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***The Influence of Cultural Awareness on EFL learners' Oral
Performance.***

The case of second year LMD students of English at Biskra University

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

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Dedication

With a deep affection, I am grateful to my family, my source of success and happiness.

*To the one who enlighten my darkness.
My mother " Saultana"*

*To the one who gave me strength and hope
My father " Belkacem" .*

*To my brothers and sisters for their unconditional support and
encouragement.*

To my Grandmother and the little angle " Ayoub."

*To my extended family and friends, who have been so supportive and
encouraged the fulfillment of this work.*

To all those who believed in me and prayed for my success.

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Abstract

The present research is conducted in order to investigate the influence of the socio-cultural dimension of the language on EFL learners' oral performance. EFL learners cannot use the language appropriately due to cultural unawareness. Since speech is an inherent part of language as compared to writing, the main concern of this study is to demonstrate the effectiveness of high cultural awareness in improving second year LMD students' oral proficiency and reducing serious speaking difficulties. Thus, it is hypothesized that if EFL learners are aware of the English cultural dimension, they will enhance their oral performance. Our investigation aims to explore the causes behind EFL learners' poor cultural awareness and, eventually, to suggest some solutions. The nature of the research and the testing of the hypothesis require two research tools. First, we designed and administered a questionnaire to second year LMD students of English at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University. Second, an interview was conducted with teachers who actually teach courses involved in our research and who have a long experience in this field of study. After analyzing the data obtained from both students' questionnaire and teachers' interview, our research hypothesis is confirmed and some solutions and recommendations are suggested.

List of abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

TC: Target Culture

NC: Native Culture

FL: Foreign Culture

SL: Second Language

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General introduction

Introduction

The core objective of EFL learning is the use of the target language fluently in the different contexts. It is agreed that developing a foreign language proficiency involves not only the more than mastering the formal linguistic aspects(grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation), but it also proficiency in the socio-cultural elements including; ways of life, beliefs, values, customs, idioms, taboo, superstition...etc. Thus, a fluent language speaker needs to know what to say, when, where, and to whom.

As a matter of fact, EFL learners have unsatisfactory knowledge of the socio-cultural dimension of the foreign language. This cultural unawareness causes difficulties in their oral performance. The present study is concerned with the analysis of the effectiveness of high cultural awareness in enhancing second year students' oral proficiency and reducing their speaking difficulties. It aims at exploring the causes behind EFL learners' cultural unawareness and; eventually, proposing some solutions in order to raise cultural awareness.

The present study ensures the close relationship between culture and language teaching. It reveals that EFL learners are aware of the importance of integrating culture in EFL teaching, but their background knowledge of the English culture is unsatisfactory. This later causes many speaking difficulties. The analysis of the data collected demonstrates that EFL learners would better orally perform if they develop rich background information of the target language. Thus, our research aims were achieved and our hypothesis was confirmed.

1. Statement of the problem

The awareness of socio-cultural dimension is an important factor in teaching/learning a foreign language. Thus, the main concern of this study is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the socio-cultural knowledge of the foreign language in enhancing the oral performance and reducing speaking difficulties of second level students of English at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University. Moreover, our study attempts to raise learners' cultural awareness and shed light on the real situation of teaching English language culture at Biskra University.

2. Aims and objectives of the study:

The main aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of integrating culture within English courses, and to investigate its contribution to improve student's oral performance.

The secondary aims are set in the following:

- To determine the relationship between language and culture.
- To suggest solutions to overcome speaking difficulties that are related to their unawareness of the cultural dimension
- To shed light on the current culture teaching situation at Biskra University, and to show how teachers' cultural awareness may affect the students' performance.

3. Hypotheses:

To give insight in the problems raised in this study, the following hypothesis has been elaborated:

- If English Foreign Language learners are aware of the English cultural dimension, they will enhance their oral proficiency.

4. Significance of the study:

The concern with culture and teaching foreign languages is not new. Thus, it is not surprising that the continuous merging of these two worlds that contributes in teaching English as a foreign language. Hence, investigating this area of study is of a great importance for both, teachers and students. We attempt to demonstrate that if teachers apply teaching strategies that make connections with cultural dimension, this can facilitate the teaching process. On the other hand, this study makes a useful contribution to students' understanding of culture within the context of learning English as a foreign language; they may improve their oral performances, produce a successful communication, and socialize with new communities.

5. Methodology:

To demonstrate that the assumption made in this thesis is built on a solid ground, and to accomplish the research aims a descriptive methodology is adopted. This research is conducted qualitatively through a questionnaire that is designed to a sample selected randomly that is composed of 70 second year LMD students of English at Biskra University. Because culture lectures deal with only the first and second year levels,

however, we have opted for the second year students because they may have better experience with the English language. An interview is conducted with six teachers who actually teach courses involved in our present research and who have much experience in this area of study.

6. Limitations of the study:

- In this study, a simple random sample is used because most of students learn nearly in the same conditions: level, age, social status, cultural background, and they follow the same educational curriculum too.
- Our sample is only two groups of second year LMD students, and not all the groups because of time restrictions.
- This area of study focuses on culture in relation to foreign language teaching and not other areas or fields.

7. The Literature review:

An extensive research has been devoted to culture in terms of its relationship with foreign language learning. Claire Kramsh, in her book “Language and Culture” explores the relationship between language and culture .This book is divided into four parts: survey, readings, references, and glossary. In the first part, Kramsh defines culture as: “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and imaginings” (Kramsh,10).She claims that language expresses cultural reality, embodies cultural reality ,and symbolizes cultural reality. Kramsh discusses the relationship between nature, culture, and language. According to Kramsh, people who

identify themselves as members of a social group (family, neighborhood, professional or ethnic affiliation, nation) acquire common ways of viewing the world through their interactions with other members of the same group .

Kramsh discusses The Sapir_Whorf hypothesis. She explains how to interpret meaning within a specific context: “One had to understand why they said, what they said, and how they said it to whom in a specific context of situation”.(Kramsh,26). She explores the relationship between language and cultural identity: “by their accent ,their vocabulary ,their discourse patterns ,speakers identify themselves and are identified as members of this or that speech and discourse community”.(kramsh,65). Kramsh explains key concepts such as; cultural authenticity, cross-cultural , intercultural, and multicultural.

It is important to explore the place of culture in second language teaching and learning. Eli Hinkel, in his book:“ Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning” claimed that many researchers and language teachers pointed that a foreign language can rarely be taught or learned without being aware of the foreign language culture. Thomas claims that teachers must draw on research to:“ develop ways of heightening and refining students’ metapragmatic awareness, so that they are able to express themselves as they choose”.(qtd in Hinkel,2). Kramsh emphasizes that the influence of culture on language learning is more complex than the four Fs; foods, fairs, folklore, and statistical facts, and that research and language teaching need to integrate culture within foreign language teaching.

Hymes and Gumperz emphasizes the need for studying the social contexts of speech acts, cultural influences in interaction, and the interactional competence of language users. Hinkel claims that learning a foreign language to interact with others requires the development of pragmatic competence ,basically, interactional competence,

and the systematic study of the interactive practices of the foreign language by the learner itself. He discussed the language teaching and the intercultural competence. Meyer defines intercultural competence as: “ the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures.” (qtd in Hinkel,198).

It is of a great importance to mention the different conceptualization of the term culture, and discussing its element, and exploring its relationship with language. In this respect, David. G. Mandelbaum, in his book:“Selected Writing of Edward Sapir in Language ,Culture, and Personality” discussed the concept of culture. Sapir defined culture in three different ways or senses. He explains concepts such as ; genuine culture, the cultured individual ,and cultural group .The earlier anthropologists were greatly impressed by the importance and stability of the family in modern life .Sapir claimed that symbolic associations are very important in social grouping such as; party slogans, national flags...etc. He explores the meaning of religion concept, and made a difference between “a religion” and “religion”, he also discusses the ordinary definition of religion as a part of the culture of a specific community. Sapir defines customs as an element of culture: “custom is used to apply to the totality of behavior patterns which are carried by tradition and lodged in the group, as contrasted with the more random personal activities of the individual”.(qtd in Mandelbaum,365). He defines customs variously, and determined the difference between custom and tradition .Sapir also explains the concept of fashion.

Chapter One: An Overview of Culture

Introduction

It may not be an exaggeration to say that the culture of each of us influences one's way of life, including what he says, how he thinks, what he feels, how he behaves and what he believes. Every person sees the world from a specific angle, according to the culture s/he belongs to. It is the culture that determines the social dos and don'ts, and shapes people's attitudes and views towards the world and human life. All the socio-cultural aspects are concerned namely religion, education, familial relationships, customs, language, dress, food, politics, marriage ...etc, and even the small details in our daily life which are culturally determined.

In this chapter, we start with the definition of the concept of culture and then; the exploration of the different views of culture in various disciplines. Moreover, we investigate the multiple features of culture, background information about the elements of culture, and also try to highlight the social knowledge that people share in a specific community. We investigate the relationship between culture and communication. The chapter sheds light on concepts of culture shock and acculturation in terms of their definitions, their indicators, and stages. Finally, we attempt to demonstrate the inseparability of language and culture with a special focus on the work undertaken by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf.

1. Approaches to culture.

A good starting point in the present research would be the understanding of the nature of culture. For discovering what culture relates to, it is important to know its different conceptualizations, its origins and development, and its different characteristics.

1.1. Definition of culture.

The concept “culture” cannot be easily defined because of its complex nature. Culture is a very vast area of study that researchers have sought to understand and define within different fields in which they look at it from different angles.

In general, the study of culture is developed in distinct domains such as; Anthropology, Cultural studies, and Ethnography. According to Hinkel (1999) anthropology investigates culture in terms of ways people’s life, social construction, what they feel, how they think, what they believe, and how they behave within their social communities. In Shweder (1984) words, culture theory... delves into conceptual properties of culture and cultural meaning systems, as well as symbolic representations of self and manifestations of beliefs and emotions (cited in Hinkel. E, 1999, p.3). Hence, Cultural studies attempts to explore how people express themselves, their beliefs, their feelings , and their ways of life through their cultural output such as; poems, sports, songs...etc. According to Byram (1989), ethnography is concerned with language and way of behaving of human communities in relation to their social constructs and beliefs. Thus, culture is defined in different and multiple ways within various fields by different scholars (Adopting a single definition cannot fit all contexts hence, it is important to include different definitions of culture.

Chastain (1988) argues that big 'C' culture differs from small 'c' culture. Big 'C' culture or 'high' culture refers to the cultural output that is presented by the elite people in a human group. On the other hand, small 'c' culture or 'deep' culture refers to the whole way of life, behaving, and thinking of particular group.

Whereas there is no agreement about the definition of culture, a more complicated definition and the most quoted is the one given by Taylor: "culture is ... the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society" (cited in Wallace, 1970, p.6). From his anthropological view, Taylor argues that in general culture refers to the total set of features of human society. In particular, culture is about the set of social behaviors that is acquired and learned by individuals in their own societies.

From the ethnographical view, Hymes (1971) culture refers to the competence that allows individuals to interact successfully and appropriately, using the set of shared knowledge of a society in order to organize and interpret speech.

For others, Geertz (1973, p.89) defined culture as : "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conception expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate ,perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes toward life". He highlights the relation between culture and language. Culture, in this sense, refers to the body of knowledge that is "inherited"(Geertz,ibid), from one generation to another, it is represented in a society as the whole social rules, norms, customs, traditions, values that govern the way people behave and act in their societies.

Goodenough (1957) views culture as the knowledge that an individual, as a member of a society needs to acquire or believe, in order to behave appropriately in a way that is agreed by all members of that society.

According to Kramsh (1998, p.10), culture is “a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting”. She argues that culture is a set of ingrained knowledge that is shared by members of a given society that guide them to think, believe, and behave in a particular way.

On the basis of what has been mentioned before, culture can be defined as the general and specific body of common knowledge including; way of life, beliefs, values, behaviors, customs, norms, attitudes, traditions that is acquired or learned by members of a society. This knowledge allows people to interact successfully, and to behave appropriately in their societies. Culture involves cultural artifacts too such as; literature, music, food, and architecture.

1.2. Characteristics of culture.

Though there is a disagreement concerning the definition of culture, it is possible to single out some common features of culture. Damen’s study (as cited in Thu, 2010) suggested six features of culture.

- Cultures are dynamic: cultures are changing according to people’s needs and value, cultures also may change due to some uncontrolled external factors such as wars or maybe because of immigration.
- Culture is learned or acquired: the knowledge that shapes culture is not innate, but it is learned or acquired socially by members of a given society.

- Culture is a global fact and need of human life: although culture is a human need, no society or human group can really exist and conceive without its own culture.
- “Culture provides sets of unique and interrelated, selected blueprints” (cited in Thu, 2010, p.6): culture shapes people’s life by means of selected principles, values, beliefs, norms...etc.
- Culture is deeply related to language: through language people can interact with each other, express their own cultures, feeling, thinking, attitudes, and pass it from one generation to the next.
- Culture functions as a filter: through culture people perceive and think about reality.

There exists another study accomplished by Cushner and Brislin (1996) presented seven characteristics of culture (as cited in Merrouche, 2006).

- Culture is a human phenomenon: Brooks (1968) argues that culture deals with humans and created by them, it is not found innately in nature.
- Subjectivity and objectivity of culture: whereas subjective culture is the invisible, abstract one, i.e., beliefs, values, norms, and assumptions that govern life of people and their behavior, objective culture is the visible one, i.e., cultural artifacts, food, dress, literature...etc.
- Culture is socially acquired and transmitted: culture is not a matter of innateness from birth; it is learned through interaction between members of a given society. In this sense, Benedict (1943) argues that culture is “behavior which in man is not given at birth, which is not determined by his germ cells as is the behavior of wasps or the social ants, but must be learned anew from grown people by each generation”(cited in Shaules ,2007, p.26). Kramsh

(1998, p.4) writes: “one way of thinking about culture is to contrast it with nature. Nature refers to what is born and grows organically; culture refers to what has been grown and groomed” While nature is similar to all societies and groups in the world, culture is specific to each society. For example, all humans eat, but they have different dishes, and different ways of eating, all people in the world greet each other but in different ways.

- Cushner and Brislin argue that a culture enables its bearers to interact with gestures, body language, or few words, and interpret meaning that it is not really stated on the basis of their common cultural knowledge (cited in Merrouche, 2006).
- Merrouche (2006, p.19) states “people are likely to react with feeling when their cultural norms and values are violated in cross-cultural encounters”.
- Cultural norms and values are undoubted. This does not mean that all members of a society accept it there are always individuals who refuse it. However, they eventually follow the main stream of their culture because a cultural value remains a value even if it is compromised. It is of great importance to mention that values, norms, attitudes, beliefs, and the total social rules may change ,i.e., the status of woman in world societies in general and Arabic societies in particular have changed after the Second World War.
- Hofstede (1991) argues that cultures are compared and analyzed according to some contrastive dimensions, i.e., respect of age, individualism/collectivism, short term/long term focus, assertiveness/modesty, avoidance of uncertainty, power distance.

2. The Structure of culture.

As it has been mentioned previously, culture is the total body of knowledge that is shared by and passed on by the members of specific human group. This shared knowledge is reflected in different elements. Hence, culture is seen as existing at different levels. At the surface, material products and behaviors are appeared. Underneath, there are the norms and the values that form the basis for those products and behaviors. Beneath, deep assumptions that determine the social dos and don'ts take place.

2.1. Elements of culture.

Culture is set of common knowledge in a given society. This knowledge constitutes of objective culture (visible culture) and subjective culture (deep culture). Triandis (1972) states that the objective elements of culture are the cultural artifacts such as architecture, food, and clothing while the subjective elements of culture are those that cannot be touched such as; norms, values ,beliefs, assumptions, attitudes (as cited in shaules,2007, p.40).

2.1.1. Norms.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner define norms as “mutual sense a group has of what is right and wrong” (cited in Shaules, 2007, p.57). There are formal norms such as those relating to legal contexts, i.e., laws, etiquette of society, and informal norms such as customs, i.e., shaking hands. Shaules (2007) claims that Norms guide the human behaviour to be more appropriate whether they are formal or informal. For instance,

driving on the left side in Algeria is a formal norm, and shaking hands for greeting is an informal norm

2.1.2. Assumptions.

Deep assumptions form the ground and the basis for cultural norms and values of a specific human group they are abstract and rarely questioned. Shaules (2007) claims that assumptions are dealing with social hierarchy, importance of independence...etc. A good example that clarifies the concept of assumptions: a Japanese employee bows to his boss; this represents a norm which is built on the value of showing respect that is built on the assumption that hierarchical relationships are normal and require esteem

2.1.3. Values.

Values are crucial elements of a particular culture. They refer to what bearers of a given culture regard as good or bad. Thus, they are characterized by an evaluative dimension. Values have judgmental function; they determine what is socially good or bad. Besides, values are normative, they indicate what should be done and in what way. Shaules (ibid, p.57-58) states “values reflects a cultural group’s definition of good and bad and serves as criteria to choose between alternatives...Values define how one wants to behave.” Religion is a main source of values, for example, honesty is a crucial value in the Muslim communities.

2.1.4. Rituals.

Rituals are actions that are performed usually in the same way. Rapport (1999, p.24) states that ritual is: “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.” This definition highlights the features of rituals: rituals are performed, formal, invariant, built on acts and utterances, and encoded by other than the performer. Rituals are changing from one culture to another. For instance, when meeting with friends, in some cultures, involves the exchange of two kisses, others three kisses, in others just shaking hands.

2.1.5. Taboos.

Taboo is a cultural or religious tradition that prevents people from doing something or talking about a particular subject, people usually find it offensive. Taboo refers to the forbidden behaviour that should be avoided in a given society. Allan & Buridge (2006, p.1) state that: “taboos arise out of social constraints on the individual’s behavior where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury”. Violating taboos can cause sickness, legal punishment, death, social disapproval. The term taboo is derived from the Tongan word “tabu” which means forbidden. Cook and Anderson firstly used the term tabu to refer to the behaviour of Polynesians of what can was not done, seen or touched (as cited in Allan and Buridge, 2006). Taboos deal with dietary restrictions like Halal and kosher diets or sexual activities. An example of taboos is eating pork meat, or drinking alcohol in Islamic countries.

2.1.6. Artifacts.

Cultural artifacts are the visible products and contribution of a particular society. It is the concrete and physical elements that one can see, hear, or touch. Artifacts include architectural achievements, literature, dress, food, art achievements; music, painting, and others such as: books, the Algerian Hayek or kouskous, El-batra town in Jordan, museums...etc.

2.1.7. Stereotypes.

A stereotype is the groundless belief that all members of a particular society share the same features. It associates with race, religion, age, gender, and others. Stereotypes are usually aroused from the attribution of negative attitudes towards people who are different from oneself. Bennet (1998) indicates that there are two types of stereotypes: positive and negative stereotypes. The former deals with the case in which characteristics that is assumed to be shared by members of a society are respected. The later deals with situations in which these characteristics are violated.

2.2. Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Hofstede (1997) proposes a set of dimensions that is used to describe and examine cultures. He presents five cultural value orientations for analyzing and describing cultures: power distance dimension, individualism-collectivism dimension, masculinity dimension, uncertainty avoidance dimension, long term orientation versus short term orientation dimension. The five dimensions are presented as follows:

The power distance dimension refers to the way in which cultures deal with inequality. It is the emotional distance between people of different status. Hofstede (1997, p. 28) defines it as: “the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally”. In high power distance cultures, people should show respect for those who have a higher rank. In Cambodia for example people are obliged to respect monks by greeting, removing hats, well dressing ...etc. Low power distance cultures believe in the equality of people.

Individualism versus collectivism dimension refers to the way individuals define themselves and their relationships in a society. Shaules (2007) points out that cultures that are based on individualism lack ties between individuals. People are defined in terms of their achievements. Collectivist cultures are based on strong, integrated groups of people. They highlight the importance of interdependent activities aiming at the utility of the group.

Masculine cultures deal with the distinctions of what men and women are assumed to do. Masculine cultures are those of high values of masculine traits. They are characterized by assertiveness, competition, and material success. Feminine cultures deal with incorporating both, men and women in social activities. They value feminine traits, and stress nurturance, relationships and living environment.

Uncertainty avoidance dimension handles with the feeling of threat by uncertain, unknown situations. Cultures which are characterized by strong uncertainty avoidance are aggressive, intolerant, active, and emotional. Those are characterized by weak uncertainty avoidance are less aggressive, relaxed, unemotional, and tolerant.

With respect to the Confucian dynamism dimension or long –term versus short-term dimension, long-term cultures stress thrift, saving, and perseverance for results while short-term cultures are less saving and interest in quick results.

3. Culture and communication.

3.1. Intercultural communication.

Language is considered a part of each culture and usually it is defined as a means of communication. Communication refers to the exchange of ideas, thoughts, words, symbols and meanings between individuals in a particular context through face to face interaction or writing. During the process of communication, the speaker/writer sends a message and the hearer/reader interprets the meaning. Successful communication is achieved when both the sender and the receiver of the message share the same interpretations of what has been said or written. Allwood (1985, p.3) states that communication is: “the sharing of information between people on different levels of awareness and control”.

Cultures of the world are different in their languages, their ways of living, thinking, and believing, their values, norms, customs and traditions. However, when communication takes place between people from different cultural backgrounds, who speak dissimilar languages, there is a high possibility of miscomprehension between interlocutors. Intercultural communication is used to refer to the way people from different cultures interact with each other, and the extent to which the variation of cultures affects the flow of communication. It is worth mentioning that the two terms, intercultural and cross-cultural are synonyms in sense, but they are used interchangeably to refer to communication between people from dissimilar cultural backgrounds.

Kramsh (1998, p.81) parallels between the two concepts, intercultural and cross-cultural. She writes: “the term cross-cultural or intercultural usually refers to the meeting of two cultures or two languages across the political boundaries of nation-states.” She defines the concept intercultural communication as: “communication between people from different ethnic, social, gendered cultures within the boundaries of the same national language.” She (ibid, p.82) adds that intercultural communication is used also to describe the linguistic interaction between minority culture and dominant cultures. Kramsh points out that both terms, intercultural and cross-cultural, characterize communication and that they are related to the concepts of bilingualism and biculturalism.

Findlay (1998, p.111) believes that intercultural communication studies are interested in: “describing, analyzing, and applying an understanding of how culture influences communication when people from fundamentally different cultures attempt to communicate”. According to Byram (1997) intercultural communication takes place in three situations:

- Intercultural communication occurs between individuals from different languages who speak different native languages. In this situation, one of the interlocutors is a native speaker of the language being used.
- It takes place between individuals from different nations who speak different languages. In this situation, the language being used is a lingua franca.
- It takes place when the interlocutors are from the same nation, but they speak dissimilar languages, and one of them is a native speaker of the language being used.

3.2. The Main barriers of successful intercultural communication.

In situations where people from different cultural backgrounds meet, the cultural differences between them may create miscomprehension. Hostfede (2002) presents five major barriers of intercultural communication: language, non-verbal communication, stereotypes, behavior evaluation, and stress.

3.2.1. Language.

Language is a means of communication between people. In real situation of communication, a fluent language user should not only master grammar and vocabulary knowledge of the language, but he should also culturally competent, he should know what to say, when, where, to whom, and why. In order to decrease the language barrier, one should:

- learn the language.
- find an interpreter who can speak the language.
- ask for clarification if the message is ambiguous .

3.2.2. Nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is the automatic and unconscious use of non-linguistic elements during communication such as: gestures, facial expressions, body postures, wave of the hand, eye contact and other instances. The receiver of the message should make a cultural interpretation for each gesture, facial expressions, physical appearance, physical closeness...etc. In order to avoid non-verbal barrier, one should take into account the following:

- One should not assume that he can interpret all the non-linguistic elements unless he is familiar with the culture.
- One should not take a non-linguistic element of a stranger personally, even if it is insulting in one's own culture.
- One should be aware of his own non-linguistic patterns that must be insulting in other cultures.

3.2.3. Stereotypes.

Stereotypes are generalizations about a particular group of people; they are aroused when assuming that all group members share the same characteristics. Hofstede (2002) points out that when stereotyping, one accepts what he wants to expect, to see and reject the interpretation that is contradicted with one's expectation. There are three steps for overcoming this barrier:

- One should develop awareness of his stereotypes of encountered cultures.
- One should learn about the other culture.
- One should understand one's behaviour from his cultural perspectives, and adapt new stereotypes to fit the new experiences.

3.2.4. Behavior evaluation.

It refers to one's tendency to evaluate others' behaviour as good or bad from his cultural view, and to make a judgmental stands depending on one's own cultural norms. It refers to making prejudices without full understanding and analyzing of other's behavior, the prejudice represents groundless attitudes towards one's behaviour. Hofstede

(2002) believes that evaluation is the third stage in the process of the attribution of meaning: observation, interpretation and evaluation. He proposes three ways to deduce or avoid the evaluation barrier:

- One should maintain appropriate distance.
- One should be aware that it is possible to change his culture or himself suddenly.
- One should not judge a foreigner who has different cultural background depending on his own cultural values until coming to know the foreigner's cultural values.

3.2.5. Stress.

People feel stressed when dealing with unfamiliar situation. Hence, intercultural interaction with people from other countries who speak different native languages, who have different norms and values and who believe differently is considered a stressful experience that one may pass through. Hofstede (ibid, p.19) states: "Like every other unfamiliar experience, intercultural contact is likely to involve some stress." He believes that stress can be decreased through:

- The acceptance of cross-cultural situations where uncertainty of what one expects from others and what others expect takes place.
- The work on reducing other intercultural barriers.
- The forgiveness of oneself and others, and giving the benefit of doubt.

If one fails to decrease and control his stress, he would be a subject of more mental, psychological states which is called "culture shock".

3.3. Culture shock.

3.3.1. Definition of culture shock.

Hofstede (2002, p.22)defines culture shock: “the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar culture”. He argues that culture shock is associated with experiencing new cultural situations, or even new school, town, organization, or family. Shaules (2007, p.106) states that culture shock: “looks at how people do react to intercultural environments” He defines culture shock as the way individuals feel and act when they face a new culture. This concept is firstly described by Oberg (1960) as “occupational disease of those going abroad caused by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (cited in Shaules, *ibid*). Hofstede (2002) mentions that culture shock is totally personal, it differs from one person to another, and differs for one person from one occasion to another.

3.3.2. The Indicators of culture shock.

Hofstede (*ibid*) claims that Culture shock that one can experience is indicated by at least six principles.

- The lack of familiar norms and cues about ways of behaving, or expressing other meaning.
- The values that are considered to be good, desirable, beautiful, and worthy are not respected by the one who experiences culture shock.
- Feeling lost, confused, depressed, or hostile.
- Dissatisfaction with the new ways of behaving.

- The social skills that one acquires in his own society, and that are used to work seem to be inappropriate.
- Feeling that this is terrible, and that culture shock will not go away.

3.3.3. Stages of culture shock.

Culture shock is described as a process that is made up of a chain of stages. These stages do not certainly describe culture shock in details and they do not spot light on each instance that one goes through. Hofstede (ibid) proposes the stage model of culture shock (“honeymoon”, “disorientation”, “irritability and hostility”, “adjustment and integration”, “biculturality”).

- “Honeymoon”: At this stage, one feels optimistic, curious, and excited when he encounters the new culture for the first time, but his own identity is extremely influenced by his own culture.
- “Disorientation”: at this level, a person misses his own norms and familiar cues, with a feeling of disorientation, self-blame, and personal inadequacy.
- “Irritability and Hostility”: one feels angry and resent toward this new environment due to the difficulties that he faces.
- “Adjustment and Integration”: At this stage, one adapts with the cues of the new culture, and he will be able to function well in the new environment with an increased ability to differentiate between what is good and what is bad in both cultures.
- “Biculturality”: one is fluently competent in both cultures; however, there is disagreement about whether all people can master the two cultures.

It is worth mentioning that culture shock is considered a stage that one passes through to be an acculturated person.

3.4. Acculturation.

3.4.1. Definition of acculturation.

Acculturation is a concept that is used to describe the process of acquiring a particular culture without losing one's culture. It is the process of becoming adapted to a new culture without losing one's native culture. Acton & De Felix define the concept acculturation as: "the gradual adaptation to the target culture without necessarily forsaking one's native language identity" (as cited in Valdes, 1986, p.20). They argue that acculturation is the acquisition of a new culture while keeping the personal identity, culture and language. They assume that the essential factor influencing acculturation is the difference or social distance between two cultures.

Brown points out that acculturation is experienced differently according to each second language learning situation. The deepest form of acculturation is involved in learning a SL in the context of a foreign culture. SL learning in the native culture differs in the degree of acculturation experienced by the learner, depending on the country, the sociopolitical status of the language, and the motivation of the learner. The most variable severity of acculturation is experienced in foreign language context (as cited in Valdes, 1986).

3.4.2. Stages of acculturation.

Acculturation is a process that goes through different stages. Acton & De Felix (as cited in Valdes,1986) propose a model of acculturation that goes through four stages:

- Tourist: it is the first stage, during this phase the target culture knowledge is completely unachievable; this stage is considered as entailing some degree of culture shock. One's spoken language may be called "phrasebookese." The learners depend on their native language techniques, strategies and resources.
- Survivor: During this stage, the use of language and the understanding of culture will be functional and practical. Individuals must go this stage in order to be considered as fluent, competent, and educated speakers of a language. Other individuals need little more than survivor competence in language and culture. During this stage, one uses a language akin to a pidgin.
- Immigrant: this stage deals with the expected level of acculturation of an educated learner who is literate in his or her native language. It is reached by literate people who live or work in foreign cultures for an extended period of time. Most educated people do not develop their languages and knowledge of the TC beyond this stage.
- Citizen: this stage deals with the level of the native speaker, in which a person has acculturated to the degree one is rarely made mistakes by the subtleties of language and culture. During this stage, it is expected that one will have both pronunciation and gestures akin to those of native language speakers.

Brown (ibid) points out that acculturation is a process composed of four stages. The early stage is the dealing with excitement and exhilaration, during this stage one feels excited over the new culture and environment. The second stage is culture shock, it

handles one's feeling of intrusion of more cultural differences into his own culture. The third stage is the stage of recovery; it should be gradual, tentative, changing. The stage is characterized by what Larson & Smalley (1972) call culture stress: some drawbacks of acculturation are solved while others are not. Generally, a slow development is made; the individual will accept gradually the difference between his own NC and the TC. The final stage constitutes a near or complete recovery; one can assimilate, adapt and accept variation between the NC and the TC

4. Language and culture.

4.1. The Relationship of language and culture.

Language and the cultural background of its users are evidently intertwined and cannot be separated. There is a fundamental association between languages and the cultures of their speakers. One's language reflects his cultural background and it is considered as a part of his culture. Brown (1994) points the relationship between the two: "a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (cited in Jiang, 2000, p.328). He believes that culture and language are deeply related and that they complete each other.

Language is principally related to culture in three ways. Kramsh (1998, p.3) states: firstly, "language expresses cultural reality"; people words are used to express common facts, events, and experiences in a particular human group. These words also mirror the language user's attitudes, feelings, views, and beliefs. Secondly, "language embodies cultural reality"; people give meaning to their experiences through deciding the medium or the context of communication, for instance face to face conversation or writing a letter.

People use the medium in a way that is comprehensible for those who belong to the same society. Thus, the medium itself creates meaning. Thirdly, "language symbolizes cultural reality"; the linguistic signs have a cultural value. Native language users consider their languages as a symbol of their cultural identity. Preventing its use is interpreted by its users as a refuse of a society and its culture.

The appearance of some acronyms that links culture with language supports the interconnection of these two concepts. Paul Friedrich (1989) refers to the interconnection between language and culture as "linguaculture". Michael Agar (1994) refers to the linkage of culture and language as "linguaculture". Metaphors also better illustrate for the relationship between language and culture (cited in Jiang , 2000, p.328). For instance, "language is the mirror of culture", "the iceberg"; language is the visible part, with a small part of culture, the invisible aspect of the greater one that is lying hidden beneath the surface.

Language is the mirror of culture. Thanasoulas (2001) views that language and culture are related: "language does not exist apart from culture, that is from the socially inherited assemblages of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives"(cited in Elmes, 2013, p.12). One's cultural backgrounds, beliefs, values, assumptions, and others are all reflected in oneself language. In this sense, Montgomery states: "culture is implicated in every instance of language in use" (cited in Corbett, 2003, p.ix). In this stance, it is worth mentioning that this may be considered as an argument of the influence of culture on what people say. This is a matter of controversy, and it is contradicted with what it is called "the linguistic relativity"; language reflects its users' thought.

4.2. The Linguistic relativity.

The relationship between language, thought and culture is expressed in the formulation of the Sapir- Whorf Hypothesis. It is discussed and developed by Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf that. It is known also as “ the linguistic relativity”. They believe that language determines and resolves thought of its speaker, and that culture does not affects the language directly, but it affects the language speaker’s thinking and perception. Shaules (2007) states that this hypothesis proposes that one’s language affects oneself thought due to the different categorization and description of objects and meanings. Kramsh (1998, p.11) points out that “the Sapir_Whorf Hypothesis makes the claim that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one thinks and behaves.”

Crystal (1997) argues that the origins of the linguistic relativity traced back to the work of Johann Herder (1744-1803) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1762-1835) in the late 18th century who place a great value on the diversity of languages and cultures around the world. The inseparability of language and culture was firstly insisted by Herder and Humboldt. Later on, these ideas were discussed and developed by Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) which resulted in “the linguistic relativity hypothesis.”

Whorf supports this hypothesis by exemplifying from different language. In Hopi, that is an Amerindian language, the word “masa’yataka” is used to represent everything that flies except birds. This is absolutely different from someone who used to thinking in English. On one hand, for English speakers there is only one word for multiple kinds of snow, on the other hand, to Eskimo there are different words for falling snow, snow on the ground, snow packed hard like ice, and so on. He adds, Hopi language lacks the

concept of time and the different forms of tenses, while the English language is rich of different forms that enable expressing different duration. Whorf believes that it is difficult for English and Hopi speakers to understand each other due to the differences of languages.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is based on two consistent and unified principles: the linguistic determinism and the linguistic relativity. The former proposes that language determines the way in which speakers of this language think. It is known as the weak version of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. The latter is the strong one; it states that the features and distinctions that are encoded in a language do not exist in other languages. Thus, the difference of the structure and vocabulary of languages conveys the difference of cultural significance and meaning.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis displays some important contributions for intercultural learners. The hypothesis reveals the fact that a language is a symbolic system that reflects the social reality and culture of the speaker (ibid). Since culture of a particular group or a country is different from those of other countries, a miscomprehension may take place when a foreigner speaks the language of other country. Thus, in foreign language teaching settings, understanding and learning a language; structures, words, grammar and vocabulary involves learning its culture too. Byram & Morgan (1994) state: "it is axiomatic in our view that cultural learning has to take place as an integral part of language learning, and vice versa" (cited in Hinkel, 1999, p.7).

Conclusion

Culture together with areas that it covers have been a matter of interest from the past till the present days. This chapter reveals that culture covers all aspects of human

life; it determines the way people behave, believe, think, eat, dress, speak, and exchange information when communicating with others. Thus, cultural awareness is crucial in intercultural communication settings and to mastery of foreign language. This chapter demonstrates the inseparability of language and culture; hence, foreign languages can rarely be taught, learnt and used without considering the foreign culture and developing enough cultural background of that culture.

Chapter Two: The Speaking skill.

Introduction

Communication is the core aim of learning foreign languages. However, many people in the globe learn foreign languages with the aim of being fluent speakers in communication settings in which sending and receiving messages are involved. Thus, speech plays a major role in communication. Through speech people exchange information, express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Consequently, speaking in the target language becomes a central goal for EFL learners.

The present chapter presents general insight into speaking. It sheds light on oral proficiency; it presents different conceptualization of speaking, its functions, and its different characteristics. The chapter discusses the linguistic and extra-linguistic elements that a speaker need in order to produce fluent speech. Moreover, the chapter analyses the notion of speaking competence by reflecting speaking on the model of communicative competence. Finally, the chapter explores the situation of teaching speaking in EFL classrooms in terms the difficulties that may face learners when they speak, and the different activities that are designed to enhance EFL learners speaking skill.

1. Oral Proficiency.

Language proficiency is a concept that is used to describe the extent to which the language skills can be realised by the learner. It refers to how well a learner can speak, read, write, and listen. Tylor (1988, p.166) states that the term proficiency refers to: “the ability to make use of competence. Performance is then what is done when proficiency is put to use ...proficiency is a dynamic concept, having to do with process and function”.

In this sense, a competent language learner can show his proficiency through using the language in actual communication.

Therefore, in English language learning, oral proficiency refers to the learner's ability to speak and orally perform during communication with others. This definition implies a deep relationship between the oral speaking skill and the aural listening skill of the language. On this ground, a proficient speaker of English is the one who effectively uses the oral English language in different situations. In addition, he should be able to ask and answer questions appropriately, express his ideas, feelings, and thoughts successfully and interact easily during communication with other interlocutors. Iwashita (2010) argues that characteristics of being fluent, accurate, good, knowledgeable, bilingual and competent are used to describe a proficient speaker of a language.

Oral proficiency requires multiple features of a language; vocabulary, grammar, fluency, pronunciation, sociolinguistic features. Adams (as cited in Iwashita, 2010) claimed that vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency contribute equally to develop high oral proficiency, and the sociolinguistic factor contributes less. Saunders and Brien (as cited in Genesee, 2006) argue that oral proficiency in English involves vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, prosody, fluency, pronunciation, and interactional skills. Since one's oral proficiency appears mainly during communication where the spoken language is used; therefore, it becomes important to define speaking skill.

2. Speaking skill.

2.1. Definition.

Daily life communication depends primarily on our ability to speak, to express our feelings and thoughts. It is termed “the speaking skill” that is considered to be significant one of the four language skills. Speaking is the core of FL acquisition since the aim of learning is to speak and communicate effectively in the target language. Burns & Joyce and Luoma (as cited in Torkey, 2006) describe speaking as an interactive process in which a speaker constructs and shares meaning by producing, receiving, and processing information differently according to the context in which it occurs, the interlocutors, the physical setting, and the purpose of speaking .

Pertie (1987, p.336)states that :“ speaking is an activity which most of us spend a great deal of time engaged in , apparently without any effort and with not very much thought”. Additionally, Hedge (2000, p.261) states that speaking is: “a skill by which they are judged while first impressions are being formed”. That is, speaking is a skill that reflects people’s thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Celce-Murcia (2001) points out that speaking and mastering a language are synonyms, because speech is the primary means of communication.

Speaking skill is the essence of all human communication. It is a complex process of sending and receiving messages verbally and non-verbally between people. The speaker aims to express himself, his thoughts, and feelings, or exchange information with other interlocutors in particular context.

2.2. Functions of speaking.

Speaking is a human activity that plays a major role in human communication in which speech functions differently. However, multiple studies have been elaborated to classify the functions of speaking in human communication. Brown and Yule (as cited in Richards, p.2008) make a distinction between two functions of speaking: the interactional function which consists of keeping and building social relationships and the transactional function in which exchanging information is the main focus. On the basis of Brown and Yule studies, Richards (2008) expands three-parts version of this study respectively talk as interaction, talk as transaction and talk as performance.

2.2.1. Talk as interaction.

Talk as interaction is an equal synonym to the concept of conversation. It is characterized by its social function. In such interactional settings, people are more interested in the way they wish to present themselves than the form of speech itself. It can be either formal or casual depending on the surrounding circumstances. Talk as interaction involves mastering various skills such as: opening and closing conversations, determining topics, joking, turn-taking conventions, interrupting, and so on. Generally, talk as interaction is characterised by the following:

- It has mainly a social function.
- It mirrors role relationship.
- It reflects the personal identity of the speaker.
- It can be either casual or formal.
- The use of conversational conventions.
- It reflects degrees of politeness.

- The use of generic words.
- It is jointly constructed.

2.2.2. Talk as transaction.

Talk as transaction focuses on the message itself, either verbal or non-verbal, rather than the interlocutors and the way they interact with each other. The speech should be clear and understandable. Classroom discussion, problem solving activities, ordering food in a restaurant, asking for directions in the street are examples of talk as transaction. Different skills are involved to master this task such as: asking questions, asking for clarification, justifying an opinion, making suggestions, describing, and so on. Talk as transaction is characterized by the following:

- It has an informative focus.
- The use of questions, repetitions, and comprehension checks.
- Linguistic accuracy is not always important.
- The main focus is on the message.

2.2.3. Talk as performance.

Talk as performance refers to public speaking in which the message transmits information to audience. It takes the form of monologue in recognized format, it is evaluated depending on its impact on the listener. Giving a lecture and giving a speech of welcome are instances of talk as performance. The main characteristics of talk as performance are:

- The focus is on both message and audience.
- Organized format and predictable sequencing.
- Form and accuracy are important.

- Closeness to the written language.
- It takes a form of monologue.

Rose (as cited in Torkey, p.2006) distinguishes between five main functions of language: social, informative, giving opinion, requesting, directing functions. They are listed as follows:

- Social functions: including functions of introducing people, complaining, greeting, apologizing, and thanking.
- Informative functions: they include functions such as asking for factual information, providing personal information, describing and narrating.
- Giving opinion functions: such as asking for an opinion, giving an opinion, agreeing, disagreeing, and predicting.
- Requesting: such as requesting, and accepting or refusing a request.
- Directing: including functions of suggesting, encouraging, persuading, threatening, advising, and ordering.

2.3. What a speaker needs to know?

The spoken language is characterized by the use of multiple linguistic and extra-linguistic elements. Thornbury (2005) claims that producing speech requires the following:

2.3.1. Extra-linguistic knowledge.

The extra-linguistic knowledge that influences speech production includes issues such as: the topic itself, the cultural knowledge, the context, and relationships with the other interlocutors. Thornbury (2005, p.12) states: “context knowledge allows speakers to

make reference to the immediate context”. Moreover, relationships between interlocutors determine the degree of formality in conversations.

2.3.1.1. The socio-cultural knowledge.

The socio-cultural knowledge refers to the knowledge of social values, norms and behaviours in a given social group, and their influence on producing speech. Thornbury (2005) claims that the socio-cultural knowledge can be either extra-linguistic or linguistic. For example, knowledge about the way people in a given culture greet each other; shaking hands, bowing, or embracing is extra-linguistic, and knowledge about what they say is linguistic. Studies show a disagreement about the extent to which cultural differences may cause a misunderstanding in communication. In addition, studies of conversational style points out those cultural differences take place within the same culture as between cultures.

2.3.2. The linguistic knowledge.

The linguistic knowledge refers to the different features of a language namely vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Thornbury (ibid) discusses the different features of the language in the following:

2.3.2.1. Genre knowledge.

He (ibid, p.14) defines genre as: “the type of speech events, especially in terms of how that speech events might be labelled by its participants”. Generally, there are two major functions of speaking: transactional, and interpersonal. The former focuses on

conveying information, and the later emphasizes the maintaining of social relationships. These two functions generate a wide range of speech events that is organised depending on the social and mental processes. Transactional speech events such as; service encounters (buying goods, requesting information) follow a fairly predictable script.

The structure of genre is determined by whether it is interactive or non-interactive. For instance, casual conversation between friends is interactive, and presenting a lecture is non-interactive. Moreover, planned and unplanned speech may influence the use of language. Thus, genres of speaking are classified depending on their general purpose, the kind of participation, the level of planning. Carter and McCarthy (as cited in Torkey, 2006) distinguish between six speaking genres:

- Narrative: series of actions in which the listener is active.
- Identifying: it takes place when people talk about their life, their emotions, their likes and dislikes, and so on.
- Language-in-action: extracts that is recorded when cooking, packing...etc.
- Comment-elaboration: it refers to giving casual opinions about things, people and situations.
- Debate and argument: extracts when people take a particular position, and support it by arguments.
- Decision-making and negotiation outcomes: extracts that illustrate how people work toward decision or negotiate their way through problems towards solutions.

2.3.2.2. Discourse knowledge.

Discourse knowledge refers to knowledge of ways of organising and connecting utterances, and applying this knowledge on the turn taking structures in human interaction. Discursive markers are used to get one's intentions, to hold the turn, and to mark limitations in speaking. Discourse knowledge (as cited in Torkey, 2006) includes the speaker ability to keep the coherence of discourse so that the listener can easily follow the sequences of speech. The use of lexical and grammatical references, and the use of discursive markers (well, anyway, now, and so on) for making coherent speech and; lastly, manage turn-taking (taking a turn, holding a turn, and relinquishing a turn).

2.3.2.3. Pragmatic knowledge.

Pragmatic knowledge refers to the knowledge of the way of doing things with language, taking into consideration the context and the purpose of language use. Thornbury (2005) claims that pragmatic knowledge includes knowledge of the speech act and the co-operative principle.

2.3.2.3.1. Speech act.

Knowledge of speech act refers to the speaker ability to perform and understand the different speech functions such as: suggesting, requesting, greeting, apologising, complementing, inviting, and offering, and so on. For instance, the following example expresses a speech act of closing:

A: Have a nice day.

B: You too.

A: Good bye.

B: Bye.

2.3.2.3.2. The co-operative principal.

Thornbury states: “the assumption that, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, speakers are co-operating with one another forms what is called the co-operative principle. Grice (as cited in Thornbury, 2005) elaborates this principle into four maxims:

- Quantity: a speaker should make his speech as informative as required.
- Quality: a speaker should make a true and valid speech.
- Relation: speech should be relevant.
- Manner: speech should be brief and ordered.

Knowing how to co-operate during conversation should not be in contradiction with being polite. The speaker should not hurt people just because he wants to tell the truth for example.

2.3.2.3.3. Politeness.

Being polite is very important to a language speaker. Knowledge of politeness refers to knowing the way we protect other speaker’s face. Language speakers usually use different means to avoid threats to face. Politeness markers (please and thank) and distancing devices such as the use of past tense forms and modal verbs contribute in avoiding the potential threat to face. Knowing the way politeness is expressed in language is a particular trait of good language users.

2.3.2.3.4. Register.

A speaker's knowledge of register requires knowing what language choices are appropriate in a particular context. This depends on the field which refers to what is talked about, tenor that refers to the relationships between interlocutors, and mode which refers to the choice of channel.

2.3.2.4. Grammar.

The grammatical rules that are used in the spoken language are different from the ones that are used in the written language. Hughes and Luoma (as cited in Torkey, p.2006) claim that using grammar correctly in speech involves employing the different grammatical structures taking into account the characteristics of the spoken language. For instance, spoken clauses are uttered next to each other, or with a pause between them, without using conjunctions or coordinators. On the other hand, written language involves the use of co-ordinators and conjunctions. Thornbury (2005) distinguishes between the spoken grammar and the written grammar in the following table:

Written grammar	Spoken grammar
Sentence is the basic unit for construction	Clause is the basic unit for construction
Clauses are often embedded(subordination)	Clauses are usually added (co-ordinated)
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesitation • Repeats • False starts • Incompletion • Syntactic blends

Representation of the differences between written grammar and spoken grammar

(Thornbury, 2005, p.21)

The table above shows that grammar that is used in speech is different from the one used in written language. A speaker should be produce direct speech, use tag questions and ellipsis. He may hesitate, repeat some words and expressions or incomplete what he says, and so on.

2.3.2.5. Vocabulary.

Knowledge of vocabulary involves the ability to use words and utterances as they are employed by a native speaker of a language. Thornbury (2005) argues that the words and utterances used in speech are lesser than those are used in written language. He adds that knowing vocabulary involves the ability to manipulate chunks which refer to “any combination of words which occur together with more than random frequency”. (p.23). Chunks include; collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, sayings and social formulas.

2.3.2.6. Phonology.

This level of knowledge deals with pronunciation. Thornbury argues that phonology refers to the way of pronouncing individual words and the composed sounds. Cornbleet & Carter (as cited in Torky, 2006) point out that knowledge of pronunciation includes the following:

- Sounds: including consonants, vowels and consonant clusters.
- Intonation: it describes the pitch changes (falling and rising pitch).
- Rhythm: it is created in accordance to the stress placing within the same word where it is fixed, or group of words in which it changes depending on meaning.
- Linking and assimilation: it refers to the changes caused by the influence of neighbouring sounds in connected speech.

It is important to mention that the different characteristics of the spoken language can be interpreted from the speaker's knowledge: connected speech, the use of pronunciation and the use of negotiation language. All these elements are part of fluency which regarded as a major feature of speaking.

2.4. The characteristics of the spoken language.

Harmer (2001) points out that there are multiple elements which characterise ones' speech: connected speech, expressive devices, lexis, different grammar, pronunciation, and negotiation language. Moreover, effective spoken language should be fluent and accurate. These features are listed as follows:

- **Connected speech:** the speaker should find a connection between the different elements of speech such as, assimilation and elision.
- **Expressive devices:** language speakers tend to express themselves and convey meaning by the use of some expressive devices such as gestures, eye gaze, facial expressions, and so on.
- **Lexis:** the spoken language is characterized by the extended use of lexical phrases.
- **Grammatical rules:** they are not necessary identical to those used in written language.
- **Pronunciation:** speech is characterised by producing sounds. Speaker's ability to produce correct sounds creates an effective and understood speech.
- **Negotiation language:** it refers to the use of some techniques such as: asking for clarification, repairs, and so on.
- **Fluency:** fluency refers to the smoothness when interacting with others. Widdowon (as cited in Torkey, 2006) defines fluency as the speaker's ability to employ the different speaking skills to cope with the on-going process of interaction. Hedge (2002, p.261) states: "fluency means responding coherently within the turns of conversation, linking words and utterances, using intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation, and doing all of these without undue hesitation." In this sense, fluency is the capability to produce coherent speech by combining words and phrases without inappropriate pauses. Thornbury (2005) disagrees and claims that pauses and speed are both important to speak fluently.

3. The notion of speaking competence

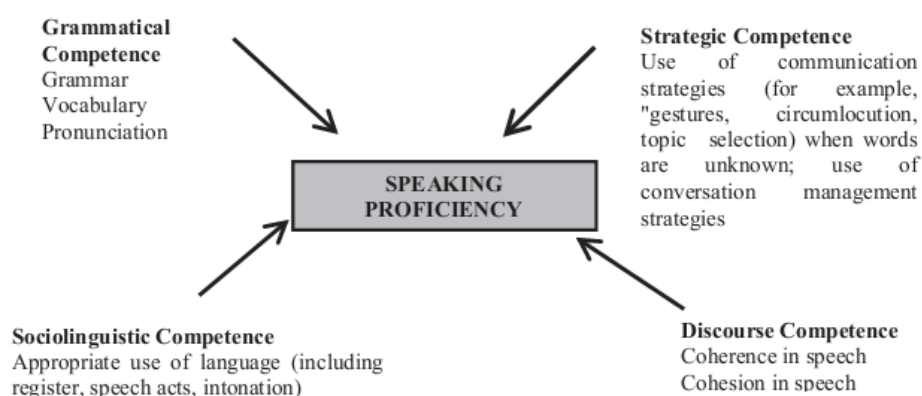
Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning. Shumin (2002) argues that speaking a foreign language involves mastering both, the grammatical rules of the FL and the pragmatic rules including the context. Hymes (1971) claims that FL learners need more than the linguistic knowledge to communicate, they need to be knowledgeable about the cultural dimension of the foreign language. Moreover, Canale & Swain (1980) propose additional competencies in order to learn and master a FL; discourse and strategic competencies including the mastery of language as its functional use. According to Canale & Swain theory, there are a number of communicative elements of competence in speaking (as cited in Torkey, 2006) which can be summarised as follows:

- **Grammatical competence:** shumin (2002) claims that EFL learners should use and understand the structures and the rules of the language. Moreover, Luoma (as cited in Torkey, 2006) argues that speakers of a language need to use words and utterances as they are used by a native speaker of a language. Cornbleet & Carter (ibid) point out that a competent speaker should master the rules of pronunciation.
- **Discourse competence:** Scarcella & Oxford (ibid) claim that a good speaker needs to be knowledgeable about discourse markers. Discourse competence involves the speaker's ability to keep coherence in the speech production, the appropriate use of grammatical and lexical references and the well organization of turn taking.
- **Pragmatic competence:** it is influenced by the context, the function and the interlocutors in communication. According to Pohl (ibid) who argues that Pragmatic competence includes two distinct competencies: functional competence and sociolinguistic competence. The former refers to the capability to realize language functions using patterns of speech acts. The later refers to the way a speaker uses the

language appropriately in different contexts with different degrees of formality. Yoshida (ibid) states that sociolinguistic competence focuses on politeness strategies.

- **Strategic Competence:** Shumin (2002) uses the concept of strategic competence to refer to the ability to acquire and use the rules that govern specific timing and accomplishing of a particular speech act. Good language speakers' use compensatory and achievement strategies in situations of communication breakdown such as: gestures, circumlocution, topic selection, facial expressions...etc. Scarcella & Oxford (as cited in Torcky, 2006) points out that having a strategic competence requires knowing how to interrupt, how to ask for clarification and how to change the topic. Thus, strategic competence requires some skills that are necessary in the other competencies.

These competencies are different from beginners to proficient speakers or from basic levels to professional. Thus, these speaking abilities can be improved intelligibly by contribution of both the teacher and learner. Teachers can design activities that focus on enhancing communicative abilities in the classroom whereas learners should improve their speaking abilities through more practice. On the basis of communicative competence, Scarcella and Oxford (as cited in Torcky,2006, p.46) determine the different skills that underlay the speaking proficiency.



Representation of the Skills Underlying Speaking Competence

4. Speaking in EFL classes.

Speaking is one of the four skills that EFL teaching focuses on. EFL learning aims to develop proficiency in speaking in order to accomplish professional aims, or simply to use the FL in communication settings with natives. While teachers use multiple activities to enhance learners' speaking skill, EFL learners usually face different problems in producing speech.

4.1. Difficulties in speaking.

EFL learners usually face difficulties when they try to speak the foreign language. This is simply a result of some factors of fear of making mistakes, lack of particular words in particular situations. Thus, EFL learners find difficulties in producing speech due to linguistic and psychological factors.

4.1.1. Linguistic factors.

Brown (2001) presents many difficulties that may face learners when they try to speak a foreign language. They are listed as follows:

- **Clustering**

Brown (2001) argues that fluent spoken language should be phrasal rather than word by word. When learners produce speech, their spoken language appears to be divided into words or few phrases. Thus, fluent speakers should produce continuum phrasal verbs.

- **Redundancy.**

Redundancy in speech refers to the possibility of rephrasing, repeating, and using expressions of repairs. By using these techniques student's speech can be understood.

- **Reduced Forms.**

Speech is characterized by phonological, morphological, syntactic, or pragmatic reduced forms. Using these forms in speech may be difficult for students who learn only the full forms in a language.

- **Performance variables.**

When FL learners speak, they hesitate, pause...etc, therefore, teachers should help their students to think at the same time of their oral performance using uh, um, well...etc.

- **Colloquial language.**

Using the collocations (proverbs, idioms, slang) in learners' spoken language is deemed to be a difficult task. Thus, teacher must focus on helping students to use these forms.

- **Stress, rhythm and intonation.**

Mastering the rules of pronunciation is difficult for learners. Stress, rhythm and intonation are peculiar elements to the English language since the right pronunciation conveys meanings.

- **Interaction.**

Learners need to interact and experience different communication situations in order to improve their abilities. Learners can acquire new vocabulary and structures when negotiating meaning (giving feedback or asking for explanation).

4.1.2. Psychological factors.

The psychological state of FL learners may create problems in their speech production. Brown (2001, p.82) notices that: "some of psychological factors such as anxiety, shyness, fear of making mistakes and lack of vocabulary are considered as the main causes of students' reluctance to speak".

- **Shyness and fear of making mistakes**

Shyness is a psychological state that many EFL learners suffer from. Students may feel shy when they are involved in speaking task in the classroom. Thus, it is argued that shyness is associated with speaking in front of people. This feeling may make learners' minds blank or they will forget what to say. Sauric (2011) believes that learners feel shy when they speak the language since they think they will make mistakes when they talk. Teachers should create comfortable environment in order to help students to enhance their speaking proficiency.

- **Anxiety**

Anxiety is considered a serious problem that hinders FL learners when using the language. Brown (2007) claims that anxiety is a negative psychological state that is associated with feeling nervous, worry, self-doubted, and tenuous in FL learning situations. Feeling anxious in FL classes affects learners' oral proficiency negatively. Consequently, teachers should try to decrease students' anxiety in order to enhance students' spoken language.

- **Lack of interest.**

Rivers (1968) argues that lack of interest results in poor students' performance in speaking. EF learners may lack interest in the subject being taught as a consequence of

their little knowledge about the question, the teacher's presentation of the lesson, or the difficulty of the subject itself. In this situation, the teacher should well present the lesson, and facilitate the task in order to support students to participate and being involved in the task, so that they will improve their speaking abilities.

4.2. Activities used to teach speaking.

There are different activities that are designed in EFL classes by the teacher in order to enhance learners' speaking. Thornbury (2005) proposes various effective tasks to teach speaking. Here are some of them:

4.2.1. Awareness activities.

Thornbury (2005, p.41) defines awareness activities as "prerequisite for the restructuring of the learners mental representations of the language". Awareness activities require three processes: attention (learners should be interested, involved and paying attention), noticing (it refers to the conscious registering of occurring events), and understanding (recognizing the rule, principal or pattern). Awareness activities include the following:

- **Using recordings and transcripts.**

To raise learners' awareness of the features of the foreign spoken language, teachers can expose their learners to some instances of authentic transcripts and recordings such as: multiparty talk, monologues...etc.

- **Using live listening.**

The teacher or another guest can speak taking into consideration the level of learners in order to enhance their interactive skills.

- **Using noticing gap activities.**

This kind of activities refers to tasks that aim at helping students to uncover the gap of their lack knowledge. These activities enable learners to discover the knowledge gaps by themselves. The teacher guides the learners to accomplish the target knowledge during this task. These activities aim at raising learners' awareness of the gap between their actual and target competence.

4.2.2. Appropriation activities.

Thornbury (2005) advances that these activities give learners chance to achieve a good control of their own speaking. Appropriation activities include:

- **Drilling and chants activities.**

Drilling refers to repeating key words or phrases in a conversation. Chants are more memorable than drills. They give learners the opportunity to pick up different words and idiomatic expressions by listening to foreign songs and playing computer games.

- **Milling activities**

These activities help students to improve their ability to ask questions with a view of completing a survey.

- **Reading aloud activities.**

This task involves the learners' focus on low level of speech without considering what to say next. Powell (as cited in Thornbury, 2005) suggests "sound scripting" technique for reading aloud which includes:

- Teacher asks learners to determine where pauses are placed in a given text.
- Students highlight or underline the stressed words.
- Students decide whether sequences of words are slow or deliberate.
- Students read the prepared text aloud.

- **Dialogue activities.**

Teaching speaking involves practicing because dialogues and conversations are natural in language. These activities focus on the grammatical rules and lexical structures of the language, and they include: items on board activities, disappearing dialogue activities and dialogue building.

- **Informative gap activities.**

This activity requires distributing different information among students in order to create gap knowledge between students. Hence, students need to participate in order to achieve the outcomes of the task.

- **Guessing games activities.**

These activities develop students' imagination and thought. The student describes a specific animal, personality, or thing...etc, while the other students should guess the answer.

- **Jigsaw Activities.**

These activities are better realised in groups rather than individually. In this activity, the teacher arranges four flashcards and divides the students into four groups. Then, he explains the general idea that these cards uphold. Each group takes just one card. Then, the teacher asks the members of each group to describe what s/he has seen. Later on, the teacher and the group members decide upon the idea that this card upholds.

4.2.3. Autonomy.

Thornbury (2005, p.90) defines autonomy as: "the capacity to self-regulate performance as a consequence of gaining control over skills that were firmly regulated." There are different classroom tasks that enhance the student's automaticity.

- **Presentation and Talk**

The teacher asks his students to present something and talk in front of his colleagues. For example, the teacher can incite a student to talk about a book he has read.

- **Role play.**

Role play is an authentic technique because it keeps students involved in real-life situations, it can be performed in pairs or groups. Role play activity allows students to practice, and develop different speech acts and it also contributes in reducing students' fear. It can be performed from scripts, real life experiences or students' imagination. Hedge (2002) claims that role play success depends on the choice of the topics and teacher's motivation.

- **Discussion and debate.**

Discussion is the most common task that is used in EFL classes to improve students' speaking abilities. Discussion activity enables students to talk and share their interests, opinions and experiences. Hedge (2002) argues that the discussion should be free and the best way to accomplish these task goals is to divide the class into groups. This may facilitate exchanging ideas, proposing suggestions, giving remedies in their target language...etc.

- **Academic presentation.**

This activity involves preparation for effective presentation which necessitates the consideration of the formal characteristics and the different genres of language. It may be performed individually, in pairs or in groups. Asking for clarification, questions and discussion take place when students finish their presentation.

Conclusion

In sum, speaking a foreign language requires more than knowing the linguistic rules of the target language. It requires being knowledgeable of all aspects of language namely the linguistic, socio-cultural and pragmatic dimensions. In EFL classes, speaking is considered to be a crucial pre-requisite of learning a foreign language; therefore, learners should aim to develop their speaking skill in order to communicate effectively in the target language. In their attempts to speak fluently, learners may face many difficulties that hinder their speech; however, many interesting activities are designed in order to enhance EFL learner's oral proficiency.

Chapter Three: *Interpretation and Analysis of the Questionnaire's and the Interview' Results.*

Introduction

The current study deals with the issue of effectiveness of the cultural awareness in improving learners' speech production. For the requirements of this study, two tools are used; a students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview. The former is administered to second year students of English at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University. The later is conducted with teachers who actually teach courses involved in our present research and who have long experience in this area of study. These two tools aim mainly at collecting data needed to reach our research goals. The present chapter analyses the sample of both students and teachers. It describes the design and the pilot stage of the questionnaires and the interview in details. Then, it presents the analysis and the interpretation of the results obtained from the two cited tools and determines the findings revealed from both students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview. Finally, it is concluded by the suggestion of some pedagogical recommendations for both EFL teachers and learners.

1. Students' questionnaire.

1.1. Students' sample.

To carry out our research, a sample of 70 second year students of English are chosen randomly from a whole population of 425 students (ten groups) at the Department of Foreign Languages at Mohamed Kheider University during the academic year 2005/2016. The representative sample constitutes 16% of the whole population. The

participants are chosen randomly from three groups, and the majority is composed of female students.

The choice of working with second year LMD students is due to many reasons. First, culture lectures are programmed only with first and second year LMD students of English. On one hand, we have opted for the second year students because they may have better experience with the English language and culture. On the other hand, since they have already learned the rules of grammar and structures of the language in the first year. Second, the main focus is enhancing students' speaking skills and their communicative abilities.

1.2. Description of the students' questionnaire.

A students' questionnaire was designed in order to study the learners' thoughts and perceptions about the issue that is treated in the present study. The students' questionnaire was distributed to seventy students. It is introduced by a short paragraph which clarifies the aims of the study and then followed by instructions and guidelines for students about how to answer the questions. The questionnaire consisted of 23 different questions. Closed questions (yes/no questions), multiple choices questions, open ended questions, scale items questions, are used to demonstrate the main hypothesis. These questions are organized into six sections.

Section one: general information

In this section, we attempt to gather information about students' background information. It consisted of two questions about age and gender.

Section two: Language learning (3-5).

This section was designed to obtain information about students' reasons of choosing to learn English, their self-evaluation of the level in English, and their perceptions about the nature of learning English.

Section Three: Cultural Awareness (6-11).

Though this section, we intended to explore the students' perceptions and thoughts about the definition of culture, its importance in EFL learning and its impact on language. In addition, we investigate the cultural component that students have learned up to know, and whether teachers deal with culture related issues in their lectures or not.

Section four: Attitudes towards the English language (12)

This section is concerned with how EFL learners find culture lectures and whether they like the English speaking countries' culture or not.

Section Five: Difficulties in Using English (13-19).

This section deals with the difficulties that face students in using the English language. In this part, we attempt to obtain information about the skill that represents more problems to learners and students' self-evaluation of their speaking skill. Moreover, we try to discover the strategies that are used when students face these difficulties.

Section six: cultural awareness and speaking.

The section of cultural awareness and speaking is concerned with the effectiveness of cultural awareness in enhancing students' speaking skill. In this section, we attempt to gather information about the cultural tasks that are used in the EFL classrooms in order to enhance students' speaking skill. We also try to determine the ways and degrees of effectiveness of these activities.

1.3. Pilot study.

Piloting stage is undertaken to confirm that the questions included in our questionnaire are understandable for students, so that the data needed can be collected. The questionnaire was piloted during two days before distributing it to the whole sample with a group of ten second year LMD students. During this stage, the students are given the opportunity to ask for clarification if they miscomprehend some questions. The ambiguous questions are modified in order to enable the students to respond appropriately and provide us with the data needed for conducting our study.

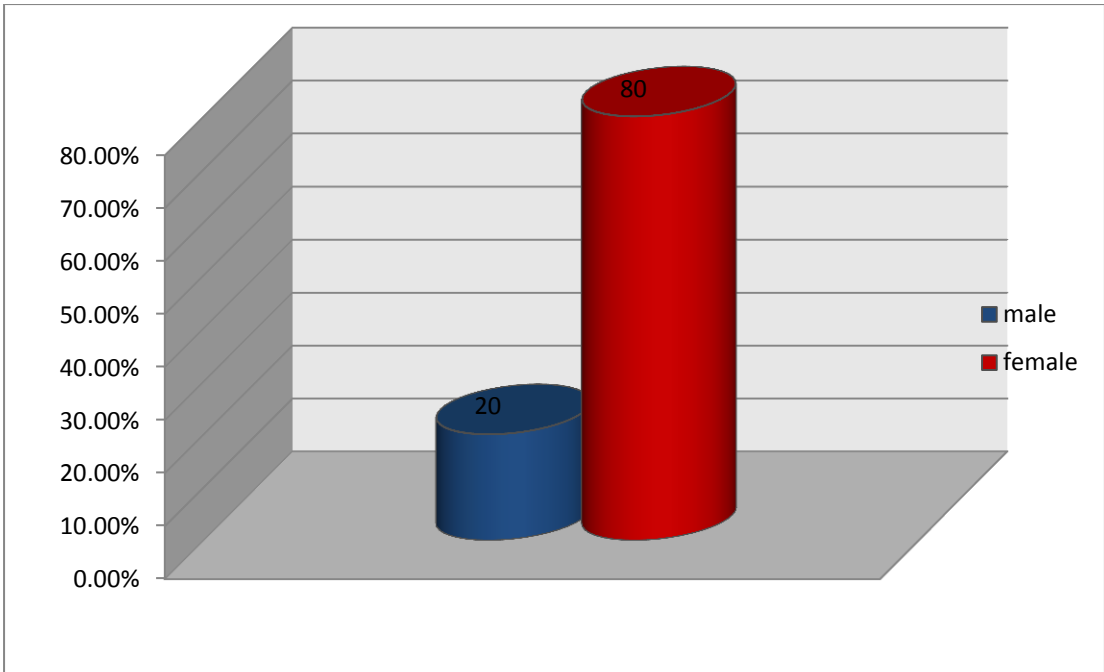
1.4. Data collection and analysis

Section I: General Information

Question 01: Students' gender:

Options	Male	female	Total
Number	14	56	70
Percentage	20%	80%	100%

Table 01: Students' Gender



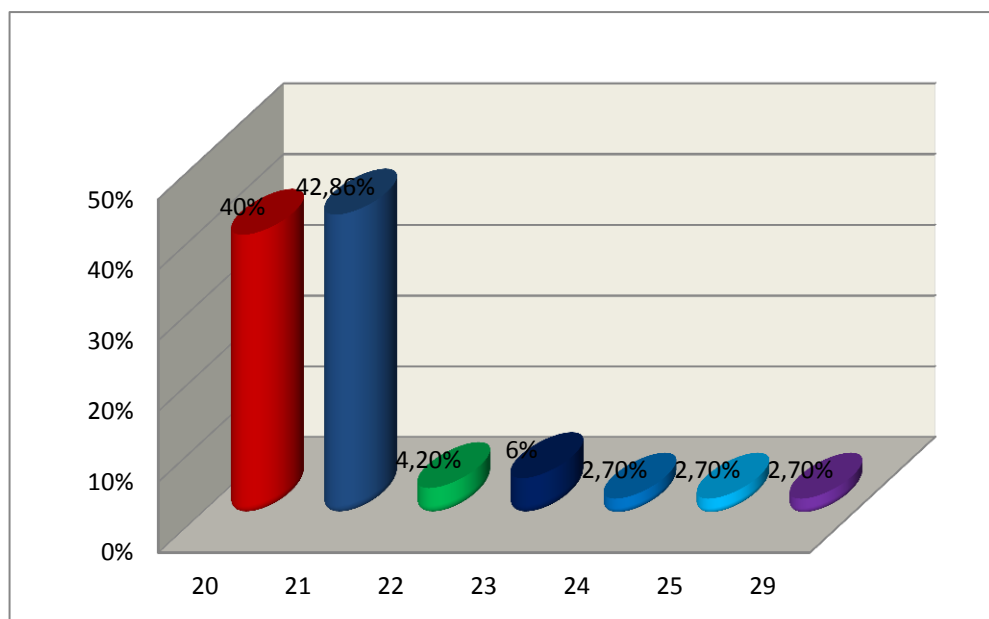
Graph01: Students' Gender

From the table above, it is clear that most of students are females. We have recorded 56 females from a total number of 70 students. Female students make up 80% of our sample. Whereas male students are only 14 students and make up 20% of the sample under study. Indicating male and female percentages in EFL classes helps us to reach different opinions and views about cultural awareness and its effectiveness in enhancing students' speaking skills.

Question 02: Students' age

Options	20	21	22	23	24	25	29	Total
Number	28	30	3	5	2	1	1	70
Percentage	40%	42,86%	4,3%	7.1%	2,9%	1.4%	1.4%	100%

Table 02: students' age



Graph 02: Students' age

The results obtained reveal that students' ages of the chosen sample vary between 20 and 29 years old. The majority of students are 21 years old (42.86%). Students who are 20 years old represent 40% followed by 23 years old (7.1%), 22 years old (4.3%), 24 years old (2.9%). Students who are aged 25 years old and 29 years old represent a numerical minority 1.4 % from the chosen sample for each group. On one hand, the results obtained ensure that most of second year LMD students of English are young and they can enhance their abilities in English. On the other hand, variation of students' ages gives us the opportunity to obtain different views about the issue treated in our study from different life experiences.

Section II (01-03): Language Learning.

Question 03: Are you learning English because:

- a- It is the language of technology and scientific research.
- b- You want to know more about its speakers and their cultures.

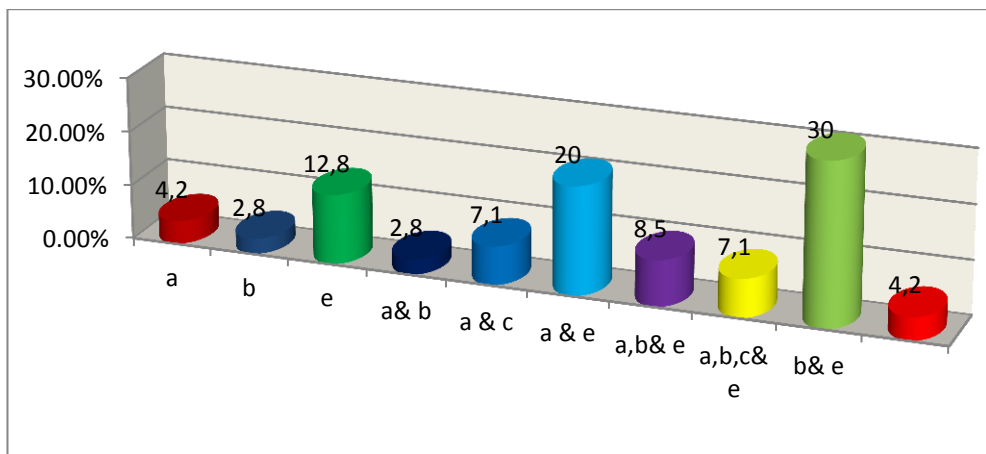
- c- Its mastery is required to get a good job
- d- It is a compulsory school subject
- e- You like it and you want to speak it fluently

This question is designed in order to explore the reasons behind learning English.

The results are summarized in the table below:

Options	a	b	e	a & b	a & c	a & e	a, b & e	A, b, c, & e	b & e	b & c	Total
Number	3	2	9	2	5	14	6	5	21	3	70
Percentage	4.2 %	2.8 %	12.8 %	2.8 %	7.1 %	20 %	8.5 %	7.1 %	30 %	4.2 %	100 %

Table03: Students' Reasons behind Studying English



Graph 03: Students' Reasons behind Learning English

The above table shows that the majority of the respondents (30%) of the whole sample choose to learn English because they like it and want to know about its speakers' cultures. 20% of the students' choices to learn English are because they like it and they believe that it is the language of technology and scientific research. 12.8% of students prefer to learn English because they simply like it. A rate of 8.5% of students learns it because of all the previous three reasons. A low rate of students (7.1%) represents reasons of getting a job and its use in technology and scientific research. An equal percentage of students choose to learn it due to all these four reasons.

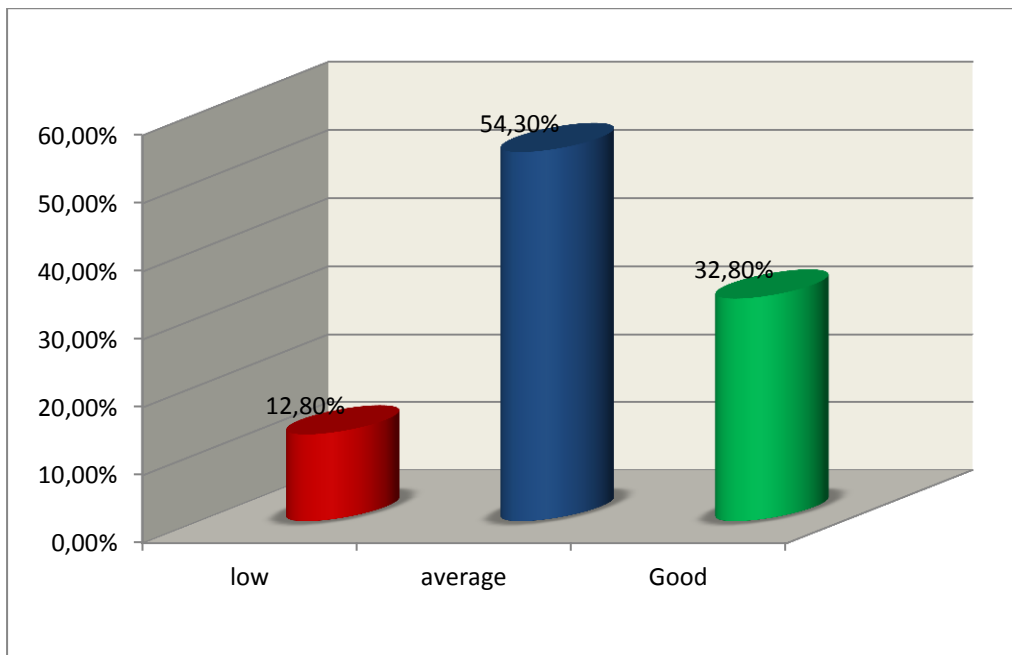
The reason behind choosing to learn English is exploration of the culture of English speaking countries and getting a job for only 4.2% of the chosen sample, and a similar rate 4.2% learn English since it is the language of technology. A low rate of students 2.8% learn it due to their desire to know more about the culture of English speaking countries or because their belief that it is used in technology and scientific research for each group. This means that most of students are motivated to learn English and they are aware of the importance of the foreign English culture in developing a high proficiency in English. Few students are learn it for the requirements of a job, those students are not motivated enough to master it.

Question 04: your level in learning English is:

- a. Good
- b. average
- c. low

Options	good	Average	Low	Total
Number	23	38	9	70
Percentage	32.8%	54.3%	12.8%	100%

Table 04: Students' Self Evaluation of Their Levels in English.



Graph 04: Students' Self Evaluation of Their Levels in English.

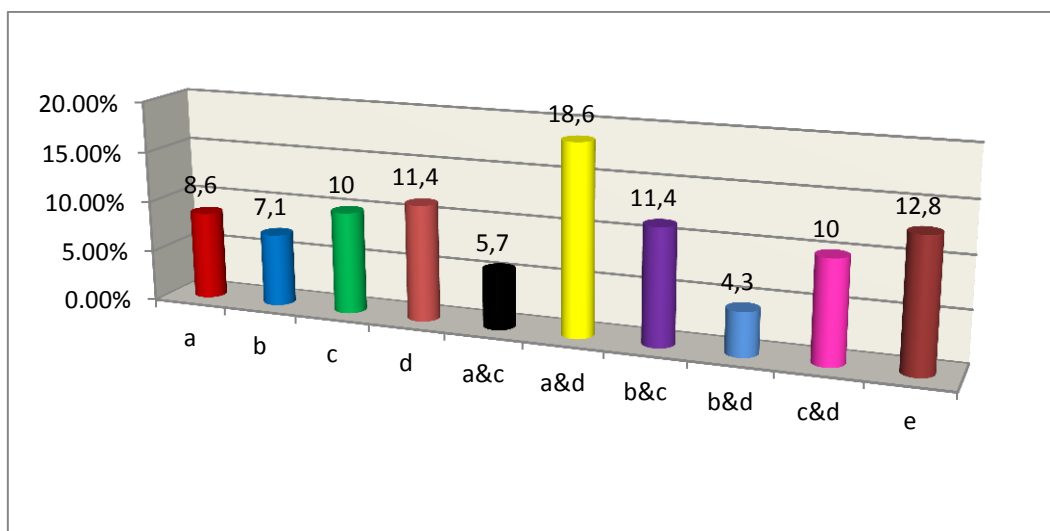
The results that are summarized above show that a major number of students (38) evaluate their levels in learning English as average followed by percentage of 32.8% of students who assess their selves as good. A minority of students (9) making up 12.8% of students think that they are weak students. The high rate (54.3%) of students who see their selves as average reveals that most of second year LMD students of English are not satisfied with their levels and they need to improve their proficiency in English.

Question 05: what does learning English mean most to you?

- a. learning how to build words and sentences
- b. learning the meanings of words and sentences
- c. learning how to pronounce words and sentences.
- d. learning about the culture(s) of English-speaking people
- e. all of them

Options	a	b	C	D	a & c	a & d	b &c	b & d	c & d	E	Total
Numbers	6	5	7	8	4	13	8	3	7	9	70
Percentages	8.6%	7.1%	10%	11.4%	5.7%	18.6%	11.4%	4.3%	10%	12.8%	100%

Table05: students' perceptions about the nature of learning Englis



Graph 05: students' perceptions about the nature of learning English

Students look at learning English from different angles. Through the results obtained from this question, we notice that the majority of students (18.6%) look at learning English as a matter of both building structures and mastering the socio-cultural aspect of the language. 12.8% of students think that learning English is a combination of learning how structures are built, learning the meaning of words and sentences, learning the rules of pronunciation, and learning about the socio-cultural aspect of the language. Students who give more importance for the socio-cultural dimension make up 11.4% and an equal rate for those who consider it as a matter of both pronunciation and meaning of words and sentences.

Similar rates (10%) represent two groups of students who think that learning English is the mastery of the rules of pronunciation, and also those who look at it as a matter of pronunciation and mastering the socio-cultural aspect. 8.6% of students give priority to the rules of building correct structures followed by 7.1% of students who think that knowing the meaning of words and sentences is the central issue of learning English. Minority of students (5.7%) think that the core of learning English is knowing how to build structures and how to pronounce correctly followed by 4.3% of students who give priority for the socio-cultural aspect and the meaning of words and sentences. According to the results obtained, most of second LMD students of English are aware of the importance of both, the linguistic aspect and the socio-cultural aspect of the language.

Section Three: Cultural awareness.

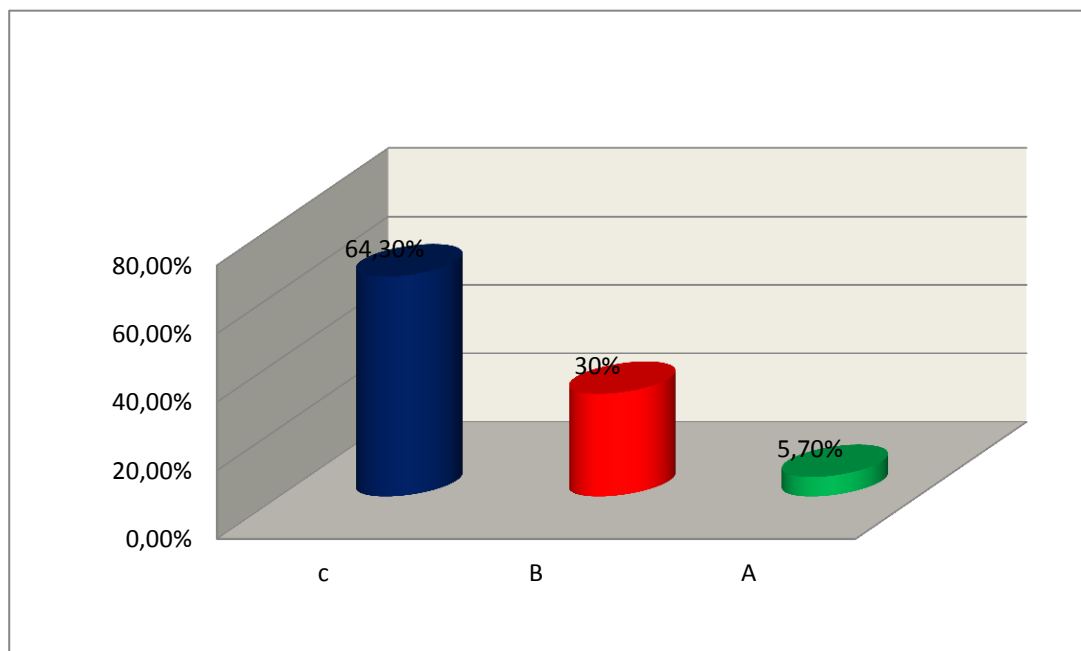
Question 06: According to you, the word culture refers to:

- a. Art, music, theatre, literature, dancing...etc.

- b. The way of life of a given human group including; customs, traditions, food, beliefs, behaviors, clothing, and ceremonies.
- c. Both of them.

Options	A	b	c	Total
Numbers	4	21	45	70
Percentages	5.7%	30%	64.3%	100%

Table 06: Students' Definitions of Culture



Graph 06: Students' Definitions of Culture

Statistically, the majority of students (64.3%) define culture as the particular way of life of a given human group as well as their artistic products. 30% of students think that culture is the special way of life of a particular society, whereas a low rate of students consider the artistic side in defining culture.

Question07: in your opinion, does culture influence the use of language?

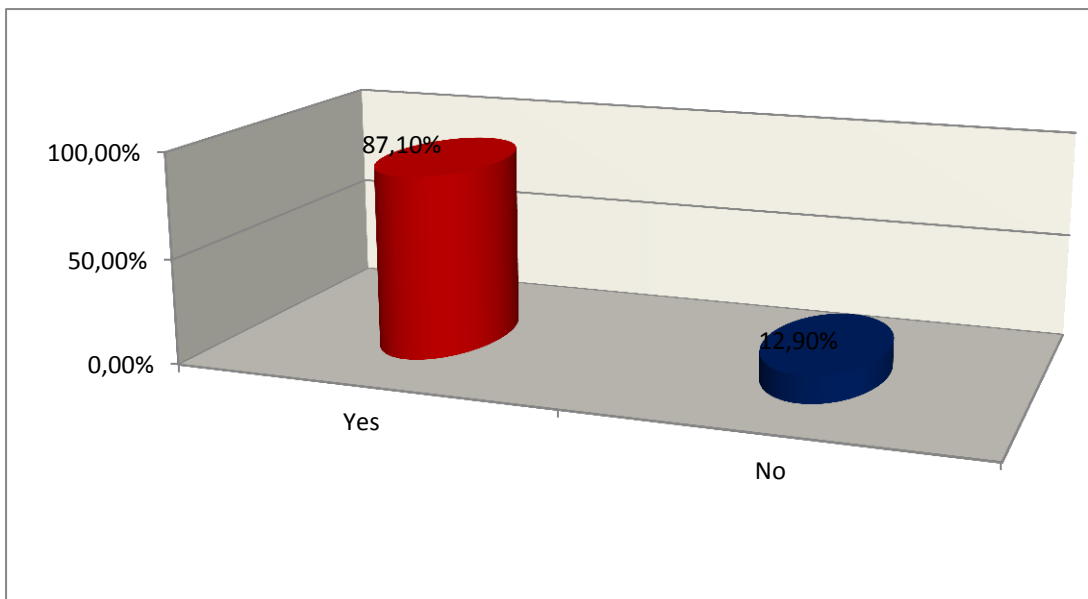
Yes

No

If "yes", how?

Options	Yes	No	Total
Numbers	61	9	70
Percentages	87.1%	12.9%	100%

Table 07. The Influence of Culture on the Use of Language.



Graph 07: The Influence of Culture on the Use of Language.

The results obtained make it clear that the majority of students (87.1%) agree with the fact that culture influences the use of language, while a low rate of students (12.9%) disagree with this fact. This means that most of students are aware of the relationship between culture and language.

According to the second part of this question, the respondents did not answer this question. For those who have answered, they think that culture influence the language in the way they speak, write, and communicate. They believe that culture determines what to say, when, how, and for whom in different settings.

Question 08: Do you think that it is important for EFL learners to know about the culture(s) of English-speaking countries, their ways of life, their worldviews ?

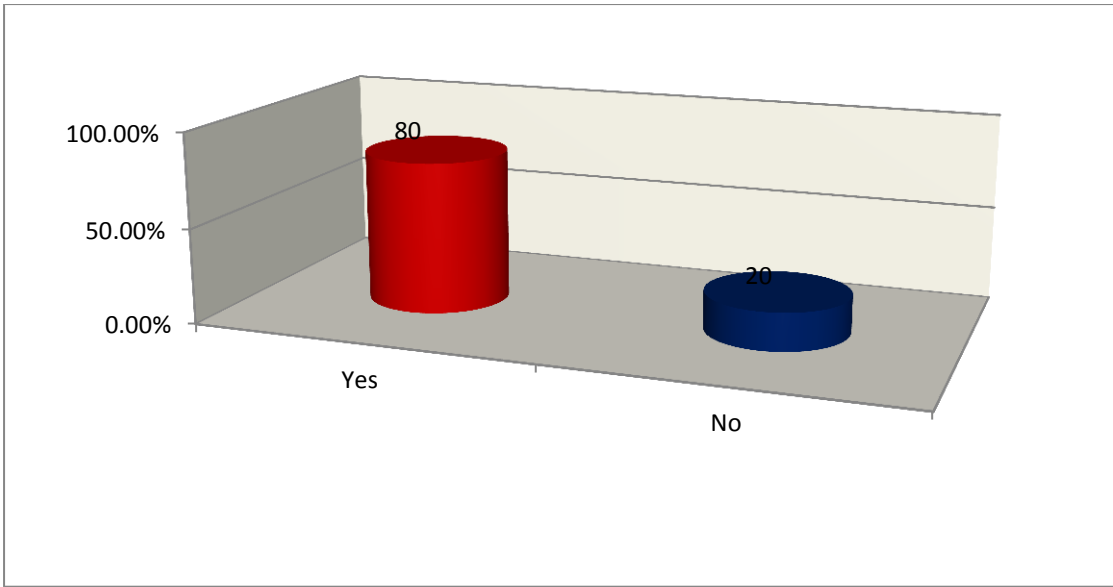
Yes

No

Please justify your answer.

Options	Yes	No	Total
Numbers	56	14	70
Petrcentages	80%	20%	100%

Table 08: Students' Views about the Importance Teaching Culture



Graph 08: Students' Views about the Importance Teaching Culture

From the table3.8, we notice that 80% of students are aware of the importance of being knowledgeable about culture related issues to develop high proficiency in English, whereas just 20% of students are unaware of its importance. Thus, the majority of second year LMD students of English are aware of the importance of mastering the socio-cultural aspect of the language.

Most of students did not really answer the second part of this question. Those who agreed this fact support their answers by saying that knowing the socio-cultural aspects helps them to speak fluently and interpret the hidden meaning when communicating with natives. Some students believe that culture helps them to improve their oral and written language. Moreover, they think that teaching culture enlarge their background information about cultures of the world.

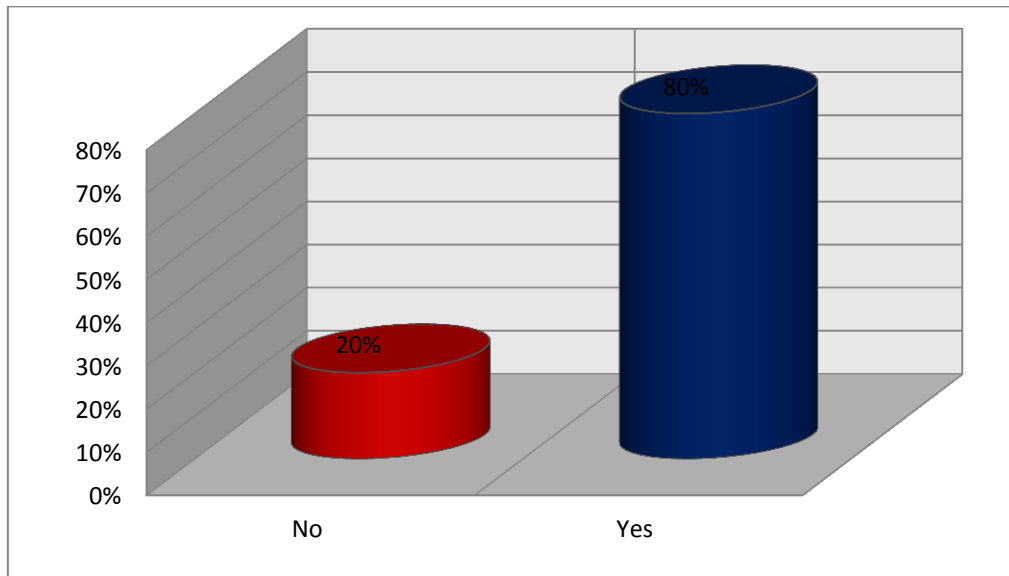
Question09: Does your English teacher talk to you about the importance of English-speaking countries culture?

Yes

No

Options	Yes	No	Total
Numbers	57	13	70
Percentages	81.4%	18.6%	100%

Table 09: Teachers and the Importance of Culture Teaching



Graph 09: Teachers and the Importance of Culture Teaching.

Throughout the results summarized in the table above, 80% of the respondents say that their teachers tend to mention the importance of learning culture in their lectures,

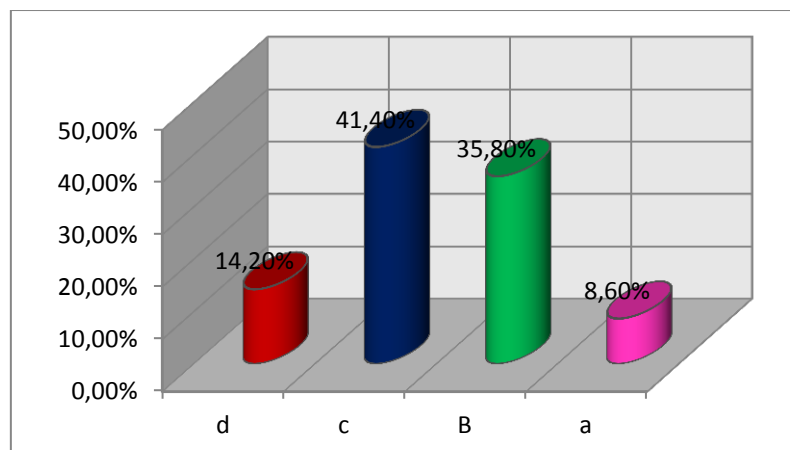
whereas just 20% of students give negative responses. This means that most of teachers of second year LMD students of English attempt to raise students' cultural awareness.

Question 10: How much of the foreign culture do you think you have learned up to now?

- a. Very much.
- b. Much.
- c. Little.
- d. Very little.

Options	a	b	C	d	Total
Numbers	6	25	29	10	70
Percentages	8.6%	35.8%	41.4%	14.2%	100%

Table 10: The students' Self Evaluation of the Amount Cultural Instruction they receive



Graph 10: The students' Self Evaluation of amount the cultural instruction they receive.

The amount of culture learned may reflect some difficulties in using the language. Statistically, 41.4% of students think that the amount of the foreign English culture they receive up to now is little followed by 35.8% of students who see that they receive much instruction about culture related issues of the English speaking countries. Students who think that they learn very little amount of the English language culture are represented by 14.2%. A low rate of students (8.6%) is satisfied with the amount of culture they have learned up to know.

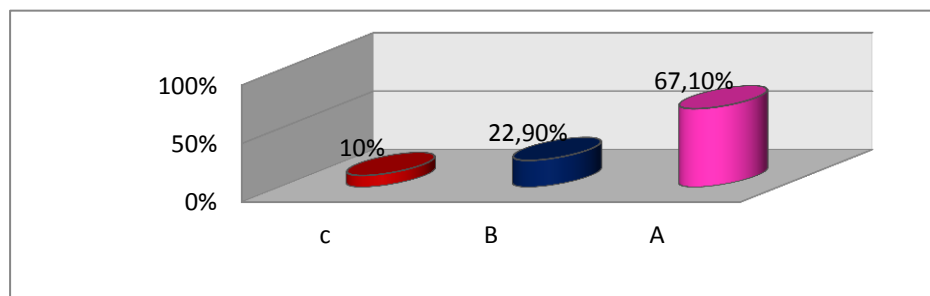
Section Four: Attitudes towards the English Culture.

Question 11: How do you find learning about others people’s culture?

- a. Very interesting.
- b. Not interesting.
- c. Boring.

Options	a	b	c	Total
Numbers	47	16	7	70
Percentage	67.1%	22.9%	10%	100%

Table11: Students' Attitudes towards the English Culture



Graph 11: Students' Attitudes towards the English Culture

Student's attitude is a psychological factor that contributes in rising students' awareness of the socio-cultural dimension. The data shown in the table3.11 and the above graph reveal that the majority of students (67.1%) find learning about the English speaking countries very interesting. 22.9% of students find it not interesting, whereas a low rate (10%) finds it boring.

Section Five: Difficulties in Using English.

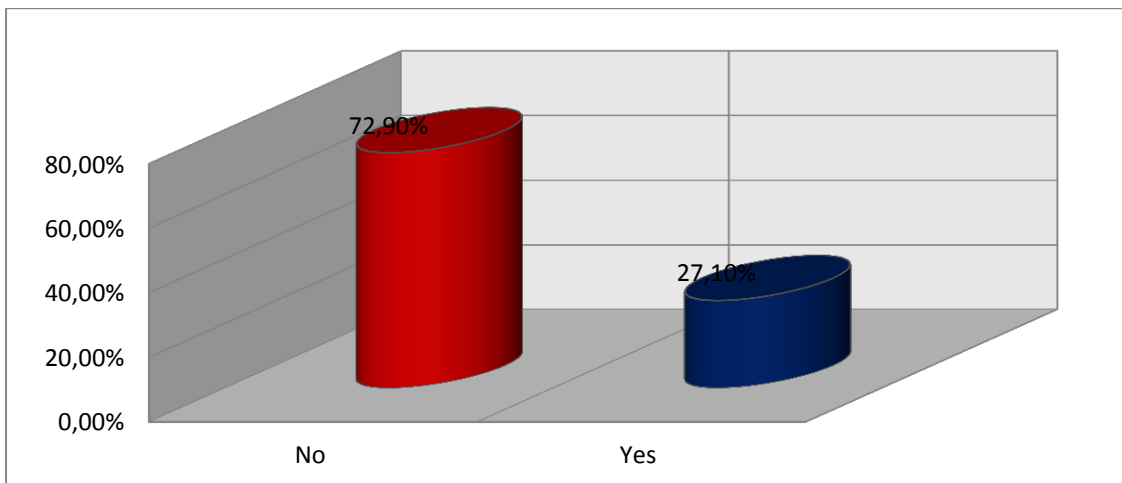
Question12: do you face any difficulties in using the language?

Yes

No

Options	Yes	No	Total
Numbers	19	51	70
Percentages	27.1%	72.9%	100%

Table12: Students' capability in Using the Language.



Graph 12: Students' capability in Using the Language.

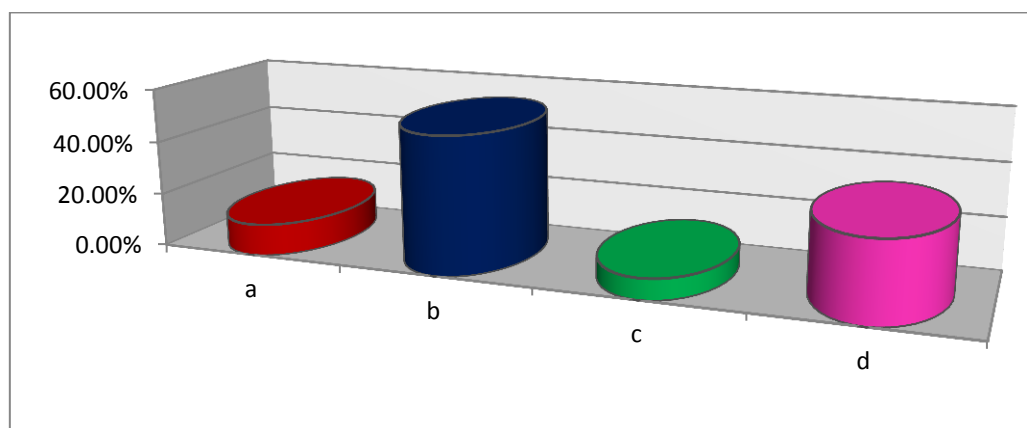
We notice that the majority of students (72.9%) have difficulties in using the language, whereas only 27.1% of them can use it without any difficulties. Thus, most of second year LMD students of English face problems in using the language and this may be a result of different reasons.

Question 13: 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

Options	a	b	c	D	Total
Numbers	6	26	4	15	51
Percentages	11.8%	51%	7.8%	29.4%	100%

Table 13: Students' English Language Difficulties.



Graph 13: Students' English Language Difficulties.

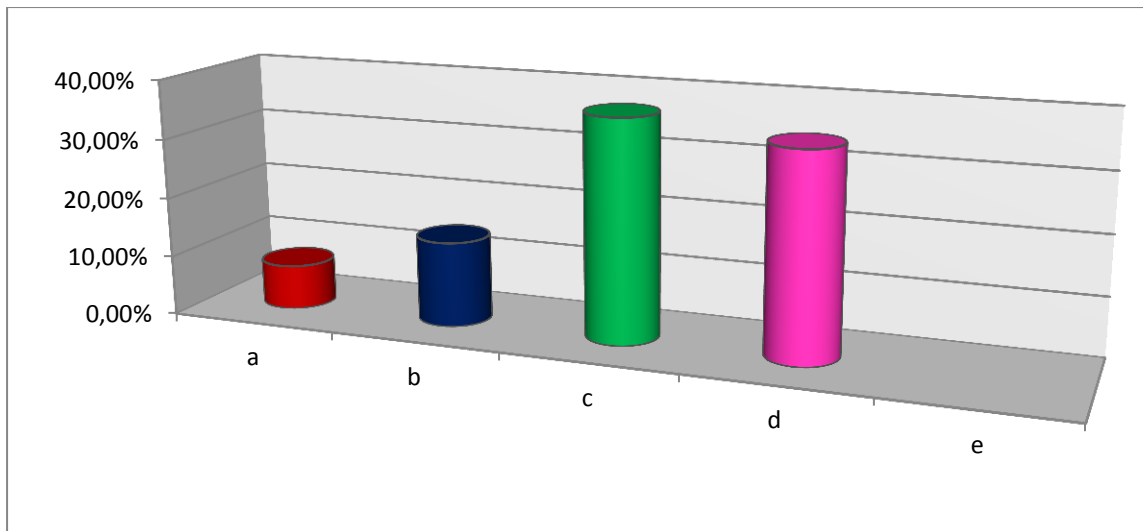
The data obtained in the above table reveal that the majority of students (51%) face more difficulties when they try to speak. Students with more writing difficulties make up 29.4% followed by students who face listening difficulties 11.8%. A low rate (7.8%) represents those who have reading difficulties. The conclusion drawn is that most of second year LMD students face more difficulties in their productive skills.

Question 14: Which of the following describes your level of oral performance in English?

- a. High
- b. Above average
- c. Average
- d. Below average
- e. Low.

Options	A	B	c	d	e	Total
Numbers	4	10	26	24	6	70
Percentages	5.7%	14.3%	37.1%	34.3%	8.6%	100%

Table 14: Students' Self Evaluation of Their Speaking Skill.



Graph 14: Students' Self Evaluation of Their Speaking Skill.

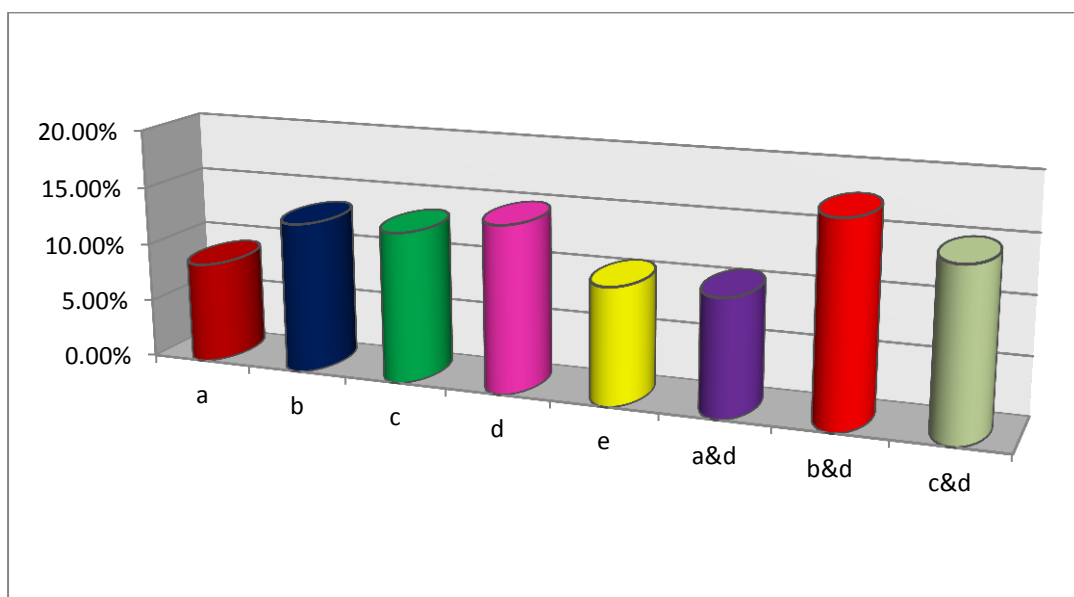
The statistics in the table 3.16 show that 37.1% of students have average level in speaking followed by 34.3% of students who evaluate their selves as above average speakers. Only 14.3% of students are good in speaking. A percentage of 8.6% of students have low speaking abilities. The lowest rate 5.7% is for those who have high speaking level. These results ensure that most of second year LMD students of English face difficulties in speaking and they are in need to enhance this skill.

Question15: What are your speaking difficulties?

- a. Pronunciation difficulties.
- b. Lack of vocabulary and structures.
- c. Lack of practice.
- d. Lack of the English foreign culture.
- e. All of those.

Options	A	b	c	d	E	a & d	b & d	c & d	Total
Num- bers	6	9	9	10	7	7	12	10	70
Percen- tages	8.6 %	12.9 %	12.9 %	14.3 %	10%	10%	17.1 %	14.3 %	100 %

Table 15: Students' Difficulties in Speaking.



Graph 15: Students' Difficulties in Speaking.

Through the above table and graph, we observe that most students' difficulties of speaking is due to both lack of vocabulary and lack of the English language cultural background making up a percentage of (17.1%). 14.3% of students speaking difficulties is resulted from the unawareness of the English speaking countries culture. Equal percentage of the previous one represents who have difficulties because of the lack of practice and the unawareness of the socio-cultural aspect of the language. 12.9%

represents two groups of students, those who have vocabulary difficulties, and whose difficulties are resulted from the lack practice.

10% of students' speaking difficulties are caused by pronunciation problems, lack of vocabulary, lack practice, the unawareness of the English language culture, and the same percentage (10%) for those who have pronunciation difficulties and problems in acquiring the English language culture. A low rate 8.6% represents students who have only pronunciation difficulties. The statistics reveal that most second year LMD students' difficulties is resulted from the lack of the English speaking countries cultural background, the lack of practice, and the lack of vocabulary and structures.

Section Six: cultural awareness and speaking.

Question 16: is it necessary to know about the foreign English culture in order to understand and speak English fluently?

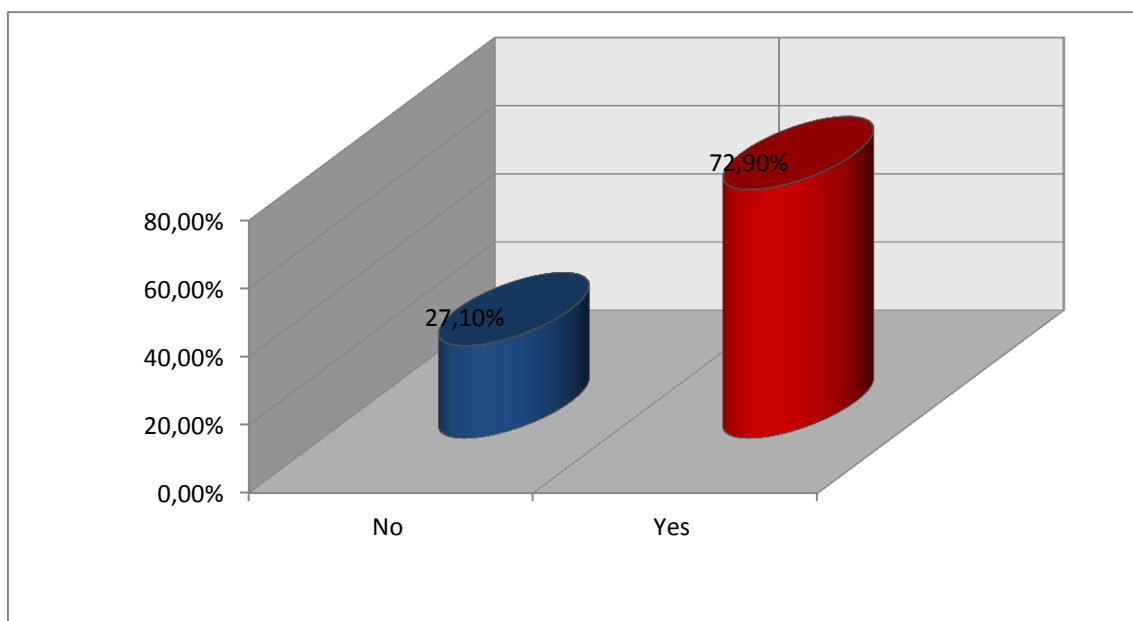
Yes

No

Please justify your answer.

Options	Yes	No	Total
Numbers	51	19	70
Percentages	72.9%	27.1%	100%

Table 16: Students' Views about the Effectiveness of Cultural awareness in Enhancing their Speaking Skill.



Graph 16: Students' Views about the Effectiveness of Cultural Awareness in Enhancing their Speaking Skill.

The results obtained demonstrate that the majority of students (72.9%) are aware of the importance of culture in enhancing their speaking skill. Minority of students (27.1%) believe that it is not necessary to know about the socio-cultural aspect of the language in order to be a fluent speaker of the language.

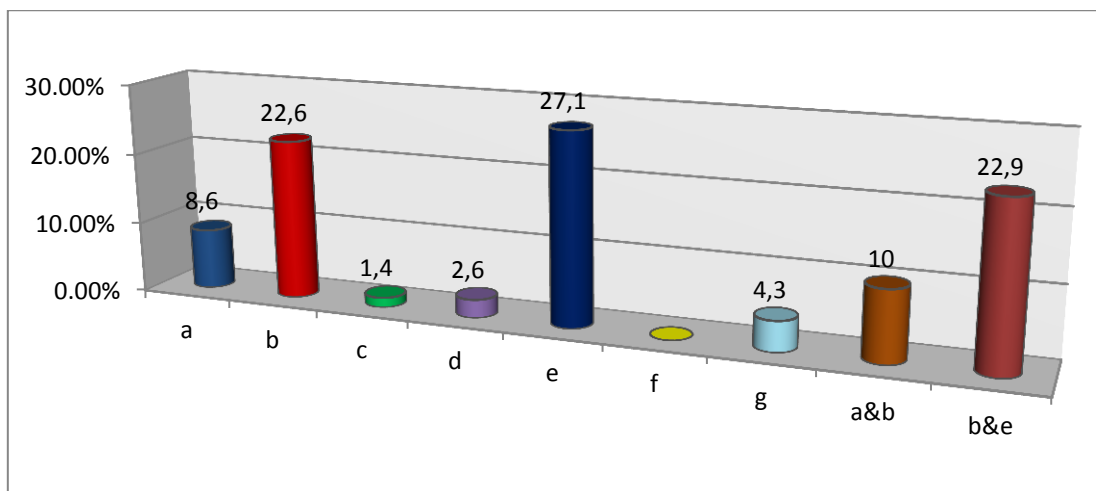
According to the second part of this question, some students did not respond at all, some of them gave unclear responses. The remaining students responded differently, they believe that mastering the socio-cultural aspect of the English language culture helps them to decide what to say in that say, And for whom in a given situation. Other students say that their awareness of the cultural background helps them to interpret what others say when interacting with natives, so that they can respond appropriately.

Question17: inside the classroom, which cultural activities are the most used to enhance your speaking skill?(You can tick more than one option)

- a. Watching and analyzing foreign films.
- b. Audio songs.
- c. Cooking recipes.
- d. Analyzing foreign proverbs and idioms.
- e. Role play.
- f. Newspapers and magazines.
- g. Analyzing patterns of communication.

Options	a	b	c	d	E	f	g	a& b	b &e	Total
Numbers	6	16	1	2	19	0	3	7	16	70
Percentages	8.6%	22.6	1.4	2.6%	27.1	0%	4.3%	10%	22.9	100%
		%	%		%				%	

Table 17: The Cultural Activities Used in EFL Class



Graph17: The Cultural Activities Used in EFL Class

The data summarized above reveal that the most used cultural task is role play task making up 27.1%. A percentage of 22.9% of students argue that a combination of audio songs and role play activities is used. Students who say that the most cultural resource used in their classrooms is audio songs are represented by 22.6% .A rate of 10% of students ensure the use both audio songs and analyzing foreign films followed by 8.6% for watching and analyzing foreign analyzing films.

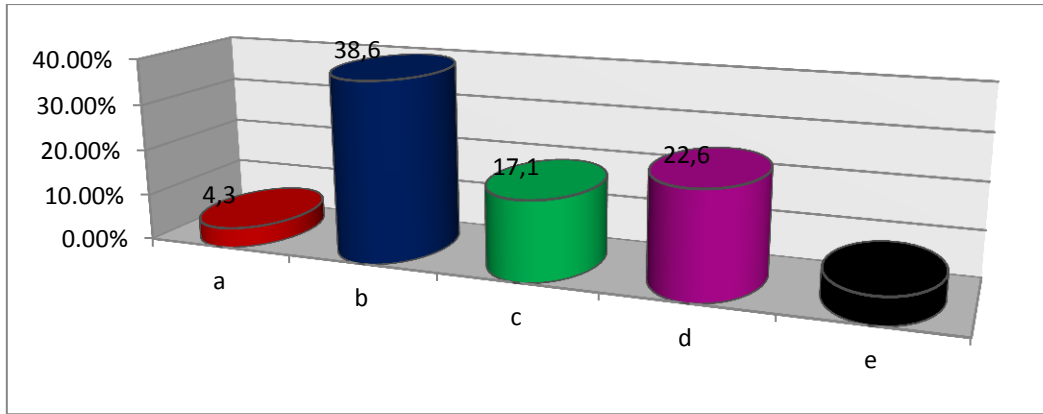
The use of patterns of communication makes up 4.3%, and 2.6 % represents the analysis of foreign proverbs and idioms. A low rate (1.4%) represents the use of cooking recipes tasks. A null rate makes up the use of newspapers and magazines. It is clear that most teachers of English who teach second year LMD students prefer to use some tasks rather than the others in order to raise students' cultural awareness and to improve their speaking skills.

Question 18: to what extent do the cultural tasks help you to improve your oral performance?

- a. Very much
- b. Somewhat
- c. Do not know
- d. Not very much
- e. Not at all

Options	a	b	C	d	e	Total
Numbers	11	27	12	16	4	70
Percentages	15.7%	38.6%	17.1%	22.6%	5.7%	100%

Table 18: The Extent to Which the Cultural Tasks Can Improve Students' Speaking Skill.



Graph 18: The Extent to Which the Cultural Tasks Can Improve Students' Speaking Skill.

Through the statistics shown in the table 3.20, we notice that 45.7% of students believe that the use of cultural activities in the classroom helps them somewhat to improve their speaking skill followed by 22.6% of students who believe that this aspect of language is not very effective in developing the students' speaking abilities. A rate of 17.1% of students are neutral, whereas students who think that knowing the socio-cultural dimension of the language helps them very much to enhance their oral proficiency make up 15.7% of the chosen sample. A low rate (5.7%) represents students who think that the socio-cultural aspect is not necessary at all in improving students' oral proficiency. We can draw a conclusion that most of second year LMD students of English are aware of extent to which these cultural tasks may help them to improve their speaking skills.

Question 19: in what way do you think that learning about English people's culture may help you to improve oral proficiency?

- a. Being fluent speaker in real communication settings.

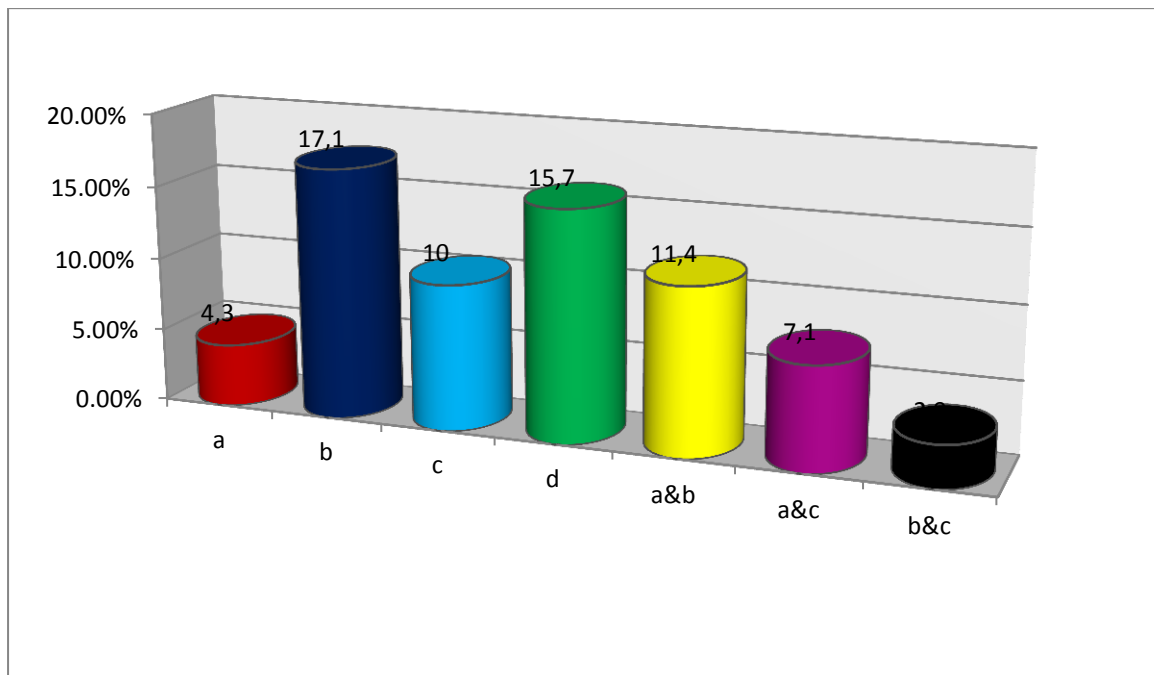
b. Developing your speaking skill during classroom discussion.

c. Developing your listening skill.

a. All of them.

Options	A	b	c	d	a & b	a & c	b & c	Total
Numbers	25	12	7	11	8	5	2	70
Percentages	35.7 %	17.1 %	10%	15.7%	11.4%	7.1%	2.9%	100%

Table 19: Students' perceptions about the way the socio-cultural aspect can improve their speaking skill.



Graph 19: Students' perceptions about the way the socio-cultural aspect can improve their speaking skill.

Statically, 35.7% of students believe that mastering the socio-cultural aspect of the language helps the EFL learner to be a fluent speaker in real communication settings, whereas 17.1% of students think that it helps them to improve their speaking skills in academic settings. Students who think that knowledge of the cultural background of the English speaking countries helps them interact with others fluently in daily life communication, in academic settings, and also to develop their listening skill are represented by 15.7% of the whole chosen sample.

A percentage of 11.4% of students argue that this knowledge influences the language they use in their daily life and in their classes too, while 10% of students believe that they can improve their listening skill through knowing this aspect of the language. Those who consider that the cultural knowledge can improve their language used in daily life communication and their listening skill make up 7.1% of whole number of the respondents. The lowest rate (2.9%) represents students who think that this knowledge helps them to develop their academic language and their listening skill. Thus, second year LMD students' cultural awareness of the socio-cultural dimension of the English language culture really helps them to enhance their speaking skill.

Question 20: We would greatly appreciate any further suggestions to overcome learners' speaking difficulties.

The majority of the respondents did not really add any comments or solutions. The remaining students gave some solutions to enlarge their cultural knowledge of the English language culture inside and outside the classroom, so that they speak fluently. Distinct suggestions are given to be implemented inside the EFL classes:

- Teachers should introduce the use of authentic materials into the classroom.

- Oral expressions lectures should include a variety of the cultural tasks that introduce the students to the culture of English speaking countries.
- Giving more timing for lectures of culture in order to give students the opportunity to more exposure to the English language culture.

Students have mentioned the importance of self efforts on raising their cultural awareness and improving their speaking skill. Outside the classroom, students have suggested that they can overcome this problem by:

- Reading books about the cultures of the English speaking countries.
- Using internet to know more about the English cultures, and exposing their selves to authentic materials that may facilitate learning about others' people cultures.
- The use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, what's app) to interact with natives, and to know more about their cultures and their patterns of communication.
- The exposure to authentic materials by watching foreign English films and listening English songs.

1.5. Findings

Through the analysis of the data collected with respect to students' responses, we generally remark that there are different opinions and situations related to culture teaching and students' speaking difficulties in EFL learning.

Although second year students are highly motivated to learn the English language and appreciate the English culture, they need to improve their English proficiency. Moreover, second year LMD students are aware of the importance of culture and its

impact on the use of language. However, but they are not satisfied with the English language culture instruction that they receive.

Furthermore, the role of the teacher is important in raising students' cultural awareness. Second year students of English face difficulties in using the language especially the spoken record. They argue that having extensive knowledge of the socio-cultural dimension of the foreign language will help them not only to improve their speaking skill in academic settings, but also in daily life communication with natives.

2. Teachers' interview

2.1. Teachers' sample.

A structured interview was designed for teachers of English at the Department of Foreign Languages at Mohamed kheider University. The interview was conducted with six (6) teachers who actually teach courses involved in our research and who have long experience in this area of study. The participants were chosen randomly from a whole population of 37 teachers of the English Division.

2.2. Description of the teachers' interview.

The teachers' interview is composed of ten questions. The interview is preceded by a short paragraph which states the purpose of the interview and gives some instructions to the participants. It is constituted of 10 distinct questions that encompass the most important aspects of our investigation. The two first questions deal with teachers' degrees and work experiences. The third question is designed to obtain information about teachers' views of the word 'culture'. Questions 4 and 5 are concerned

with the importance of teaching culture lectures in EFL teaching. The sixth question aims to have some insights into teaching culture at Biskra University. The seventh question aims to explore teachers' evaluation of the level of their students' speaking skill. Question 8 deals with teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of cultural awareness in enhancing students' speaking skill. In question 9, teachers are asked about the tasks that are used to develop students' speaking skill. The final statement invites teachers to make any further suggestions.

2.3. Data Analysis

Question 01: what is your educational degree?

The responses of teachers vary as follows:

Teacher 01: Doctorate degree.

Teacher 02: Magister degree.

Teacher 03: Magister degree.

Teacher 04: Doctorate degree.

Teacher 05: Magister degree.

Teacher 06: Magister degree.

The responses of the teachers reveal that all of them have high educational degrees, two of them have Doctorate degree, and the remaining teachers have Magister degree.

Question 02: How long have you been teaching English?

Teacher 01: 10 years.

Teacher 02: 02 years.

Teacher 03: 28 years.

Teacher 04: 10 years.

Teacher 05: 08 years

Teacher 06: 07 years.

The data obtained show that all the teachers have experienced teaching culture of the language or oral expression for different time periods between two years (02 years) and twenty eight years(28years). These responses demonstrate that all our informants are experienced teachers. Thus, we are able to obtain different, reliable opinions and views that can help us to reach our goals.

Question 03: What is your understanding of culture teaching?

It is clear that culture is double-faceted concept that can be defined from two distinct angles. On one hand, it can be defined as the set of artistic achievements of a given human group. On the other hand, it can be defined as the way of life of a particular society including: customs, traditions, food, beliefs, behaviors, and values. So that, teaching culture involves teachings these sets of knowledge. This question is designed to explore the teachers' views about which element of the dichotomy should be emphasized and why.

Teachers 01, 02, 03, and 06 believe that teaching culture involves making a combination of the artistic achievements and the ways of life. Those teachers argue that teaching culture is teaching how people of the foreign culture think, behave, speak, eat, and dress. We should introduce students to the artistic achievements of foreign societies

and how these aspects of life can influence the way they use the language. Teacher 03 and teacher 04 define teaching culture as teaching ways of life of others' people cultures taking into account their norms, values, beliefs, behaviors, daily life routines, customs, traditions, festivals, and ceremonies and their impact on the use of language.

Question 04: in your opinion, does the English culture influence the use of the English language? Please justify your answer

All the teachers respond positively to this question. They think that culture influences the use of language. They support their answers through the following arguments:

Teacher 01: culture shows the learner how to act appropriately in different situations using the right aspects of the English language.

Teacher 02: EFL learners cannot deal successfully with a native speaker, relying only on their mastery of the linguistic aspects of the language.

Teacher 03: knowing the English language culture enables learners to understand words, utterances, idioms and proverbs that are related to the English speaking countries cultures.

Teacher 04: learners who are aware of the English culture produce meaningful discourse that combines both language and culture.

Teacher 05: culture influences the use of the language through the use of some vocabulary related to that culture religion, customs, and life style. EFL learners can understand and use this vocabulary appropriately only when they consider native speakers' customs, traditions, values, and so on.

Teacher 06: knowledge of the English socio-cultural dimension enhances fluency in using the language. Moreover, it facilitates the comprehension of idiomatic expressions.

Teachers' responses reveal that the socio-cultural knowledge of the English language influences second year EFL students' use of the language. It improves the comprehension and the production of discourse by combining both the linguistic aspects and the socio-cultural aspects of the language. Knowing the cultural component enables students to understand words, utterances, and idiomatic expressions related to the target culture, so that they can fluently use the language in different situations. Thus, cultural skills are strongly required to operate successfully with different interlocutors.

Question 05: How important is learning the English culture in teaching English as a foreign language?

Teacher 01: learning about English speaking countries' cultures is of great importance. It introduces the learners to the main cultural dimensions found in the real context of the English language.

Teacher 02: learning about the English language culture is important for EFL learners since it helps them to manage successful conversations especially with native speakers.

Teacher 03: culture is very important in EFL learning because learners cannot understand the use some vocabulary structures without understanding its socio-cultural context.

Teacher 04: knowing the cultural background of the English speaking countries is very important because culture and language are two dimensions of the same coin.

Teacher 05: culture is very important in EFL learning. It is the tied part of the language. Learners have to consider culture in order to understand the language and to use it accurately and correctly in its particular context.

Teacher 06: culture is very important to learn because it is considered a motivational factor in learning English. Moreover, learners need to be culturally competent, not just linguistically in order to develop high proficiency in English.

The data obtained demonstrate that integrating the socio-cultural dimension in EFL learning is of a great importance. Since culture and language are interrelated, second level EFL students need to master both aspects of the language in order to develop high proficiency in English. In addition, learning about the English language culture is a factor that motivates students to learn the English language. Furthermore, the socio-cultural knowledge helps students to interpret hidden meanings and react appropriately by using meaningful language in a given context.

Question 06: can you evaluate the situation of teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University?

Teacher 01: teacher 01 thinks that teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University is not really good because of the lack of prescribed programs and the absence of authentic materials.

Teacher 02: s/he argues that although there is a course in the study of culture of the language, students still ignore many important issues related to the cultural backgrounds of the British and the American societies. Because one course is not enough to introduce the learner to all the cultural elements of those societies.

Teacher 03: teacher 03 thinks that the situation of teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University is somewhat good.

Teacher 04: teacher 04 ensures that teaching culture is not given sufficient attention at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University. S/he adds that some teachers focus only on the linguistic aspects and disregard the cultural aspects of the language.

Teacher 05: for teacher 05, teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University is good. S/he points out that culture is introduced in different lectures; oral expression, literature, culture of the language. However, some notions are mentioned but not well explained and exemplified.

Teacher 06: teacher 06 thinks the level of teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University is average, not good and not bad.

The responses above reveal that three teachers think the teaching of culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University is not really good and is not given much attention, whereas two teachers argue that it is good. Only one teacher thinks that it is average. Thus, most of the informants think that the situation of teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University is not really good and the socio-cultural aspects are not given as much attention as the linguistic ones.

Question 07: How do you describe your students' level of oral proficiency in English?

Teacher 01: teacher 01 assesses his/her students' speaking skill level as poor.

Teacher 02: s/he points out that his/her students' oral proficiency levels vary from one group to another, but generally students' speaking skill is good.

Teacher 03: s/he evaluates his/her students as having acceptable speaking abilities.

Teacher 04: s/he responds to this question by saying that some of his/her students are good, whereas others are not. In general they have average oral proficiencies.

Teacher 05: s/he states that his/ her students as having average speaking skill levels for most of them.

Teacher 06: teacher 06 evaluates his/her students have average speaking abilities.

Through the data shown above, there is a variety in students' levels of oral proficiency, but the majority of students have average speaking abilities. Thus, a large number of students face speaking difficulties that should be overcome in order to enhance their oral proficiency.

Question 08: Do you think that learners' awareness of the English culture can help them to enhance their speaking skill? How?

Teacher 01: teacher 01 responds positively to this question. S/he argues that EFL learners' cultural awareness enables them to choose the appropriate vocabulary in the different social situations.

Teacher 02: s/he ensures that EFL learners cultural awareness influences their oral proficiency positively because students will be knowledgeable about issues related to the way they should operate in each social/ cultural situation, and which vocabulary and paralinguistic features they should use in order to communicate successfully with others.

Teacher 03: s/he thinks that EFL learners' cultural awareness can help them to reduce their speaking difficulties, so that they can speak English fluently. S/he points out that EFL cultural awareness enables them to pronounce correctly. Moreover, they will be able to comprehend and use the English idiomatic expressions appropriately.

Teacher 04: s/he responds positively to this question. S/he justifies his/her answer by the effectiveness of cultural awareness in improving learners' ability to understand idiomatic expressions and the informal language of the English speaking societies.

Teacher 05: s/he agrees that EFL learners' awareness of the English language culture helps them to enhance their speaking skills. S/he supports her/his response by presenting some arguments. EFL learners' cultural awareness enables them to use some words and expressions correctly. Moreover, they will be able to use the paralinguistic features appropriately (gestures, behaviors, facial expressions...etc) that are tolerated in the target culture. Furthermore, they will be able to pronounce words and expressions accurately.

Teacher 06: according to teacher 06, cultural awareness can absolutely help the EFL learners to improve their speaking skills. S/he adds they will be able to use the suitable vocabulary in its appropriate context.

The teachers' responses above clearly reveal that second year EFL students' awareness of the socio-cultural dimension of the language enhances their speaking skills in a way that it determines what they should say, how, to whom in a given context. Students will be able to appropriately and accurately comprehend and use words, utterances, idiomatic expressions, paralinguistic features, and informal language of the target language with correct pronunciation(intonation, accent, rhythm) in order to manage successful communication in a particular context.

Question 09: inside the classroom, which cultural tasks do you use to enhance your learners' speaking skill?

The respondents gave the following responses:

Teacher 01: according to teacher 01, s/he tends to use a variety of activities in order to fit students' needs and interests.

Teacher 02: teacher 02 argues that s/he uses different situational activities such as, discussion, reading activities, role play, oral presentation about English public figures or habits.

Teacher 03: s/he attempts to enhance his students' oral performance by the use of role play, videos, and debates.

Teacher 04: in order to overcome learners' speaking difficulties, teacher 04 tends to use simulation and role play activities.

Teacher 05: s/he tends to use discussion activities, role play, and analyzing foreign idioms.

Teacher 06: s/he mainly uses foreign English movies and analyzing patterns of communication activities.

We notice that the teachers of English at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University use a set of cultural tasks to improve students' oral performance and to overcome their speaking difficulties. These cultural tasks are: role play, discussion, analyzing English films and videos, oral presentation about some English culture elements, and analyzing patterns of communication activities.

Question 10: we would greatly appreciate any further suggestions to develop learners' cultural awareness and overcome their speaking difficulties.

Teachers suggested different points.

Teacher 01: s/he suggests that EFL local learning conditions (class size, absence of authenticity) should be comfortable. S/he adds that teachers should use authentic materials.

Teacher 02: s/he focuses on the integration of media in EFL teaching and the use of authentic materials. S/he adds curriculum and schedule of culture lectures should fit learners' needs.

Teacher 03: s/he argues that EFL teachers should raise their students' cultural awareness to understand and accept the foreign culture despite its differences and probably the contradictory aspects of EFL students' native culture.

Teacher 04: s/he points out that EFL teachers should encourage their students to read, listen, and watch materials of a cultural content outside the classroom.

Teacher 05: s/he suggests that teachers should extensively use the authentic materials (videos, songs...etc).

Teacher 06: s/he considers that the use of authentic materials is the best way to overcome students' speaking problems, so that students can enhance their oral performance.

Teachers' suggests some solutions in order to overcome students' speaking difficulties. They are summarized in the following:

- The creation of comfortable EFL teaching and learning conditions for both learners and teachers.
- Teachers should use authentic materials.
- Both teachers and learners should be aware of the target culture and respect it even if it is conflicted with their own culture.
- Learners should read and watch foreign English films outside the class.

- Teachers should bring cultural artifacts into the classroom and use a variety of cultural activities.
- The integration of the new technology in teaching.
- Designing well-graded and thorough curriculum of culture lectures and more time scheduling of culture sessions.

2.5. Findings

The results obtained from teachers' interview are of great importance to reach the goals of the present study. After analyzing teachers' responses, we draw the following conclusions:

- Integrating the socio-cultural dimension in EFL teaching is of great importance.
- Although teachers are aware of the importance of teaching culture and its influence on the use of language, the situation of teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University is not really good.
- EFL learners still face many speaking difficulties.
- Raising EFL learners' cultural awareness will help them to overcome these difficulties and enhance their speaking skills.
- Time scheduling is not sufficient to raise EFL learners' cultural awareness.
- Although teachers use different cultural activities in the classroom in order to raise students' cultural awareness, the lack of authenticity still represents a serious problem.

Conclusion

Throughout the analysis and the interpretation of the data obtained from both students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview, different results can be demonstrated. First, integrating culture within FEL teaching curriculum is of great importance for learners in order to develop high proficiency in English. In addition, both EFL teachers and second year LMD students are aware of the importance of the socio-cultural dimension nevertheless learners do not have much background knowledge about this aspect of language. EFL learners' poor cultural background knowledge is mainly due to problems of time scheduling and the lack of authenticity. Thus, raising second level EFL students' awareness of the socio-cultural dimension of the target language improves students' oral performance and reduces speaking difficulties.

General Conclusion

The current study has dealt with the influence of cultural awareness on speech production. The core of this study is investigation of the effectiveness of the socio-cultural knowledge of the foreign language in enhancing the oral performance and reducing speaking difficulties of second level students of English at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University.

The first chapter has been devoted to the theoretical aspects of the concept of culture. We have presented distinct conceptualizations of culture proposed by different researchers and explored its features while considering the various elements of culture that determine the shared socio-cultural knowledge of a given human group. Moreover, we have shed light on the connections that exist between culture, communication, and language. We have also analyzed some significant concepts like culture shock and acculturation.

The second chapter has dealt with the various components of EFL speaking. We have started with the definitions of the speaking skill and determined its different functions and characteristics. Then, we have presented the linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge needed for producing successful speech. The notion of speaking competence has been discussed and explained in this chapter. As a final point, we have considered EFL speaking classes in terms of its problems and the activities used in the classroom to reduce these problems.

The field work of this study required two tools in order to confirm or dismiss our research hypothesis. A questionnaire has been distributed to a random sample of second year LMD students and an interview that has been designed and managed with teachers who have a long experience in this field of study.

The analysis of the data obtained from students' and teachers' responses resulted with four main points. First, second year LMD students of English are aware of the importance of the cultural background knowledge in EFL learning, but their proficiency is very limited in connection with this crucial component of language. Also, since they are unaware of the socio-cultural aspects of the language, they tend to miscomprehend and misuse some vocabulary, paralinguistic features related to the English culture; and they even mispronounce certain words and expressions. In addition, raising second year LMD students' cultural awareness enhances their speech production and decreases their speaking difficulties. On the other hand, the situation of teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University is confronted to certain pedagogical and materialistic problems. As a final point, these results confirmed our research hypothesis and; therefore, realized our research goals

However, we should recognize that our research work is limited to Algerian EFL students from Arabic and Tamazight cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the sample of the study has been deliberately restrained in terms of the simple chosen because of time restrictions and the large population of second year students.

Recommendations

The EFL learners accurate and appropriate use of language necessitate that teachers and learners should give as much importance to the socio-cultural dimension of the language as they do with the linguistic system. As a matter of fact, cultural awareness allows the use of the English language appropriately and accurately. Accordingly, we propose some pedagogical recommendations that may contribute in solving the problems related to learners' cultural unawareness:

- EFL teachers should be aware that culture can be introduced in all courses explicitly or implicitly. Courses of literature, culture of the language, oral expression, written expression, theme and version represent appropriate context to introduce the learner to the English culture.
- Teachers should introduce concrete English culture constituents inside the classroom by using authentic materials such as foreign English films and videos, audio songs, and so on.
- Learners should be aware of the differences between their own culture and the culture of English speaking countries and respect it even if it contradicts their own beliefs, traditions, or rituals.
- EFL Teachers should motivate their students to know more about the English culture by designing suitable activities that fit the learners' needs.
- Teachers should encourage learners to develop their background knowledge of the socio-cultural dimension of the foreign language outside the classroom. This can be achieved through reading books, using internet, chat rooms or social media communication with English native speakers.
- EFL curriculum designers should give equal importance to both culture and linguistic teaching.
- Time allotment to the target culture teaching should be significantly increased.

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Appendix 01: The students' questionnaire

Students' questionnaire.

Dear students

This questionnaire is part of a research work . It is undertaken in order to identify the role and the effectiveness of cultural awareness in English foreign language learners' speaking skill ,and to enhance their proficiency in using the spoken English language. The findings of the current research are based on your responses. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Instructions: Please, tick the appropriate box (or boxes) (√) and make full statements whenever necessary .

Section One: General Information. Please specify

1. Sex:

a. Male.

b. Female.

2.Age:.....

Section Two : language learning (you can tick more than one option).

3.Are you learning English because:

a- It is the language of technology and scientific research?

b- You want to know more about its speakers and their cultures?

c- Its mastery is required to get a good job?

d- It is a compulsory school subject?

e- You like it and you want to speak it fluently?

4. How would you assess your level in learning English?

a. Good

b. Average.

c. Low

5. What does learning English mean most to you?
- a. Learning how to build words and sentences
 - b. Learning the meanings of words and sentences
 - c. Learning how to pronounce words and sentences.
 - d. Learning about the culture(s) of English-speaking people

Other: Please, specify

.....

Section Three: Cultural awareness.

6. According to you , the word culture refers to:
- a. Art, music, theatre, literature, dancing...etc.
 - b. The way of life of a given human group including; customs, traditions, food, beliefs, behaviours, clothing, and ceremonies.
 - c. both of them.

7. In your opinion, does culture influence the use of language?

Yes No

If "yes", how?

.....

.....

8. Do you think that it is important for EFL learners to know about the culture(s) of English-speaking people, their way(s) of life, their worldview(s) in?

Yes No

Please justify your answer

.....

.....

9. Does your English teacher deal with the culture of English-speaking countries?

Yes No

10. How much of the foreign culture do you think you have learned up to now?

- a. Very much.
- b. Much.
- c. Little.
- d. Very little.

Section Four: Attitudes Towards the English Culture.

11. How do you find learning about others people's culture?

- a. Very interesting.
- b. Not interesting.
- c. Boring.

Section Five: Difficulties in Using English.

12. do you face any difficulties in using the language?

Yes

No

13. 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

14. Which of the following describes your level of oral performance in English?

- a. High
- b. Above average
- c. Average
- d. Below average

e. Low .

15. What are your speaking difficulties?

- a. Pronunciation difficulties.
- b. Lack of vocabulary and structures.
- c. Lack of practice.
- d. Lack of the English foreign culture.
- e. All of those.

Section Six: cultural awareness and speaking.

16. is it necessary to know about the foreign English culture in order to understand and speak English fluently?

Yes No

Please justify your answer

.....

.....

17. Inside the classroom , which of the following cultural activities are used to enhance your speaking skill?(you can tick more than one option)

- a. Watching and analyzing foreign films.
- b. Audio songs.
- c. Cooking recipes.
- d. Analyzing foreign proverbs and idioms.
- e. Role play.
- f. Newspapers and magazines.
- g. Analyzing patterns of communication.

18. To what extent do the cultural tasks help you improve your oral performance?

- a. Very much
- b. Somewhat
- c. Do not know
- d. Not very much

e. Not at all

19. In what way do you think that learning about English people's culture may help you to improve oral proficiency?

- a. Being fluent in real communication settings.
- b. Developing your speaking skill during classroom discussion.
- c. Developing your understanding of what is said.
- d. Developing your listening skill.

20. We would greatly appreciate any further suggestions to develop learners' cultural awareness?.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you.

Appendix 02: the Teachers' Interview

Teachers' Interview.

Dear teachers:

This interview is part of a research work. Your completion of this interview will be of great help to bring to fruition the present research work. The main purpose of this interview is to identify the role and the effectiveness of the cultural dimension in enhancing English foreign language learners' oral performances. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions.

Thank you very much in advance for taking the time to share your experience and

1. What is your educational degree?.....
2. How long have you been teaching English?.....
3. What is your understanding of culture teaching?.....
.....
.....
4. in your opinion, does the English culture influence the use of the English language?
Please justify your answer.....
.....
.....
5. How important is learning the English culture in teaching English as a foreign language?
.....
6. Can you evaluate the situation of teaching culture at the Department of Foreign Languages at Biskra University?
.....

7. Do you describe your students' level of oral proficiency in English?

.....

8. Do you think that learners' awareness of the English culture can help them to enhance their speaking skill? How?.....

.....

9. Inside the classroom, which cultural tasks do you use to enhance your learners' speaking skill?

.....

.....

10. We would greatly appreciate any further suggestions to develop learners' cultural awareness and overcome their speaking difficulties

.....

.....

ملخص البحث

إن الهدف الأساسي من تعليم اللغات الأجنبية هو القدرة على استعمال اللغة بكفاءة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة تأثير العامل الثقافي على التعبير الشفهي لمتعلم اللغة الأجنبية. إن الكفاءة اللغوية تقتضي الإلمام بقواعد اللغة و الجانب الثقافي لهذه اللغة. لهذا، فقد أولينا الاهتمام في هذه الدراسة للتخلص من التعبير الشفهي في اللغة الانكليزية . الناتجة عن اللاوعي الثقافي، فكانت فرضيتنا لهذا البحث كانت كالآتي :إذا كان المتعلم الأجنبي على دراية بالجانب الاجتماعي والثقافية للغة الأجنبية ، فانه بذلك يكون قادرا عل تحسين الأداء الشفهي للغة المستهدفة. نصبو في دراستنا هذه إلى معرفة أسباب انتشار الظاهرة في أقسام اللغة الانكليزية بالجزائر، وبذلك نقترح حلولاً لها . و لتحقيق هذا الهدف قمنا بتوزيع استبيان على طلبة السنة الثانية ماستر بفرع اللغة الانكليزية بجامعة بسكرة، كما أجرينا مقابلات مع عدد من أساتذة التخصص نظرا لتجربتهم الطويلة في مجال بحثنا، و لكونهم أكثر الأساتذة علما بالصعوبات التي تواجه هؤلاء الطلبة . بعد تحليل البيانات والنتائج المتوصل إليها، استطعنا إثبات فرضية الدراسة، وحاولنا استخلاص بعض الاقتراحات البيداغوجية والتي تهدف إلى إيجاد حلول مناسبة للمشكلة، ومساعدة المتعلم الجزائري للتغلب على مشكلة اللاوعي الثقافي في استعمال و للغة الانكليزية.