from the sound /b/ because the former does not exist in Arabic. Because of this difference, the sound /b/ influences the sound /p/; and subsequently, the learner pronounces the two sounds in the same way. The same problem happens for the sound /v/ that could be influenced by the sound /f/.

- **Supra-segmental Errors**

Supra-segmental patterns in English language are very important. We take as an example the stress pattern. Because Arabic is among the languages that are not stressed, the EFL Arab learner tends to pronounce all the words in the same way. There is a general rule in English which says that in words which contain more than one syllable, there is always one syllable which receives stress. Stress can have a great impact on the meaning we are trying to get across. A very slight shift in stress placement can change the nature of the word from a noun to a verb; For instance, the word 'present' can be a noun and a verb at the same time; if it is stressed on the first syllable, it is a noun; if not, it is a verb. According to Odlin (1989, p. 117), "When non-native speakers do not use a stress pattern that is a norm in the target language, vowels and consonants may also vary from the target pattern, and this can result in a total misperception by listeners."

English is a very musical language. As we speak, our words and phrases go up and then they come other way down, much like music does. Tone and intonation keep

our speech interesting and they help to get our message across. Many foreign speakers of EFL use a flat intonation pattern or a mono-tone, this can create uninteresting and misunderstood speech. According to Odlin (1989, p. 119), "non-native speakers may at times risk giving offence simply from the use of intonation patterns that signal one emotional state in the native language and a different one in the target language."

2.3.1.2 Phonological Interference

The learner may exhibit phonological interference; for example, he may not master the necessary physical articulation in the production of certain phonemes in English, so he uses the rules which belong to Arabic. As a case, the two sounds /d/ and /t/ exist in the two languages, but they are pronounced differently.

2.3.1.3 Lexical/ Semantic Interference

Lexical interference may happen when the learner translates a word from Arabic into English; what causes later interference at the semantic level. Semantic interference becomes very clear when the learner uses words that fit Arabic, but after translation in English, they make deviations in sense. For example, an Arab learner uses the two adjectives 'tall' and 'long' interchangeably, since the two express the adjective 'tawil' in Arabic, and he says: "my father is a long thin man" (Parker, 2005, p. 227). This sentence is syntactically correct, but semantically, it is not.

Words which have similar forms either in pronunciation or in the written script in the two languages, the native and the target, are called false friends or cognates. False friends create a difficulty for the foreign language learner since their meanings are not

always the same in the two languages. FL learners fail in this type of lexis because they are unaware of their disparate meanings.

Relying on dictionaries may also be another source for semantic interference, especially for beginners. For instance, an Arab learner of English may say: "I want to grow my knowledge", after checking the dictionary and finding that the two verbs 'develop' and 'grow' are synonyms (Parker, 2005). This interference happens when the learner over-generalize the meaning of words. Littlewood (1981, p. 5) has discussed this point in his *Communicative Language Teaching*. He says: "learners are sometimes misled by apparent structural or dictionary equivalents in their own language, which causes them to produce socially offensive forms in the foreign language."

There is another type of semantic interference which is called 'circumlocutions'. According to Parker (2005, p. 227), "[Circumlocutions] involve substituting a descriptive phrase for a word that the learner has not yet acquired or can not retrieve". As a case of this kind of interference, the following example is for a student who does not know the word 'pregnant': "Smoking cigarettes has a bad effect, especially on a lady who is carrying a baby" (Parker, 2005, p. 227).

2.3.1.4 Syntactic Interference

Syntactic interference occurs on the level above the word, i.e., on the level of syntax. It appears when the EFL learner uses one of the syntactic rules of Arabic in producing English, whether in speaking or in writing.

2.3.1.5 Cultural Interference

Cultural interference takes place when the two languages, the L1 and the L2, represent different cultural backgrounds. Culture influences our language unconsciously, that is why we are sometimes unable to understand others from different cultures, simply because as Glissant believes, we talk to them in their language, but we understand them in our language (kramsch, 1993, p. 177). Furthermore, we may expect serious problems due to this difference, since a permissible word in one culture can be an insult in another.

3. Cultural Interference as a Handicap in the Learning Process in EFL Classrooms in   Algeria

3.1 Origins of Cultural Interference in EFL Classrooms in Algeria

In EFL classrooms in Algeria, cultural interference is of Arabic and Islamic origins. The expressions of salute are one example of Islamic traits in Arabic. In the English language, the words 'Hello' and 'Hi' replace the Arabic phrase 'Salam alikom'. In Arabic, 'Salam alikom' is more than a statement of salute; it is a symbol of the Islamic religion. This kind of differences makes the Arabic learner feels loosed in values which may contradict with those of his native culture.

3.2 Causes of Cultural Interference in EFL Classrooms in Algeria

Problems which cause cultural interference in FL classrooms are those rejections that arise because of the students' negative attitudes towards the TL speech community and culture. These attitudes are not scientific since they are based on stereotyping and pre-judging without having some kind of accurate knowledge about the socio-cultural

community of the TL. "Many of the learners regard their first encounter with a new language and a new culture as an encounter with something alien, a challenge, [and] a threat. Consequently, they experience feelings of nervousness, uneasiness and even insecurity, resistance and prejudice." (Merrouche, 2006, pp. 219-220). Stereotypes and prejudice may lead to many negative consequences.

3.2.1 Stereotype

According to Pachler (1999), stereotype is a French word which "is used to describe a one-sided, exaggerated and preconceived idea about a particular group or society" (pp. 289-290). In FL classrooms, it is a subjective and a bias assumption about the members of the foreign speech community and their culture.

3.2.2 Prejudice

"**Prejudice** occurs when someone pre-judges a particular group or individual based on their own stereotypical assumptions or ignorance." (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, p. 27). FL learners may develop what is more than a stereotype about the TL culture, which are wrong judgements instead of wrong assumptions.

Stereotypes and prejudice in EFL classrooms in the Arab nations can be returned back to the past and the time of colonization, when Arabs suffered a lot from war. Swan and Smith (2001, p. 210) say:

> It must be accepted that, in many areas of the Arab world, western values, politics and influences are very unpopular. There is a long history of distrust and many Arab nations are very defensive in their attitudes to the USA and Britain in particular.

3.3 Cultural Interference and the Arab Learner of EFL

In EFL classrooms, learners find problems of comprehension and expression in the target language. Comprehension difficulties occur at the level of texts that reflect a different culture, especially authentic sources that tackle topics like alcoholic beverages. Teachers themselves may also have difficulties in explaining this kind of texts. In this regard, Odlin (1989, 159) says: "Among the factors that can contribute to the comprehensibility of any discourse are the context in which the speaking (or writing) is produced, the cultural assumptions that speakers and listeners share, and universals of language and cognition." However, we may expect production difficulties. According to Odlin (1989, p. 61), "Culturally specific knowledge can affect not only the comprehension but also the production of discourse." Production problems occur when the learner formulates an idea in Arabic and utters it in English. In the majority of cases, EFL learners do not discover the mistakes they commit in the target language because they are unaware of the correct forms in English. The role of the teacher, here, is to provide the learner with suitable alternatives.

3.3.1 Influence of Religion and Arabic Culture

Most of the Arab learners in the Algerian classroom are Muslims which logically implies that the Arab culture and Islam are inseparable. The impact of Islam on the Arab learner is that this Arab learner is connected through his family, society, and values of the Islam with the Arabic language from childhood. This occurs through socio-cultural interaction with parents and society. When children interact with adults, they are exposed to different stylistic strategies which reflect a variety of cultural beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). Generally speaking, adults tend to teach children unconsciously about the social order of their

community. Consequently, through the development of linguistic and sociolinguistic skills, Arab children become communicatively competent in their native language. However, when it comes to EFL learning, they often do not succeed in using English without the intervention of their original culture. The fact is that the Arab learner is subjected to a new culture that would change his values and perception of the world; therefore, he confronts difficulties because of this distinct culture. Arab students may find these changes very difficult to accept. They may develop an anti-western attitude. Those reacting against western norms, with their emphasis on certain forbidden things in the learners' religion, such as boy/ girl relationships, fashion, the consumption of alcoholic beverages, etc, may show a degree of hostility to many EFL students in Algeria.

4. Arabic and English in Contact in EFL Classrooms

There are hundreds of languages around the world, and each language has its specific characteristics for exchanging ideas in social communication and for cultural transmission. For better understanding the problems and the constraints which interfere in learning English in Algeria, it is important to make a contrastive study between Arabic as a native language and English as a foreign language. Lado in his known book *Linguistics across Cultures* states: "The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real learning problems are and can better provide for teaching them." (qtd. in Odlin, 1989, p. 15).

Contrastive study is a comparison between two languages for the sake of knowing their similarities and differences (Saville-Troike, 2006; Gass & Slinker, 2008). Since our study is about negative transfer we shall give the importance to differences more than similarities.

4.1 The Linguistic System of the Two Languages: Arabic and English

To do a contrastive study of both Arabic and English, we shall begin with the description of the linguistic system of the two languages. In this aspect, we are going to deal with the phonological, the morphological, and the syntactic elements. Then, we shall describe the written aspect.

4.1.1 Phonology

Each language has a limited number of phonemes in a certain organization. The two languages, Arabic and English, have different consonants. Although Arabic has thirty-two consonants and English has twenty-four consonants, they have in common the following consonants: /b/, /d/, /f/, /j/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /r/, /s/, /t/, /w/, /h/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /θ/, /ð/. The Arab learner has difficulty in articulating some phonemes because they do not exist in his native language. For example, The Arab learner faces a difficulty in distinguishing between the phonemes /b/ and /p/ (Odlin, 1989) and /f/ and /v/. Even though some phonemes may exist in both languages, the difficulty may occur when they have different manners of articulation. As an example, the two phonemes /d/ and /t/ exist in the two languages, Arabic and English, but they are pronounced differently. /d/ and /t/ are dental in Arabic but alveolar in English (AlKhuli, 2007).

The English language has twenty-two vowels and diphthongs, whereas Arabic has only eight vowels (Swan & Smith, 2001). This difference leads Arab learners to have a difficulty in distinguishing between words they hear or in pronouncing them correctly, like ship/ sheep or bad/ bed. Although Arabic vowels are not written, but they are mostly pronounced in each consonant, that is why Arab learners have problems in pronouncing consonant clusters (Swan & Smith, 2001). For example, they pronounce the word "length" with additional vowels like "lengthes". Other difficulty that may confront Arab learners in pronouncing correct English is the silent letters. In Arabic language, almost all written letters are pronounced, so Arab learners may fail in pronouncing words that contain silent letters. As an example, they may pronounce know as /knəʊ/ instead of /nəʊ/.

4.1.2 Morphology

At the level of tenses, Arabic language has only three basic verb tenses: past, present, and future. In contrast, in English language, there is a complex combination of tenses in addition to the simple ones. The complex tenses cause certain difficulties for Arab learners because they do not exist in Arabic. This may lead Arab learners to avoid using complex tenses when they speak or write.

Another difference between the Arabic language and the English language is at the level of adjectives and verbs. Adjectives, in Arabic language, can be "singularized", "dualized", "pluralized", "masculinized", and "femininized" (AlKhuli, 2007, p. 16), and this is also the case of verbs. However, adjectives, in the English language, are generally static in all cases; i.e., adjectives never change. In the same path, nouns and their adjectives in Arabic must agree in both gender and number (Swan & Smith, 2001). We mean by gender: masculine or feminine, and by number: singular, dual, or plural.

62

However, in English, there is no such agreement between nouns and their adjectives. These differences may cause troubles in producing correct English for Arab learners.

4.1.3 Syntax

In both languages, Arabic and English, word order in the sentence is generally the same: subject + verb + predicate, which is called a "nominal sentence" in the Arabic language because it begins with a noun. All declarative sentences in English are nominal; however, in the Arabic language, there are three types of sentences: nominal, verbal, and verbless. The two last types do not exist in English. Verbal sentences are sentences which start with a verb, while verbless sentences do not contain a verb. The pattern of verbal sentence is "verb+ subject (doer)" which is very common in the Arabic language. Verbless sentence is a sentence which may have a pattern like "noun+ noun+ adjective". This pattern exists only in Arabic (AlKhuli, 2007). There are other sentence patterns that may exist in one language rather the other and especially those which exist in the target language and not in the native language because they make certain troubles in learning the foreign language. For example, a sentence pattern like "auxiliary+ subject…" exists in English and it is called auxiliary sentence or "yes/ no question". This pattern never exists in the Arabic language. We can say that the main problem in producing correct English for Arab learners is the wide use of auxiliaries and modal verbs that do not exist in Arabic. Other difference on the level of sentence structure is the place of the noun and its adjective (s). In the Arabic language, noun precedes adjectives, whereas it is the reverse in the English language; i.e., adjectives precede nouns.

The Arabic language is characterized by the overuse of the connector 'and' (Shaheen). For example, in English, items in series are separated by commas and the use of the coordinating conjunction 'and' appears just before the last item, whereas in Arabic, each item from the list is preceded by the conjunction 'wa' ('and' in English).

4.1.4 Writing

When the NL and the TL show many points of difference in the written aspect, they cause many problems for the FL learner. The same thing happens for the EFL Arab learner because Arabic and English have few common characteristics. The first point of difference in writing between Arabic and English concerns writing from right to left in Arabic and vice-versa in English (Swan & Smith, 2001). The following paragraphs discuss the most important differences between Arabic and English writing.

Although both languages have an alphabetic system, they have neither the same letters nor the same form of graphs. An Arabic character may have four shapes depending on the character itself and its place in the word. There is an isolated, a connected, a right-connected, and a left-connected shape. As an example, the letter '*ha*' in Arabic may have one of the following shapes, depending on its position in the word: ه, ـه, ـهـ, هـ.

Another problem which may face Arab learners is the lack of capitalization and the little use of punctuation in the Arabic language. In the English language, punctuation is widely used and there are a lot of capitalized conditions. Those differences make Arab learners have difficulty when writing in English if compared to other FL learners; French learners as an example. Unlike Arabic, writing in French is much closer to English because the points of difference between them are not big.

In the Arabic language, what we write is what we pronounce except some cases. So, the Arabic language is a transcription of speech. However, what characterizes writing in English is that what we write does not correspond to what we pronounce. That is why some allophones do not correspond to certain phonemes and vice-versa.

4.2 The Socio-cultural Differences between the Two Languages: Arabic and English

The linguistic differences between any two languages are not sufficient. In fact, we need to know exactly the areas where cultural interference may occur. According to Odlin (1989, p. 14), "Since transfer [positive and negative] occurs in a wide variety of social contexts, a thorough understanding of cross-linguistic influence depends very much on a thorough understanding of those contexts." Learners need to know about the norms that govern the TL society and its culture including traditions, religion, etc. Pachler (1999, p. 78) says: "in order to understand language fully and use it fluently, learners need not only linguistic… but also socio-cultural and world knowledge." In order to know more about the socio-cultural features of the target language, a kind of comparison between the two languages is needed. Lado (1986) supports this view; he says: "by comparing the two culture systems, we can predict what the trouble spots will be." (In Merrill, 1986, p. 55). For this reason, we are going to study some socio-cultural aspects of Arabic and English. In this study, we shall talk about religion and traditions.

4.2.1   Religion

Religion is the most important aspect of culture in any society. People highly value their religions and they consider all what is explained in religion as a general truth. Furthermore, they believe in these principles. According to (Wei, 2009),

Religion is a special form of human culture and mainly deals with the nature of life and death, the creation of the universe, the origin of society and groups within the society, the relationships of individuals and groups to one another, and the relation of humankind to nature. The study of religion not only offers insight into the spiritual and psychological needs of people, but also gives us clues into the social aspects of a culture.

For Muslims, religion is the first aspect that comes to the mind when talking about people's culture. Islam is the religion of most Arabs, while Christianity is the religion of most Westerners, especially American and British societies. The followings are some religious statistics and differences between Arabs and Americans.

- 85-90% of Arabs are Muslims and 20% of the Muslims are Arabs (Hamad et al, 1999)
- Arabs like using proverbs, wisdoms, and quotations from Quran in their speech and writings, whereas westerns are less users of proverbs, wisdoms, and nearly no use of quotations from the holly books. (Parker in Merrill, 1986)
- For Muslims everything happens as God wills (Parker in Merrill, 1986)

4.2.2. Traditions

Traditions refer to the daily life practices of any speech community. Foreign language learners should be aware of it specificity. Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, p. 57) say:

As increasing numbers of learners have the opportunity to travel, work, and study in English-speaking countries, they need to become aware of the life styles of people in these cultures: what people in these countries do in the common situations which are a part of normal everyday experience.

Arab learners should know about the differences between their traditions and the English traditions. We suggest the following differences between Arabic traditions and American traditions:

- Arab women are not permitted to be socialized with men outside or even inside the same room. (Swan & Smith, 2001). Unlike them, Western women are free to do what they want and their relation with men is not restricted by norms.

- Arabs respect old people, so their parents' decision is applicable, whereas Americans have the freedom to take decisions about their lives. They believe in individualism. (Parker in Merrill, 1986)

- Arabs give their health and time to their friends from the same sex, whereas westerns have a quick relationship with both sexes. Mostly, these relations are quickly ended. (Parker in Merrill, 1986)

- Males are dominants in Arab societies and females are less dominating. In the other hand, westerns treat males and females equally. (Parker in Merrill, 1986)

- Unlike westerns who maintain an easy and a free relation between men and women, male-female relationship is so restricted in the Arab societies. (Parker in Merrill, 1986). In Arab societies, touch between male and female is considered rude; especially in public places. (Hamad, Kysia, Rabal, Hassouna, & Connelly, 1999).

- To Americans, time is very structured and deadline is respected, while time for Arabs is not as important as that.

- Unlike Arab males who do not accept to be asked about their wives or any female from their families, westerns consider this as a normal behaviour.

- Arabs interpersonal distance is two feet, whereas for Americans, it is five feet (Hamad, Kysia, Rabal, Hassouna, & Connelly, 1999).

4.2.1 How can socio-cultural differences impact the use of language?

All the cultural traits that are discussed above are preserved from many years just by language. That is why the language we use is always influenced by our culture. This influence occurs largely in the use of idioms, proverbs, jokes, etc. In this research, we are going to study the use of idioms in Arabic and English.

4.2.1.1 Idioms

Idioms can be considered as important characteristics of everyday language. An idiom is a group of words that come together to indicate a meaning which cannot be found in the plain sense of the words. Idioms are interpreted correctly by native speakers. In the other hand, FL learners face difficulties when it comes to the idioms of the TL. Therefore, Arab learners of English as a foreign language face difficulties in interpreting and using idioms.

When comparing idioms between languages, we find that they fall into four categories depending on the correspondence of their linguistic structures and functions in the two languages. These four categories are explained with examples as follows (Awwad):

a. Expressions and functions correspond in both languages:

In this situation, the idiom is used in both languages. Its structure and interpretation is the same, which makes it easy for the FL learner to understand and use the TL idiom. The followings are some examples:

English	Arabic
Play with fire	يلعب بالنار
Turn over a new leaf	يبدأ صفحة جديدة
Walls have ears	الجدران لها آذان

Table 05: Idioms with Similar Structures and Functions in both English and Arabic

b. Functions correspond in both languages but expressions are completely different:

In this category, idioms have the same functions in the two languages, but they show different structures. These idioms cannot be understood by the FL learner. Below, there are some examples of idioms which belong to this category:

English	Arabic
At sixes and sevens	رأسا على عقب
Diamonds cut diamonds	لا يفل الحديد إلا الحديد
If you are Marconi I am Einstein	إذا كنت ريحا فقد لاقيت إعصارا

Table 06: Idioms with Similar Functions and Different Structures in both English and Arabic

c. Functions correspond in both languages but expressions are slightly different:

This situation is like the situation "b", but this case is less problematic. Idioms of the foreign language are understandable and easy to be memorized because they are closed to the native language idioms.

English	Arabic
To hold the rein	يمسك زمام الأمور
A wolf in a sheep's skin	ذئب في جلد حمل
By heart	عن ظهر قلب

Table 07: Idioms with Similar Functions and Slightly Different Structures in both English and Arabic

d. Both expressions and functions differ:

In this situation, idioms of the target language cannot be understood at all by FL learners because there are not equivalent to those of the native language neither in form nor in function. These idioms are not known by the FL learner; therefore, he may interpret them depending on their surface meaning, which may lead to misunderstanding and then miscommunication.

Conclusion

Cultural interference is a widespread phenomenon in EFL classrooms in the Algerian universities. EFL students always wish to use English perfectly or at least accurately and appropriately, but they cannot produce English that is free from Arabic interference. The most destroying fact is when they hear this famous statement from their teachers: 'you're still thinking in Arabic!'.

We suggest that contrastive analysis of the foreign culture with the learner's native culture will be a solution to cultural interference. Similarities between learners' native language and the target language show elements that facilitate the learning process. Differences between the two languages reflect the areas where learners fall in negative transfer or interference. In this study emphasis is put on the differences between Arabic and English in order to make Arab learners aware of the areas of interference and to reduce the degrees of this problem. We divid this contrastive study into two main parts: the first part concerns the linguistic differences between Arabic and English and the second part concerns the socio-cultural differences between the two languages. We were interested more in the socio-cultural differences between Arabic and English. In the socio-cultural differences, we emphasized the differences that concern religion, traditions, and idioms that Arab learners should be aware of.

Part Two:

Field Work

Chapter Four: Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Questionnaire

Chapter Four: Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Questionnaire

Introduction

The ultimate goal of this research is to overcome cultural interference from Arabic into English and to make Arab students aware of the differences between Arabic and English. For the requirements of this research, we devised a questionnaire for M2 students in the branch of English at Biskra University. The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect the data needed from M2 students concerning the difficulties that they encounter in using English because of the interference of their native culture. This chapter includes a description of the sample chosen and the questionnaire, the analysis of the students' opinions and the results obtained.

1. Students' Sample

The number of students in the option of Science of the Language in the branch of English at Biskra University is ninety, but because these students did not have courses in the second semester of this year, we have chosen a sample of sixty students (2/3), who are the only available at present. Our choice of the M2 students is deliberate and due to the following reason. M2 students have taken EFL courses for five years which brings to one's mind that they have developed a high proficiency in using English. However, what we observe about those students is that they still confront difficulties in using English when speaking.

2. Description of the Questionnaire

We have used about seventeen questions distributed to sixty students. The questionnaire is a combination of different kinds of questions; two-choice (questions number 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 10, 11, 12, and 16), multiple-choice (questions number 01, 13, and 09), scale items (questions number 02), activity-like (questions number 14 and 15), and open-ended questions (question number 17). These questions are intended to elicit information from the students about the issue of this research. We can divide the questionnaire into seven sections:

Section I: General Information

This section deals with the students' general information; such as their age and gender.

Section II (01-02): Language Learning

In this section, we attempt to know the students' reasons behind their choice of studying English at university and their own evaluation of their level at English.

Section III (03-06): Cultural Awareness

This section is concerned with the students' awareness of the importance of culture in FL learning and its influence on the use of language, the students' evaluation of the amount of the TL culture that they have learned up to now, and the importance of cultural difference in EFL learning.

<u>Section IV (07)</u>: Attitudes towards the Target Language Culture

In the section of attitudes towards the TL culture, we are interested to know if the students like the TL culture or not, what can help us further to know their attitudes, whether they are positive or negative.

<u>Section V (08-11)</u>: Difficulties in Using English

Here, we are interested in the students' difficulties in English and the strategies that they use when they face these difficulties in speaking.

<u>Section VI (12-15)</u>: Cultural Interference

This is the most important section of the questionnaire. It is intended to see whether the students exhibit any type of interference in English, especially cultural interference from Arabic into English.

The hypothesis of this research claims generally that learners fall in cultural interference because they are not aware of the cultural differences between their NL and the TL. It is important to note here that the coming questions of this section are opposed to the challenge, as to accept or deny the proposed hypothesis.

<u>Section VII (16-17)</u>: Further Suggestions

In the last section of this questionnaire, we want to know if the course of "Theme and Version" has helped EFL students to avoid cultural interference from Arabic, and whether the students have further suggestions to eliminate this problem.

3. Data Analysis

Section I: General Information

- Students' age

The following table reveals students' age distribution.

Age	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	30<	NA	Average
Respondents	14	22	08	03	04	01	01	01	01	01	04	60
Percentage	23.33	36.67	13.33	05.00	06.67	01.67	01.67	01.67	01.67	01.67	06.67	100%

Table 08: Students' Age Distribution

The obtained results show that students are aged between twenty-two (23.33%) and twenty-four (13.33%). The majority of them are twenty-three years old (36.67%) followed by the students who are aged twenty-two (23.33%) and twenty-four (13.33%). Low rate is recorded for those who are aged twenty-five (05.00%), twenty-six (06.67%), twenty-seven (01.67%), twenty-eight (01.67%), twenty-nine (01.67%), thirty and more (03.34%).These results indicate that most of the M2 students are young and can achieve a high proficiency in English if they receive a good instruction.

- Students' gender

The table below demonstrates the prevailing and the non prevailing gender in the sample chosen.

Gender	Male	Female	Average
Respondents	12	48	60
Percentage	20.00%	80.00%	100%

Table 09: Students' Gender

What characterizes these students is that most of them are girls (80.00%), whereas only twenty percent are boys. To find this percentage in a FL classroom indicates that the impact of the socio-cultural aspect of the NL in using the FL will be high because gender plays an important role in FL learning. Research in FL learning has shown that girls are the most careful about the language they use. Holmes (2001, p. 157) states: "women are more aware of the fact that the way they speak signals their social class background or social status in the community." Within the scope of this research, this fact implements that cultural interference from Arabic as a NL into English will spread in EFL classrooms.

Section II (01-02): Language Learning

Question 01: You have chosen to study English because:

    a) It is compulsory

    b) It is the language of technology

    c) You need it for a job

    d) You need it to travel abroad

    e) You like it

This question is intended to see the reasons that motivated students to study English. The results are showen in the following table:

Responses	a	b	C	d	e	Average
Respondents	05	10	13	07	40	75
Percentage	06.67%	13.33%	17.33%	09.33%	53.33%	100%

Table 10: Students' Choice to Study English

In the above table, we observe that fifty-three point thirty-three percent of the choices are because students like the English language. This means that they are highly

motivated to study English. It means that they exhibit integrative motivation. Learners who have integrative motivation are interested in how to use English with native speakers. These students have to know that cultural interference may be an obstacle for their communication. Low rates are recorded for those who need it for job requirement (17.33%), those who see that English is the language of technology (13.33%), and those who are going to travel abroad (09.33%). If we consider the sum of these low rates, we find out that students are instrumentally motivated, what indicate that they are not only motivated to learn English but also to master it. The lowest rate is for those who are imposed to study English (06.67%). These few students are not motivated to learn it.

Question 02: How would you assess your present level at English?

   a) Good

   b) Average

   c) Low

Our objective behind this question is to see how the students evaluate their present level at English. Based on the following results, we can deduce if they are satisfied or not.

Responses	a	B	c	Average
Respondents	23	36	01	60
Percentage	38.33%	60.00%	01.67%	100%

Table 11: Students' Self Evaluation of Their Level at English

The results show that the majority of students (60.00%) see that their level in English is average, whereas 38.33% of them see that they are good in English. There is just one student who is not satisfied about his/ her level. A high percentage like 60.00% in the second option indicates that most of the students are not completely satisfied about their level in English.

Section III (03-06): Cultural Awareness

Question 03: In your opinion, does culture influence the use of language?

    a) Yes

    b) No

- If "yes", how

As we saw in the second chapter of this study, culture and language cannot be separated. The purpose of this question is to see whether students are aware of this relationship and of the influence of culture on the use of language and vice-versa. The responses are included in the following table:

Responses	Yes	No	Average
Respondents	57	03	60
Percentage	95.00%	05.00%	100%

Table 12: The Influence of Culture in the Use of Language

What we notice through the results is that nearly all the students (95.00%) are aware of the influence of culture on the use of language.

- In the second part of this question, we wanted students to say how culture can influence the use of language for the sake of testing their awareness in this area. The types of responses were as follows:

The majority of the students did not answer the question in the right way. Some of them stated many aspects of the influence of culture in the use of language; for example, they claim that culture determines what to say and what not to say. Its influence occurs also in FL learning where cultural interference happens because of the influence of the NL culture on the FL learner. As a matter of fact, what is rejected in the culture of some societies, it is then perceived negative to be talked about. The causes that made students misunderstood this question can be interpreted as they do not know how culture can influence the use of language.

Question 04: Do you think that it is important to know about the culture of English-speaking countries?

a) Yes

b) No

- If "yes", say why

Still in the relationship between language and culture, we have, further, asked students about the importance of being aware about the culture of English-speaking countries.

Responses	Yes	No	Average
Respondents	54	06	60
Percentage	90.00%	10.00%	100%

Table 13: The Importance of the Knowledge of the Culture of English-Speaking Countries

A simple comparison of the results in this table (90.00% for "yes" versus 10.00% for "no") reveals that students are aware of the importance of being aware of the culture of English-speaking countries.

- In the second part of this question, we seek to know if students are really conscious about the importance of being knowledgeable about the culture of English-speaking countries.

The comments obtained indicate that students are aware of the importance of being knowledgeable about the culture of English-speaking countries. They see that the knowledge of the TL culture helps to:

- Facilitate comprehension in English through knowing the cultural clues in both types of discourse (spoken and written).

- Ameliorate the use of English appropriately; especially with native speakers.

- Differentiate between the two cultures (the Arab and the English) in order not to fall in cultural interference.

Question 05: What do you think of the amount of the target language culture you have learned up to now?

a) Satisfactory

b) Unsatisfactory

- In both cases: Please, explain why

Normally, the amount of the TL culture that EFL students receive may serve in the appearance/ disappearance of cultural interference from Arabic into English, hence we expect that most of the students will see that what they have learned as a culture will

be unsatisfactory. By asking this question, we attempted to know how students evaluate the amount of the TL culture that they have learned.

Responses	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Average
Respondents	12	48	60
Percentage	20.00%	80.00%	100%

Table 14: The students' Self Evaluation of the Amount of the TL Culture that They Have Learned

The data shown in the table reflect what has been expected above. The majority of students (80.00%) see that the amount of the target language culture they have learned up to now is unsatisfactory.

- In the second part of this question, we wanted students to mention the reasons behind this satisfaction/ non satisfaction. The purpose is that to study those reasons in order to find suitable solutions. The students who are satisfied with the amount of the TL culture that they have developed argued that this satisfaction would not have to come without personal efforts. Meanwhile, students who were not satisfied made reference to many reasons; for instance,

- There is a lack of courses that deal with the English culture;

- They did not have enough time to build some kind of cultural competence in English;

- They believed that the TL culture could not be taught in the classroom, and FL learners need to be in contact with native speakers:

- They see that the courses they had about culture were centered on topics that described the English people's daily life; however, there was nothing about how the English

culture influences the use of the English language. For example, they maintained that they know nothing about idioms and how to use them appropriately;

- Others see that this non satisfaction can also be returned to a lack of personal efforts from the part of the learner. They argued that even though the courses of culture were not sufficient to develop their ability to use English, they had to look for external sources to discover the culture of English-speaking countries.

Question 06: Should EFL learners be aware of the cultural differences between their mother tongue and the target language?

a) Yes

b) No

-If "yes": Please, explain how?

This question aims to see if the students are aware of the importance of cultural differences in EFL learning.

Responses	Yes	No	Average
Respondents	54	06	60
Percentage	90.00%	10.00%	100%

Table 15: EFL Students' Awareness of the Cultural Differences between the NL and the TL

A quick look at the table leads us to say that most of the students (90.00%) are aware of the importance of cultural differences in EFL learning. Therefore, the question that has to be asked here is: If EFL students are aware of the importance of cultural differences, are they aware of these differences? The answer to this question can be found in section VI (Cultural Interference).

- To know how students think about teaching cultural difference, we asked them how EFL students become aware of these differences. The purpose of this question was to study those strategies in order to make a kind of balance between them and those which would be proposed by the teachers in the interview to come at the end with suggestions that meet the students' needs and expectations.

In order not to fall in cultural interference, students mentioned many effective strategies of teaching cultural differences; for example,

- Linguistic and non-linguistic differences between the NL and the TL should be included as an important part in the syllabus;

- Teachers should always make analogies between the students' NL and the TL to make students aware of these differences;

- Students have to make personal research about the socio-cultural differences between their NL and the TL;

- Students need to be assessed on cultural differences between the NL and the TL through giving homework, classroom activities, etc.

Section IV (07): Attitudes towards the Target Language Culture

Question 07: Do you appreciate (like) the culture of English-speaking countries?

    a) Yes

    b) No

- In both cases: Please, explain why

The FL learner's attitude towards the TL culture and speech community is a factor in the emergence of cultural interference in FL classrooms. Cultural interference in this context may arise because of the students' negative attitude against the socio-cultural values and norms of the TL culture. EFL students may exhibit a reaction as well

as a rejection towards these values. Because of the importance of this fact, we asked the above question. The results are in the table number 16.

Responses	Yes	No	Neutral	Average
Respondents	29	14	17	60
Percentage	48.33%	23.33%	28.33%	100%

Table 16: The Students' Appreciation of the Culture of English-Speaking Countries

The statistics show that twenty-nine students (48.33%) like the culture of English-speaking countries and fourteen students (23.33%) responded negatively. Seventeen students with a percentage of twenty-eight point thirty-three have not yet made a decision (they are neutral).

- The reasons behind those differences in responses are the subject of the second part of this question. For the students who responded positively, some of them like the English people because they are civilized and open-minded, others state that the culture of English-speaking countries represents a variety of different values, while the rest mentioned various reasons such as: the need to use English appropriately.

Some of the participants who do not like the culture of English-speaking countries do not care about it, while others stated that they were proud of their NL culture and could not accept the changes and the differences that the TL culture would bring; especially what is associated with religion.

The students who remain neutral in their position set variable reasons that can be classified into three groups. First, there are students who like some aspects and dislike others in the culture of English-speaking countries. Second, despite the many differences between the student's NL culture and the culture of English-speaking

countries, there are students who maintain respect. Finally, the remaining students stated that they could not decide whether to appreciate or not because they did not know lot about the culture of English-speaking countries.

Section V (08-11): Difficulties in Using English

Question 08: After five years of study at university, are you able now to understand and use the English language without difficulties?

a) Yes

b) No

The purpose of this question is to discover students' ability to understand and use English without difficulties. The following table represents students' responses.

Responses	Yes	No	Average
Respondents	20	40	60
Percentage	33.33%	66.67%	100%

Table 17: The Students' Ability to Understand and to Use English without Difficulties

The above table shows that only twenty students (33.33%) were able to understand and use English without difficulties, while the remaining forty students could not; that could be caused by a lack of exposure to the English language or lack of practice, whether inside or outside the classroom. As one might expect from these students is the reverse of these results since they have studied English for five years.

Question 09: If "no", in which skill do you face most of your difficulties?

 a) Listening

 b) Speaking

 c) Reading

 d) Writing

This question is related to the previous one (question 08). Students who are not able to understand and use English without difficulties are asked to identify the skill in which they face the most difficulties. The results are in the following table:

Responses	a	B	c	d	Average
Respondents	07	21	03	09	40
Percentage	17.50%	52.50%	07.50%	22.50%	100%

Table 18: Students' Skills Difficulties

The responses shown in the table reveal that seventy-five percent of the students face most of their difficulties in the productive skills. Fifty-two point fifty percent (52.50%) of them face obstacles in speaking, while twenty-two point fifty percent have difficulties in writing. The remaining rates (25.00%) represent students who face difficulties in the receptive skills; seventeen point fifty percent for those who have problems in listening and seven point fifty percent for the ones who have problems in reading. This analysis leads to the conclusion that these students face problems of production rather than comprehension in English.

Question 10: What do you do when you face difficulties in speaking English?

a) Stop in the middle of the conversation

b) Try to continue the conversation

The aim of this question is to know about the students' reactions when they encounter difficulties in speaking English. M2 students are asked to choose between stopping in the middle of the conversation and / or trying to continue.

Responses	A	b	Average
Respondents	09	51	60
Percentage	15.00%	85.00%	100%

Table 19: What Students Do When Facing Difficulties in Speaking English

From the results that displayed in the table above, we observe that the majority of students try to continue the conversation. Few of them (15%) chose to stop in the middle of the conversation. Despite the constraints that students are faced with while speaking in English, they do not give up and try to continue the conversation at any cost. This insistence indicates that students are very ambitious in learning English and they really want to communicate using it.

Question 11: If you "try to continue the conversation", how do you keep communication going on if you cannot find the word/ meaning you are looking for? You can tick both of the two choices.

a) Use paralinguistic features (body language)

b) Use another language

This question concerned only the students who chose to continue the conversation in the previous question (question 10). They were asked about the techniques they used when they encountered difficulties in speaking English. The types of techniques we included were the use of paralinguistic features and an alternative language. The choice of these two techniques was deliberate to see at the end whether students could handle communication without falling in interference from their NL. We were able to add an extra choice which is asking someone's help, but since these students were masters of English and they studied English for five years, they might feel ashamed about asking for help to continue the conversation. Students could choose both of these techniques to continue the conversation.

Responses	a	B	both	Average
Respondents	26	09	16	51
Percentage	50.98%	17.64%	31.37%	100%

Table 20: Students' Techniques When They Face Difficulties in Speaking English

The number of students who try to continue the conversation when they faced difficulties in speaking English was fifty-one. The majority of them with a rate of fifty point ninety-eight percent preferred to use paralinguistic features as a solution. When students used paralinguistic features, they thought that the communicative barrier would be solved, but in fact, they might fail again in transmitting the message of communication. We are going to discuss this problem in details in the coming question (question 12). The others with a rate of seventeen point sixty-five percent see that even using paralinguistic features may not allow them to get their message across, thus they directly use another language. Here, learners find themselves in the chasm between their NL and English because what can be expressed clearly in their NL can make deviations

in sense in English. Problems associated with this choice will be the subject of question number 13 in section VI (Cultural Interference). For the students who chose both techniques, their number is sixteen (31.37%). Also these students may face the same problems of communication.

Section VI (12-15): Cultural Interference

Question 12: If you try to continue the conversation "using paralinguistic features", do you know how to use paralinguistic features in English?

    a) Yes

    b) No

    c) Somehow

Students who chose in the previous question (question 11) to continue the conversation through using paralinguistic feature (body language) were then asked if they knew how to use paralinguistic features in English. If they knew some and neglected others, they could choose somehow.

Responses	Yes	No	Somehow	Average
Respondents	12	04	26	42
Percentage	28.57%	09.52%	61.90%	100%

Table 21: Students' Awareness of the Interpretation of Paralinguistic Features in English

The number of students who try to continue the conversation using paralinguistic features is forty-two. Most of them (61.91%) said that they knew how to use some paralinguistic features in English. In fact, these students knew the paralinguistic features that are similar to those of their native language. Since there are some similarities

between the native language gestures and the target language gestures, FL learners would not have difficulty in using gestures. This leads us to assume that these students use the elements that are similar to their native language and avoid or misuse the elements that are different. Twenty-eight point fifty-seven percent of the forty-two students know how to use paralinguistic features in English. Few students with a low rate (09.52%) did not know how to use paralinguistic features in the English language. These students believed that gestures differ from one culture to another.

Question 13: If you try to continue the conversation "using another language", which language will you use?

    a) Arabic

    b) French

    c) Others: Please, specify

  - In all cases: Please, explain why

Students who chose in the previous question (question 11) to continue the conversation through using another language were then asked about the language they used as a solution when they faced difficulties in speaking English. They could choose between their native language (Arabic) and their second language (French). Students could choose both of them and even, they could add other languages they might use. Whatever the choice students make, they were asked to explain the causes behind it.

Answers	a	B	both	Average	Others
Respondents	09	09	07	25	Italian, German,
Percentage	36.00%	36.00%	28.00%	100%	Spanish

Table 22: The Languages Students Chose to Continue the Conversation

The number of students who have chosen to continue the conversation using another language is twenty-five. Thirty-six percent of these students chose the Arabic language because it is their native language and they master it. The same number of students with the same rate chose to continue the conversation using the French language. They chose it because French is closer to English than to Arabic and they can communicate when using it. Twenty-eight percent of the twenty-five students chose to continue the conversation by using both languages (Arabic and French). Two students added three other languages, which are: Italian, German, and Spanish. They believed that these languages are closer to English than to Arabic or French.

The analysis of the reasons that made students use a certain language instead of the other:

All of the reasons that the students mentioned to choose a language for fulfilling a missing part in their discourse emphasize two main points. First, the alternative language has to be similar to English to a great extent. Second, learners should master the alternative language.

It is worthy to note here, that some of the students who chose to stop in the middle of the conversation knew how to use paralinguistic features and the majority of them used another language as a solution. This leads to say that although these students knew ways to continue the conversation, but they did not try to continue. This can be explained as because of shyness, fear of making mistakes or other psychological problems in speaking.

Question 14: What do you understand from the following idioms?

a) Throw caution to the winds

b) Forbidden fruit is sweetest

c) A wolf in a sheep's skin

d) The world and his friend

This question takes the form of an activity. Students were asked about the meaning they understood from the four idioms. The four idioms were selected for specific purposes. By using these idioms, we wanted to know which language and which culture the students used to think about the meanings of these idioms. To achieve a kind of balance and to be fair, students would find two idioms which were easy to be understood (b and c) and two difficult ones (a and d). Therefore, we expect that students would understand the former and translate the latter semantically from Arabic into English.

Responses	Correct	Wrong	No trial	Average
a	09	15	36	60
Percentage	15.00%	25.00%	60.00%	100%
b	46	09	05	60
Percentage	76.67%	15.00%	08.33%	100%
c	50	01	09	60
Percentage	83.33%	01.67%	15.00%	100%
d	00	22	38	60
Percentage	00.00%	36.67%	63.33%	100%

Table 23: The Meaning Students Attach to the Idioms

Idioms (a) and (d):

The function of the idiom (a) and (d) exist in both English and Arabic, but their linguistic structures differ from English to Arabic, what makes problems in understanding for the Arab learners. Normally, these two idioms will be recognized by these Arab students as new and ambiguous structures that do not exist in Arabic, and even when they are translated literally from English into Arabic, they may violate their meaning. However, based on the results above, we reached to the following readings and interpretations:

- A few students (15.00%) found the exact meaning of the idiom (a), which refers to their awareness not only of the difference but also of the meaning of this idiom in English. However, this percentage is not enough to generalize that these students are aware of all the differences between English and Arabic, since no student has known the meaning of the idiom (d).

- Sixty percent of the students avoided to answer idiom (a) and sixty-three point thirty-three percent did not try to answer idiom (d) at all because students were not sure about the meaning they have attached to these idioms. When a high percentage of students like sixty percent did not answer the above question because they were not sure of the response, this is one of the positive signs that indicate the students' awareness of the structural/ semantic difference between Arabic and English.

- The rest of the students tried to answer this question, but, unfortunately, they were incorrect responses. What can be said, here, is that these students knew the meaning of the words: throw, caution, to, the, and winds when they appear in isolation, but when they come together (throw+ caution+ to+ the+ winds), students did not know that this construction means in English 'do not care to anyone'. The same analysis of the responses for idiom (d) led to the same interpretation.

Idioms (b) and (c):

The function of the idiom (b) exists in both English and Arabic, but its structure differs slightly from English to Arabic, while the function and the structure of the idiom (c) exist in both English and Arabic. This means that both idioms (b) and (c) are easily grasped by the students. Seventy-six point sixty-seven percent of the students have stated correct interpretations for the idiom (b) and eighty-three point thirty-three percent for the idiom (c), what implies that students related the meanings of the two idioms to the ones that exist in Arabic because there is a great similarity between them in the two languages (Arabic and English). Few students did not try to give their interpretation. Their rate was eight point thirty-three percent for those who did not comment on the idiom (b) and fifteen percent for those who did not comment on the idiom (c). It seems that the difference between these students and those who answered correctly was that they did not use their NL culture to understand these idioms. Students who gave incorrect interpretations for both of the idioms represent low rates; fifteen percent for the idiom (b) and one point sixty-seven percent for the idiom (c).

Question 15: What are the equivalents of the following idioms in English?

a) إذا كنت ريحا فقد لاقيت إعصارا

b) لا يفل الحديد إلا الحديد

c) يلعب بالنار

d) الجدران لها آذان

This question resembles the previous question in its form (question 14). Students were given idioms in Arabic and they were asked to give their equivalents in English. The four idioms were selected for particular purposes. To make the analysis of the

results that are summarized in the coming table clearer, we are going to analyze the idioms in pairs; (a) with (b) and (c) with (d).

Responses	Correct	Wrong	No trial	Average
a	00	41	19	60
Percentage	00.00%	68.33%	31.67%	100%
b	00	27	33	60
Percentage	00.00%	45.00%	55.00%	100%
c	51	00	09	60
Percentage	85.00%	00.00%	15.00%	100%
d	56	00	04	60
Percentage	93.33%	00.00%	06.67%	100%

Table 24: The Equivalents of the Idioms

Idioms (a) and (b):

The functions of both (a) and (b) exist in both English and Arabic, but their linguistic structures are completely different. Consequently, none of the students (00%) knew the correct equivalents to both of them. Thirty-one point sixty-seven percent of the students did not try on the idiom (a) and fifty-five percent of the students did not try to answer the idiom (b). M2 students chose to avoid answering these two idioms because they are considered as advanced learners of English who believe that idioms differ from one culture to another and they never heard these idioms in English before.

The majority of the students gave wrong equivalents to the two idioms in English; sixty-eight point thirty-three percent for the idiom (a) and forty-five percent for

the idiom (b). These students have translated both the form and the meaning of the idioms (a) and (b) into English. Their responses can be summarized as follow:

The idiom	Word for word translation	Semantic translation
(a)	- If you are wind, you will face a storm - If you are wind, you will meet a hurricane	- If you think that you are strong, there are those who are stronger - If you are difficult, I am more than you
(b)	- Iron is fought only by iron - Iron breaks iron - Iron is destroyed only by iron - Iron defeats iron	- Stronger can face only the stronger - Similar things treat each others - Force needs force - Fight fire with fire

Table 25: Students' Responses to the Idioms (a) and (b)

In order to know why M2 students have arrived to different translations (lexical and semantic), we have drawn the following table:

The idioms (a and b)	Lexical translation	Semantic translation	Average
Responses	50	18	68
Percentage	73.53%	26.47%	100%

Table 26: Types of Translation in the Students' Responses

Table number twenty-six shows the percentages of the two types of translation (lexical and semantic) which occurred in the wrong trials of students to the idioms (a) and (b) in question number fifteen. From the table, we notice that lexical translation is dominant than semantic translation in the students' answers. When students translate idioms lexically, it is an indicator of awareness and unawareness at the same time. In simple terms, students were asked to set the equivalent of the idiom, not the meaning, so they understood the question, which means they were aware of the task of the question. Meanwhile, they were not aware of the equivalent of the idioms in English, the result

which occurred in their responses (they translated the idioms lexically just to fulfil the requirement of the question). However, those who translated the idioms (a) and (b) semantically were aware of the fact that lexical translation does not work here, thus they preferred to use semantic translation; which is still an indicator of unawareness of the equivalents of these idioms in English.

Idioms (c) and (d):

The functions and the linguistic structures of both (c) and (d) exist in both English and Arabic. Therefore, literal translation can work here. As a result, none of the students failed in these two idioms. However, there were certain translations we accepted, because they were near to the correct equivalent. Some examples are in the following table:

The idiom	Lexical translation
(c)	- Plays with fire - He is playing with fire
(d)	- The walls have ears - Walls even have ears

Table 27: Students' Responses to the Idioms (c) and (d)

Fifteen percent of the students did not even try to give the equivalent of the idiom (c) in English and six point sixty-seven percent of the students did not try on the idiom (d). A possible interpretation can be that these students did not recognize the difference between these two idioms (c and d) and the preceding ones (a and b), so they have over-generalized the difficulty that they have encountered with (a) and (b) to the idioms (c) and (d).

Section VII (16-17): Further Suggestions

Question 16: In your opinion, does the course "Theme and Version" serve in
eliminating cultural interference in English?

    a) Yes

    b) No

- If "Yes", in what way

    "Theme and Version" is a new course in the LMD system. It is all about
translation from Arabic into English and vice versa. In this course, students are exposed
to different types of discourse, whether spoken or written, and they are asked to
translate them. The main objectives of "Theme and Version" in EFL classrooms in the
branch of English at Biskra University are to raise students' awareness of the
differences between Arabic and English and make them able to move from Arabic to
English or vice versa smoothly and safely without falling in any type of interference
from Arabic. For this reason, students are asked to give their opinions about the role of
"Theme and Version" course in eliminating the problem of cultural interference from
Arabic.

Responses	Yes	No	NA	Average
Respondents	13	44	03	60
Percentage	21.67%	73.33%	05.00%	100%

Table 28: Students' Opinion about the Course "Theme and Version"

    From the results obtained, we observe that the majority of M2 students (73.33%)
think that the course "Theme and Version" cannot serve in eliminating the problem of

cultural interference in English. The reasons behind their choices can be restricted to two main points:

- The time allotted to this course is not sufficient (one hour in a week and just for one year)

- The syllabus is not clearly organized and recourses are lacking.

Twenty-one point sixty-seven percent of the students see that the module of "Theme and Version" serves a lot in decreasing the degree of cultural interference in English. Their reasons behind their choices are:

- It helps them to translate meanings rather than words.

- It provides them with knowledge about the target language culture and also with the appropriate use of expressions in their contexts.

- It helps them to know the cultural differences between the native language (NL) and the target language (TL).

Three students with a rate of five percent did not answer this question they did not learn this course. These students were belonging to the option of "Science of Language" in their third year in which the course "Theme and Version" was not a part from the programmed syllabus.

Question 17: Do you have any further comments or suggestions to overcome cultural interference from Arabic into English?

The majority of students suggest some solutions to this problem. Some of these suggestions are related to the student and the learning process, while the rest are related to the ways of teaching.

The suggestions that are related to the process of teaching are the following:

- Including a course about the English language culture from the first year to the M2.

- Teaching cultural difference between the Arabic culture and the English culture.

- Using authentic materials in teaching culture difference between Arabic and English.

- Teachers should be knowledgeable about the English language culture and about the various ways to teach it.

- "Theme and Version" course should include various activities about cultural difference between the Arabic culture and the English culture and students have to be tested on this area to have the opportunity to correct different types of mistakes.

Students believe that they should develop their own way of learning English by themselves and to raise their awareness of the English culture through:

- Making personal research about the English culture.

- Watching English movies.

- Listening and reading a lot about the English culture.

- Contacting and making conversation with native speakers of English by going abroad or just using the internet (e.g.; chat).

Conclusion

After having analyzed the data collected concerning M2 students' responses to the questionnaire, we reached the following conclusions:

First, although M2 students are highly motivated to learn and to speak English, they are not satisfied with their level. They have difficulties in understanding and using it; especially in speaking. M2 students make challenges when they face difficulties in speaking English by using different strategies like using paralinguistic features or the native language. Most of the students use gestures, although they do not know how to use paralinguistic features in English. This means that students rely on their knowledge of the native language gestures. The rest of the students tend to use an alternative language that can be their native language (Arabic) or their second language (French).

Secondly, they are aware of the influence of culture in using the language and also of the importance of knowing the foreign language culture. What is important is that they appreciate/ respect the target language culture and they are aware of the importance of knowing the cultural differences between their native language and the target language.

Thirdly, students think in Arabic when they speak English and they interpret meanings based on their cultural background knowledge.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Interview

Chapter Five: Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Interview

Introduction

The results of the questionnaire were not sufficient to fully understand and find solutions to cultural interference. A complex subject like cultural interference needs to be analyzed by teachers who can provide us with fruitful information; therefore, we designed an interview for the teachers of English. The purpose of this interview is to collect the data needed from the English language teachers in the branch of English at Biskra University. This chapter will contain a description of the sample chosen and the interview, the analysis of the teachers' opinions, and the results obtained.

1. Teachers' Sample

Teachers who are concerned with this study are full time teachers at the department of foreign languages, branch of the English language at Biskra University. Those teachers have taught M2 students in the academic year 2011/ 2012 for one semester. The number of these teachers is eight. Three of them have taught M2 students just for one week. These three teachers are not teaching regularly because they do not belong to Biskra University, which means that they will not be knowledgeable about these students' main difficulties and problems, thus they cannot be helpful to this study. Therefore, the number of teachers who are going to be interviewed is five. These five teachers have already taught the same students in the previous years, which indicates that they are the most knowledgeable about these students.

2. Description of the Interview

We used about twenty-four questions asked to five teachers who have taught the M2 students in the year 2011/ 2012. The Interview consists of of open-ended questions. These questions are intended to elicit information from the teachers about the issue of this research. We can divide the interview into six sections:

Section I (01-02): General Information

This section deals with the teacher's general information and his/ her experience in teaching English as a FL.

Section II (03-05): Teaching Culture in FL Classrooms

In this section, we attempt to know how the teacher perceives the concept of culture, its importance in teaching foreign languages, and its effect on learners' cultural identity.

Section III (06-09): Teaching Culture in EFL Classrooms (M2 students)

The questions of this section and the coming ones are about the M2 students. This section comprises four questions. The first two questions attempt to investigate which language the teacher uses when teaching the FL culture and if he/ she makes references to the learners' native language culture. The third question is about the course that allows the teacher to make activities to relate the foreign culture to the students' cultural background, while the last question seeks to know whether the teacher encourages students to express their opinions about the differences between the foreign language culture and their native culture.

<u>Section IV (10-14)</u>: Teacher's Awareness of the Cultural Differences between the

NL and the TL

This section contains five questions about the teacher's knowledge of the foreign language culture and the difficulties that he/ she may face when interacting with native speakers of English.

<u>Section V (15-22)</u>: Cultural Interference

This section is the most important section in the interview. It is about the origins and the causes of cultural interference in EFL classrooms in Biskra University. The teacher was asked about his/ her opinion about interference, especially cultural interference.

<u>Section VI (23-24)</u>: Further Suggestions

In this section, the teacher is asked to give his/ her opinion about the course "Theme and Version" and its role in eliminating the problem of cultural interference in English.

3. Data Analysis

<u>Section I (01-02)</u>: General Information

All the teachers of the sample are teachers of English as a FL in the branch of the English language at Biskra University. They have been teaching English from a long time, which means they are experienced teachers. All of them started to teach English in middle and secondary schools as a point of departure in the teaching profession, then

they moved to teaching at university. The following table represents the teaching experience of each teacher, presented in number of years.

The teacher	Middle school	Secondary school	University	Average
01	/	12 years	10 years	22 years
02	/	21 years	09 years	30 years
03	15 years		07 years	22 years
04	/	02 years	08 years	10 years
05	/	/	16 years	16 years

Table 29: The Teachers' Experience in Teaching English as a FL

Section II (03-05): Teaching Culture in FL Classrooms

Question 03: What does culture teaching mean to you?

We have seen in the second chapter of this research that culture can be viewed from two angles depending on how we define it. First, culture is seen as the sum of traditions, values, and ways of life that any speech community might have, teaching culture, then, is teaching these values and traditions. The other view maintains that culture is all what is reflected in the use of language, so teaching culture is teaching what can influence the use of language. By asking this question, we want to know from which angle the teacher sees culture and how he/ she perceives the concept 'culture teaching'.

All the teachers see that the relationship language-culture is certain and there is no doubt that culture influence the use of language. For them, culture teaching is teaching traditions, values, and ways of life in addition to the influence of these socio-cultural features on the language. This influence occurs in the production of language as in comprehension. Therefore, the aim of teaching culture is to make students both

successful receivers and successful users of the FL. Students have to understand native speakers when they speak, write, and interact in their real life.

Question 04: What do you think about the importance of culture in teaching a FL?

The teacher of English has to know about the importance of teaching the culture of the English language. We want to know if the teachers of English at Biskra University know about this importance. The teachers' responses are summarized on the following points:

- Including culture in FL teaching motivates the learner to learn the FL.

- The importance of culture in teaching a FL is to make learners aware of the TL culture to be more communicative than they are. They will know when and how to use all the structures of English. By then, they will build a high self confidence when they use the TL.

- It helps learners to discover a variety of cultural traits that may go in harmony with their own or even contradict with them.

It appears from the responses that teachers are conscious about the importance of teaching the culture of the English language, which means they believe in the role of culture in FL classrooms.

Question 05: Do you think that learning about a foreign culture is a threat to one's native cultural identity?

Many FL learners regard the foreign culture as a threat, especially if it has features which can be forbidden in their culture. For this reason, we want to know whether this idea is correct.

The teachers see that learning about a foreign culture cannot be a threat to one's native cultural identity only if the teacher knows how to present this culture. The teacher has to know what should be included about the TL culture. The way of presenting the target culture to the learner should not include aspects that are taboos in the learner's native language culture. This avoidance depends on the learner's age, way of thinking (to what extent the FL learner is open-minded), and his awareness of the TL culture. Learning about the target culture is meant to develop the learner's ability to use the TL, but not to lose his own culture.

Section III (06-09): Teaching Culture in EFL Classrooms (M2 students)

Question 06: When dealing with the TL culture, do you use the English language or the Arabic language?

If the teacher presents the foreign culture using the learner's native language, this may not be beneficial for learners because the influence of culture in the use of the FL will not occur. We asked this question to know which language the teachers use when teaching the TL culture.

The teachers see that when dealing with the TL culture, it is preferable to use the target language to encourage learners to think in English. The native language is used only when necessary. This indicates that teachers are very careful about the influence of culture in the choice of language.

Question 07: In teaching the foreign culture, do you make references to the learners' native culture?

In teaching the foreign language culture, the majority of teachers agree that it is preferable to compare the native language culture with the TL culture. This comparison should include both similarities and differences to make the learners aware of the cultural differences between the two languages. One of the teachers makes references to the learner's native culture only if there are similarities between the native language culture and the foreign language culture. If not, he does not.

Based on these responses, we can say that what causes cultural interference in EFL classrooms in Biskra University is not much more about the ignorance of the learner's socio-cultural identity, but it is about the way of presenting this identity in regard with the TL one and the amount of time allotted to that.

Question 08: In your opinion, in which course you can design activities to relate the foreign culture to the students' cultural background?

The majority of the teachers believe that they should teach culture difference indirectly in all courses, but teachers are limited by time and students' number. Therefore, it is preferable to have a course in which teachers can make activities that include all types of culture differences. Some teachers see that the course of "Theme and Version" is the most appropriate course to teach culture difference if it is appropriately dealt with.

These results support the hypothesis of this research in the sense that culture difference between Arabic and French is not appropriately dealt with in EFL classrooms.

Question 09: Do you encourage students to express their opinions about the differences between the foreign culture and their culture?

All teachers encourage their students to express their opinions about the differences between the foreign culture and their culture. They believe that students should be aware of the differences before judging the foreign culture. Students' opinions may be positive as negative, so the role of the teacher is to correct their misconception. The comparative study helps them to avoid these attitudes and ideas.

Section IV (10-14): Teacher's Awareness of the Cultural Differences between the NL and the TL

The questions of this section are related to each other, thus we are going to analyze them together as one question.

Question 10: Have you been to an English-speaking country?

Question 11: How long did you stay there?

Question 12: Was the time sufficient to have in-depth knowledge about English-speaking cultures?

Question 13: In your opinion, does the English culture influence the use of the English language?

Question 14: In your interaction with native speakers of English, did you encounter any difficulties because of the influence of your NL culture? And have this interaction made you aware of some of the cultural differences between Arabic and English?

Going abroad to the TL speech community is very beneficial for FL teachers and learners. When teachers or learners interact with native speakers in their society, they will rapidly learn how to use the TL successfully. However, this progression cannot be reached in one day; it is a result of everyday exposure to the TL in real-life communication. By asking these five questions, we want to know if the teachers themselves have tried this experience or not.

Two teachers did not go abroad to an English-speaking country, but they interacted with native speakers of English. One of them interacted with native speakers for a few hours when she was a student. These teachers have observed that their interaction with native speakers was easy, and they did not face any difficulties because of the influence of their native language culture. These teachers do not have experience in the TL community and their little interaction with native speakers did not allow them to have a big knowledge about the cultural aspect of the TL.

Three teachers in Biskra University went abroad to an English speaking country. The time they spent there differs from one teacher to another. One of them stayed for fifteen days, another went many times and each time he stays there from one week to three weeks, and the third stayed there for about three successive years. The first two teachers see that the time was not sufficient to have in-depth knowledge about English-speaking cultures. To know the TL culture, one should live there for a long time. These two teachers faced difficulties because of the big difference between the native language culture and the TL culture. When they speak they use their own culture and attitudes which are different from those of the TL culture. Although the teacher who spent three years and half thinks that more time is needed for better understanding the TL culture,

he did not encounter any difficulties because of the influence of his native language culture for the reason that people in the target social community respect other cultures.

All teachers have the same opinion concerning the influence of the English culture on the use of the English language. They all see that any culture influences its language, so the FL learner is certainly influenced by his culture, the fact that makes him exhibit a kind of cultural interference in the FL.

Section V (15-22): Cultural Interference

Question 15: Do second year master students exhibit any type of interference?

All teachers say that M2 students exhibit a lot of interference because most of the time they think in Arabic and they speak and write in English. This means that the sample of students who were chosen in this research exhibit interference.

Question 16: Which type is the most apparent? Is it phonetic, phonological, lexical/ semantic, syntactic, or cultural interference?

When teachers are asked about the most apparent type of interference that M2 students face, they say that all types of interference are apparent. The teachers' responses are in the following table:

	The teachers				
Types of interference	**01**	**02**	**03**	**04**	**05**
Phonetic					
Phonological	✓				
Lexical/Semantic					✓
Syntactic	✓		✓	✓	
Cultural		✓		✓	✓

Table 30: The Most Apparent Types of Interference in the M2 Classroom in Biskra University

In the table, there are two types of interference; linguistic (phonological, lexical, and syntactic) and cultural interference. Linguistic interference in phonology, for example, appears in using the mother tongue intonation, while cultural interference appears in using the native culture gestures or way of thinking when speaking the FL. The teachers who see that the apparent type of interference is the syntactic type argue that this type of interference occurs in the students' essays and exam papers. Both types of interference are problems, but we may find remedies to the linguistic interference through practising the FL, whereas it is difficult to find remedies to cultural interference, especially if there are no opportunities to interact with native speakers.

This led to say that although M2 students are advanced learners, but they still have problems of interference in the linguistic aspect of the English language. When the linguistic aspect is not fully learned, this means that the socio-cultural aspect has not been mastered yet. As FL learners, if we are not yet able to use English accurately, we cannot use it appropriately.

Question 17: What do you think of cultural interference? Is it an obstacle in learning English?

Two teachers see that cultural interference is an obstacle in learning English as a foreign language since learners think in Arabic when producing English. This obstacle can be broken down if learners are more aware of the TL culture. These teachers look at cultural interference as a problem that has to be given importance in order not to be raised anymore.

Three teachers see that cultural interference is not an obstacle in learning English as a foreign language; rather, it can be seen as a phenomenon or inhibition in the process of FL learning. Since these teachers do not regard cultural interference as a problem, this means that they do not care a lot about the cultural differences between the native language and the foreign language, which gives cultural interference the green light to occur.

Question 18: Which is the most problematic: cultural interference in speaking or cultural interference in writing?

Accordance to the teachers interviewed, cultural interference in both speaking and writing is problematic, but it seems more problematic in speaking rather than writing. In writing, cultural interference is a problem because what is written lasts forever and we cannot explain fully what we mean, for the reason that we are not in face-to-face communication. Gestures which can complete meanings that cannot be conveyed through words are not used in our writings. Even though, in writing we have time to re-adjust what we want to say and to think before we write. Hence, cultural interference in speaking seems the most dangerous as it is explained in this research. If you commit an offence while speaking with a native speaker of English just because of

the influence of your native culture, you may be hurt because you have unconsciously hurt others.

Question 19: How do you observe cultural interference in the student's language?

Two teachers observe cultural interference when students use the mother tongue structures in producing the foreign language although the grammar they use is correct (literal translation). Literal translation seems the easiest way to learners when they face difficulties when using the TL. The other teachers observe cultural interference in the student's language through their gestures, their choice of words, and the mistakes they commit because they think in Arabic when speaking and writing in English.

Question 20: What are the origins of cultural interference in EFL classrooms?

The majority of the teachers see that there is one origin for cultural interference, which is the students' native language culture (Arabic).

Question 21: In your opinion, why do students fall in cultural interference?

Most of the teachers believe that students fall in cultural interference because of many reasons. First, they are not aware of the foreign language culture, which is returned to the lack of exposure to the natural use of the TL. Second, their aim of studying English is just to get a qualification. Other factors include: psychological, social, cultural, and pedagogical factors, in addition to the learners' personality, and attitudes towards the TL culture.

Question 22: When students exhibit cultural interference, how do you react towards

        that?

We asked this question to know if the teacher provides the student with suitable alternatives in English.

When teachers are asked what they do when students exhibit cultural interference, the majority of them say that they make direct correction and advise students to avoid bad habits. Sometimes, they point at differences between the NL culture and the TL culture. One of the teachers tries to encourage his students to appreciate the differences. At this level of analysis, we can say that teachers in Biskra University are highly interested in solving immediately the problems their students face when it comes to culture. This leads also to claim that the teacher is the only source to learn culture difference.

Section V (15-22): Cultural Interference

Question 23: In your opinion, does the course "Theme and Version" serve in

        eliminating cultural interference in English?

Some teachers do not know a lot about the course of "Theme and Version". Based on their little knowledge, they think that this course may serve in eliminating the problem of cultural interference in English. The teachers who know this course believe that the course is about translating texts with regard to the culture of the two languages. This process of translation helps in diminishing the problem of cultural interference in English. All teachers agree that teaching culture for eliminating cultural interference in English should be in all courses.

Question 24: Do you have any further comments or suggestions to overcome cultural interference from Arabic into English?

The teachers of English as a foreign language in Biskra University added the following suggestions:

- When we plan a curriculum or design a textbook for teaching a foreign language, we should include native speaker of that language. Teachers who are non-native speakers include, in one way or another, their native culture.

- Both teachers and learners should be aware that culture must be a part of syllabus design.

- . Teachers should know what to teach because not everything in the target culture is good.

- Using new materials and technology to teach culture in order to make learners live in real situations.

- Similarities and differences between the NL culture and the TL culture should be included as an essential part in the syllabus.

- Learners should be aware of the cultural differences between their native language and the TL and they should believe that the two cultures can cohabit.

- Teachers should encourage the foreign learners to stop thinking in Arabic and to speak in English in order to avoid taboos through presenting activities to make them think in English.

Conclusion

The results of the interview were of great importance to this study. The teachers' answers have confirmed the following results:

- Cultural interference is widely spread in EFL classrooms in Biskra University.

- Cultural interference is a big problem in the speaking skill.

- Making turns to the learners' native culture when teaching the foreign culture is necessary.

- Students need to be encouraged to express their opinions about culture difference.

- The time devoted to teaching and testing about culture difference is not sufficient to raise students' awareness of cultural difference.

- Comparisons between the NL culture and the TL culture should be taught explicitly.

- Cultural interference and a contrastive study between the NL with the TL can be the subject of the course "Theme and Version", where teachers have more time to deal with culture.

General

Conclusion

General Conclusion

The main objective of this research is to investigate the influence of cultural interference on the Arab learners in the branch of the English language at Biskra University. Throughout this study, we hypothesize that the knowledge of the differences between the native language culture and the target language culture may reduce the problem of interference. This study emphasizes on the influence of the NL culture on the use of the FL.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, we have presented and discussed some major issues in the speaking skill in foreign language classrooms. We defined speaking and dealt with its features and functions. We emphasized the main difficulties that learners encounter in FL classrooms, like fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of listening practice, etc. At the end, we arrived to many points in the speaking skill. The most important is that developing the learners' speaking skill requires efforts from both the teacher and the learner.

Chapter two is devoted to all what concerns culture in EFL classrooms. We concluded with the importance of the TL culture in teaching foreign languages. If learners are supposed to go abroad to the target language community, cultural knowledge of the target language can reduce some problems they may face when they interact with native speakers in their speech community. The lack of cultural knowledge of the target language may lead to the problem of cultural interference in which learners use their own culture when using the TL.

Since this research is limited to Arab learners, we studied the effect of cultural interference from the Arabic language into the use of English as a FL, its origin, and its causes in the third chapter. The suggested solution to cultural interference, which is

related to this research hypothesis, is a comparative study between learners' NL culture and the TL culture. With relation to research limitation, the contrastive study was between the Arabic culture and the English culture. Similarities between the two languages facilitate the learning process, whereas differences constitute the areas where learners fall in cultural interference.

In field work, we have brought the study to the context of Biskra University, where we made a questionnaire and an interview. In order to prove that the problem of cultural interference from the Arabic language in using English is actually exhibited by Arab learners, we have collected different data with different tools. The same tools are intended to know the causes behind the problem of cultural interference and to find appropriate solutions. We distributed the questionnaire to the M2 students in the branch of the English language at Biskra University and we sat their teachers of English to an interview. The main questions which are asked to the students are about their difficulties in using English and their awareness of the differences between the native language and the target language, while teachers are asked about their observations inside the classroom concerning the problem of interference and their viewpoints about eliminating cultural interference through being aware of the cultural differences between Arabic and English.

In the two last chapters, the results we have obtained from both the questionnaire and the interview were analysed and they revealed that the M2 students think in Arabic when they speak English, they face difficulties in speaking, and they are aware that there are differences between their native language and the target language, but they do not know what these differences are. The results of the interview added other points. The two main ones are: the M2 students exhibit a lot of interference, especially cultural

interference, and comparison between the Arabic language and the English language reduces the degree of interference.

To make EFL learners use English appropriately, both teachers and students in EFL classrooms have to catch up the actual problems. One of the biggest problems is thinking in the native language while using the target language, which results in cultural interference from Arabic into English. The results of our study helped us to suggest the following pedagogical recommendations:

- All courses of English as a FL have to contain the foreign culture. Since culture is a complex and huge subject, EFL teachers should teach culture directly and indirectly. Courses of oral expression, written expression, general culture, and theme and version are the most suitable to deal with the subject of culture directly. Teachers should be aware that culture should be taught in all courses.

- Teachers should be aware of what to teach in the foreign culture and how to present it to the FL learners. Not everything in the target language culture is acceptable to be taught to Arab learners, whose culture may contradict with many aspects in the target culture. This does not mean that teachers should not teach the elements that differ in the two cultures, but the way of teaching should depend on learners' age and their acceptance of the TL culture.

- Both teachers and learners of EFL need to be aware of the socio-cultural differences between Arabic and English. There are many ways to do so. First, they can conduct research to discover the points of difference. Second, they have to practise extensive listening to native speakers of English, whether through songs or movies. They can also interact with native speakers through using current technology, like chat. These ways may increase students' proficiency in using the TL as well as their ability to think in English.

- It is preferable to program a course concerning the TL culture, like "General Culture" and "Theme and Version" to the master students (first year and second year). These two courses can reduce some difficulties that face them. Since these students have taken the course of "General Culture" before for two years, the course of "Theme and Version" can be programmed for the two years of the Master. This course is suitable for advanced learners like these students to increase their cultural awareness and consequently their level at English.

As any researcher, we confronted some obstacles while working on this subject. Three of them have negatively influenced this research. First, the time factor was a great problem. Carrying out a research on cultural interference cannot be fulfilled in four months. Second, as we have seen in the third chapter of this research, we have made a comparative study between Arabic and English. The fact that sources in this area are not available has made the work very difficult to deal with. Third, the sample of students who are chosen to fill the questionnaire do not have courses in the second semester of this year, which made it difficult to collect data. Despite these difficulties, we have made great efforts to make this work successful. We hope that the discussion, analysis, and the results of this dissertation will contribute in improving students' proficiency in using English. Logically speaking, there are some limitations in this study because what we have proposed is based on just a sample and cannot be generalized to other cases. Therefore, it needs to be extended and developed by further research. To conclude, we do believe that a little work is important for continued efforts in this field.

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Appendices

Appendix N° 01

Mohamed Kheider University. Biskra
Department of Foreign Languages
Branch of English
Questionnaire to Students

Dear students:

We are undertaking a research on "The Effect of Cultural Interference on the Arab Learners' Speaking Skill in EFL classrooms." in order to overcome the actual problems of cultural interference and improve learners' proficiency in using English. The results of this study are based on your responses. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions and add free comments. Be sure that your answers will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Section I: General Information

Age: ☐

Gender: Male ☐   Female ☐

Section II: Language Learning

01- You have chosen to study English because:

    a) It is compulsory ☐

    b) It is the language of technology ☐

    c) You need it for a job ☐

    d) You need it to travel abroad ☐

    e) You like it ☐

02- How would you assess your present level at English?

    a) Good ☐

    b) Average ☐

    c) Low ☐

Section III: Cultural Awareness

03- In your opinion, does culture influence the use of language?

    a) Yes ☐
    b) No ☐

- If "yes", how? ………………………………………………………………………...
………………………………………………………………………………………………….
………………………………………………………………………………………………….

04- Do you think that it is important to know about the culture of English-speaking countries?

    a) Yes ☐

    b) No ☐

- If "yes", say why …………………………………………………………………………..
………………………………………………………………………………………………….
………………………………………………………………………………………………….

05- What do you think of the amount of the target language culture you have learned up to now?

      a) Satisfactory   □

      b) Unsatisfactory   □

- In both cases: Please, explain why……………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

06- Should EFL learners be aware of the cultural differences between their mother tongue and the target language?

      a) Yes   □

      b) No   □

-If "yes": Please, explain how? …………………………………………………………...
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Section IV: Attitudes towards the Target Language Culture

07- Do you appreciate (like) the culture of English-speaking countries?

      a) Yes   □

      b) No   □

      c) Neutral   □

- In both cases: Please, explain why..
....
....

Section V: Difficulties in Using English

08- After five years of study at university, are you able now to understand and use the English language without difficulties?

      a) Yes   □
      b) No   □

09- If "no", in which skill do you face the most of your difficulties? Please, tick just one.

      a) Listening   □

      b) Speaking   □

      c) Reading   □

      d) Writing   □

10- What do you do when you face difficulties in speaking English?

      a) Stop in the middle of the conversation   □

      b) Try to continue the conversation   □

11- If you "try to continue the conversation", how do you keep communication going on if you cannot find the word/ meaning you are looking for?

      a) Use paralinguistic features (body language)   □

      b) Use another language   □

Section VI: Cultural Interference

12- If you try to continue the conversation "using paralinguistic features", do you know how to use paralinguistic features in English?

     a) Yes   ☐

     b) No   ☐

     c) Somehow   ☐

13- If you try to continue the conversation "using another language", which language will you use?

     a) Arabic   ☐

     b) French   ☐

     c) Others: Please, specify ……………………………………………………....

  - In all cases: Please, explain why …………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

14- What do you understand from the following idioms?
a) Throw caution to the winds
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
b) Forbidden fruit is sweetest
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
c) A wolf in a sheep's skin
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
d) The world and his friend
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

15- What are the equivalents of the following idioms in English?

a) إذا كنت ريحا فقد لاقيت إعصارا …………………………………........……………

b) لا يفل الحديد إلا الحديد ....

c) يلعب بالنار ....……………………………………………………….............

d) الجدران لها آذان ....

Section VII: Further Suggestions

16- In your opinion, does the module "Theme and Version" serve in eliminating cultural interference in English?

     a) Yes   ☐

     b) No   ☐

- If "Yes", in what way? ....
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

17- Do you have any further comments or suggestions to overcome cultural interference in English?
....
....
....
....

Thank you for your collaboration.

Appendix N° 02

Mohamed Kheider University. Biskra

Department of Foreign Languages

Branch of English

Interview to Teachers

We are undertaking a study about "The Effect of Cultural Interference on the Arab Learners' Speaking Skill in EFL classrooms." in order to overcome the actual problems of cultural interference and improve learners' proficiency in using English. The results of this study are based on your response. You are kindly requested to sit this interview to answer the following questions.

Section I: General Information

1- First, who is Mr. "X"?

2- How long have you been teaching English?

Section II: Teaching culture in FL classroom

3- What does culture teaching mean to you?

4- What do you think about the importance of culture in teaching a FL?

5- Do you think that learning about a foreign culture is a threat to one's native cultural identity?

Section III: Teaching culture in EFL classroom (Master degree/ year two)

6- When dealing with the target language culture, do you use the English language or the Arabic language?

7- In teaching the foreign culture, do you make references to the learner's native culture?

8- In your opinion, in which course you can design activities to relate the foreign culture to the students' cultural background?

9- Do you encourage students to express their opinions about the differences between the foreign culture and their culture?

Section IV: Teacher's Awareness of the cultural differences between the NL and the TL

10- Have you been to an English speaking country?

11- How long did you stay there?

12- Was the time sufficient to have in-depth knowledge about English-speaking cultures?

13- In your opinion, does the English culture influence the use of the English language?

14- In your interaction with native speakers of English, did you encounter any difficulties because of the influence of your NL culture? And have this interaction made you aware of some of the cultural differences between Arabic and English?

Section V: Cultural Interference

15- Do second year masters exhibit any type of interference?

16- Which type is the most apparent? Is it phonetic, phonological, lexical/ semantic, syntactic, or cultural interference?

17- What do you think of cultural interference? Is it an obstacle in learning English?

18- Which is the most problematic: cultural interference in speaking or cultural interference in writing?

19- How do you observe cultural interference in the student's language?

20- What are the origins of cultural interference in EFL classrooms?

21- In your opinion, why do students fall in cultural interference?

22- When students exhibit cultural interference, how do you react towards that?

Section VI: Further Suggestions

23- In your opinion, does the course "Theme and Version" serve in eliminating cultural interference in English?

24- Do you have any further comments or suggestions to overcome cultural interference from Arabic into English?

Thank you for your collaboration.

ملخّص البحث (Summary)

تهدف الدّراسة إلى معرفة تأثير التدخّل الثّقافي على التّعبير الشّفهي لمتعلّم اللّغة الأجنبية، و نظرا إلى أنّ استخدام اللغة الأجنبية بمهارة هو هدف متعلّمي اللّغات الأجنبية فإنّنا أولينا الاهتمام للتّخلص من مشكلة التدخّل الثّقافي العربي في التّعبير الشّفهي في اللّغة الانكليزية. فرضيتنا لهذا البحث كانت كالآتي: إذا كان المتعلّم الأجنبي على دراية بالفروقات الاجتماعيّة والثّقافيّة بين لغة الأصل ولغة الوصل، فان ظاهرة التدخّل الثقافي للّغة الأم في استخدام اللّغة المستهدفة سوف تقل. نصبو في دراستنا هذه إلى معرفة أسباب هاته الظّاهرة في أقسام اللّغة الانكليزية بالجزائر، وبذلك نقترح حلولا لها. و لمعالجة هذا الموضوع قمنا بتوزيع استبيان على طلبة السّنة الثانية ماستر بفرع اللّغة الانكليزية بجامعة بسكرة، كما أجرينا مقابلات مع عدد من أساتذة التّخصّص لكونهم أكثر الأساتذة علما بالصّعوبات التي تواجه هؤلاء الطلبة. بعد تحليل البيانات والنّتائج المتوصّل إليها، استطعنا اثبات فرضية الدراسة و حاولنا وضع بعض الاقتراحات البيداغوجية والتي تهدف إلى إيجاد حلول مناسبة ومساعدة للمتعلّم العربي للتغلّب على مشكلة التّدخّل الثّقافي في استعماله للّغة الانكليزية.