

Investigating the Effect of EFL Cultural Expressions on Reinforcing FL
Learners' Communicative Competence

Jihan Abbas Mohammed Osman¹ - Mahmoud Ali Ahmed²

Abstract:

This study aims at investigating the importance of teaching Foreign Language cultural expressions in developing secondary school students' communicative competence. It also investigates if foreign language cultural expressions motivate secondary schools students to communicate fluently. The data were collected from a random sample of teachers of English working in both public and private schools in Omdurman. A questionnaire was used in order to collect the data. Descriptive analytical method was conducted so as to analyze the data. The analysis of the questionnaire has shown the following results: English language Cultural expressions play essential roles in reinforcing communicative competence among students at secondary schools. English language Cultural expressions provide excellent opportunities for the learners to express their personal opinions. Some activities like role-play are important for motivating students to practice speaking fluently. English language Cultural expressions raise students' ability of understanding native speakers. **The researcher recommends that:** English language syllabus should be based on culture

Keywords: Culture, Cultural Expressions, Communicative Competence.

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لبحث أهمية تدريس العبارات الثقافية للغة الإنجليزية في تطوير المقدرة التخاطبية لدى الطلاب في المرحلة الثانوية، وما اذا كانت العبارات الثقافية تسهم في تحفيز الطلاب للتحدث بطلاقة. وقد جمعت البيانات من عينة عشوائية من معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في كلا من القطاعين الخاص و الحكومي في مدينة أمدردمان. اعتمد البحث على الاستبانة كأداة لجمع البيانات التي حلت باستخدام الاحصاء الوصفي وكذلك تحليل المحتوى خالصا الى النتائج الآتية: أن العبارات الثقافية للغة الإنجليزية تؤدي الى تعزيز المقدرة التخاطبية لطلاب المرحلة الثانوية، وان تدريس الثقافة الإنجليزية يساهم في عملية تعلم اللغة، اذ انها تساعد الطلاب على تعلم اللغة من خلال تحفيزهم لتحدث اللغة الإنجليزية والتعبير عن آرائهم الشخصية. كما أنها ترفع من قدرتهم على فهم متحدثي اللغة الإنجليزية. واخيرا يقدم البحث المقترحات والتوصيات الي المعلمين وواضعي المناهج والخبراء للنظر فيها والعمل بها وتطبيق ما يمكن لاجل تطوير مقدرة التخاطب لدى طلاب المدارس الثانوية والتوصيات التي خرجت بها الباحثة هي:اهمية تدريس العبارات الثقافية للغة الإنجليزية الذي يساهم في تعزيز المقدرة التخاطبية والبحث عن العلاقة بين ثقافة اللغة الإنجليزية وتدريس اللغة من اجل تعزيز المقدرات التخاطبية.

Introduction

Language and culture are two inseparable entities , therefore culture has taken an important place in foreign language teaching and learning. It has been widely recognized that language is used as a main medium Also learners are not always able to use the language probably as it

through which culture is expressed. Mastering grammar and vocabulary is useful but does not necessarily lead learners' insight , that is to say one's mastery of the grammatical elements alone does not guarantee the ability to communicate through language. required . Since they are not aware enough of the target language culture



Teaching culture involves developing in learners critical cultural awareness of their own culture and target language culture as well as the skills and attitudes to understand and successfully interact with people from other cultures, that is to become communicatively competent . Communicating effectively in a language requires the speaker's good understanding of linguistic, sociolinguistic and socio-cultural aspects of that language. This understanding will enable them to use the right language in the right context for the right purpose and then they can be referred to as communicatively competent.

However, the realization of this level of knowledge and understanding is always a challenge for foreign language learners. They often struggle through their journey towards the achievement of this goal and are often met with many obstacles.

2: Statement of the problem:

It has been observed by so many linguistic scholars e.g. "Stern. H ,1983:191" that much of the work of language is focusing on the side of structures and vocabulary rather than culture . The researcher intends to investigate the subject matter and answer the following research problem as to what extent do cultural expressions help in acquiring communicative competence for EFL learners .

3: Objectives of the study:

This Study aims at :

- Showing the importance of teaching Foreign Language cultural expressions in developing secondary school students' communicative competence.
- Expanding teachers' understanding of teaching Foreign language Culture

- Explaining methods and techniques for teaching Foreign Language Culture in EFL class rooms
- Finding out how communicative competence developed through cultural expressions for students in secondary schools.

4: Significance of the study:

This study shed light on the role of teaching foreign language cultural expressions in helping secondary school students to become competent communicators . As well as it may encourage teachers to use cultural aspects in language teaching process as a motive to achieve all linguistics skills. Also it may help secondary schools students to become aware of cultural differences and similarities.

5: Questions of the study:

This study raises the following questions:

- 1- To what extent do foreign language cultural expressions reinforce secondary schools students' communicative competence?
- 2- To what extent do foreign language cultural expressions motivate secondary schools students to communicate fluently?
- 3- How can teaching foreign language cultural expressions develop secondary school students' communicative competence?

6: The hypotheses:

- 1- Teaching foreign language culture reinforces secondary school students' communicative competence.
- 2- Teaching foreign language culture motivates secondary school students to communicate fluently.
- 3- Teaching foreign language culture enriches secondary school students' insight.



7: Methodology of the study:

A quantitative research will be conducted according to the descriptive analytical method.

The researcher used a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data .The sample was the teachers of English Language in Omdurman, Sudan.

The questionnaire distributed to forty teachers of English Language, whom were chosen randomly, from different schools. The sample were from both governmental and private schools.

8: Delimitations of the study :

This study will be concerned with secondary school English Language Teachers in Omdurman locality. 2020. It investigated the effect of EFL cultural expressions on reinforcing FL learners' communicative competence.

9:Review of Relevant Literature:

Definitions of Culture

According to Richard J.et al,(1985:71) culture is the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs behavior , social habits , etc of the members of a particular society. Kramsch (1998) describes culture as a membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history and common imaginings . Liddicoot, Papademetre Scarino and Kohler (2003) define culture as a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviors, practices ,rituals and lifestyles of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artifacts they produce and institutions they create. (cited in IOSR journals, 2013:20-21). According to Brown (2000) culture is " the ideas, custom, skills , arts and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time" ; while Brooks(1975) refers to culture

as everything in human life and the best of everything in human life . (cited in IOSR journals, 2013:20-21) .

As mentioned in Forum(2008) it seems useful to make a distinction between the so called big culture and small culture. the big C part of a given culture is usually easy to study , as it constitutes factual knowledge about the fine arts such as literature, music , dance, painting ,sculpture, theater and film. Small-c culture on the other hand comprises a wide variety of aspects , many of which are inter connected, including attitudes, assumptions , beliefs , perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs , celebrations, rituals, politeness convention, patterns of interaction and discourse organization, the use of time in communication ,and the use of physical space and body language. English Language Forum(2008,11)

Niteo S (2010) has defined culture as "the ever -changing values , traditions, social and political relationships , and the world view created ,shared and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history ,geographic location ,language ,social class and religion" . Niteo S (2010:136). **2-2: Relation Between Language and Culture**

As cited in Stern . H (1983), Brooks 1960 States that language and culture are not separable; language cannot be separated completely from the culture in which it is deeply imbedded(Rivers 1981). In 1960 an American committee on language and culture expressed the relationship Which it regarded as essential in three statements.



'(1) language is a part of culture. and must be approached with the same attitudes that govern our approach to culture as a whole. (2) language conveys culture , so that the language teacher is also of necessity a teacher of a culture .(3) language itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs, which cannot be ignored in the language classroom ' (Bishop1960). Seelye (1974) regards it as an important objective for the learner to understand the interaction between language and social variables ,and to be able to appreciate the cultural connotation of phrases. Stern . H (1983:251).

Also Stern .H(1983) claims that : language learner should not only study the cultural context (language And culture) but that he/she should be made aware of the interaction between language and culture ,(language IN language ,culture IN language). Stern .H(1983:206).

Malinowski (1923) argued for this point of view: "language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture ,the tribal life and customs of the people cannot be explained without constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterance". (cited in stern 1983:207).

Wei as cited in Journal of Humanities and Social science (IOSR-IHSS) ,(2013); argues that : language has a dual character: a means of communication as well as a carrier of culture. Language without culture is inconceivable ,and vice versa. A particular language is a mirror of a particular culture . By studying a language ,students gain knowledge and understanding of the culture in which the language is embedded; in fact ,students cannot truly learn the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs. (Journal

of Humanities and Social science (IOSR-IHSS)2013:21) .

Fantini (1995) stressed the symbiotic relationship between language and culture since language affects and reflects culture and vice versa .Brown(2000) echoed the same when he says " 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 " . In other words, language is regarded as a means by which people communicate to and interact with others , which in turn is responsible for cultural development.(Cited in Journal of Humanities and Social sciences (IOSR-IHSS) , 2013:21) .

The relationship between language and culture is made meaning full in learning as ,"the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool" (Bennett, Bennett & Allen ,2003) as cited in Journal of Humanities and Social science (IOSR-IHSS) ,(2013:21). Therefore ,When it comes to the realm of teaching and learning . Wang (2008), likewise, asserts that "foreign language teaching is foreign culture teaching, and foreign language teachers are foreign culture teachers".

2-3: Culture and Language Teaching:

As cited in (Journal of Humanities and Social science (IOSR-IHSS), 2013), McKay (2003) claims that culture influences language Teaching in two important ways: linguistically and pedagogically, culture is significant in the linguistic dimension of the language itself, affecting the semantic pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language.



Pedagogically, it influences the choice of language materials because cultural content of the language materials and the cultural basis of the teaching methodology are to be taken into consideration while deciding upon the language materials. He argues that in order to master language students have to learn both, its linguistic and cultural norms. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-IHSS)*,(2013:20-24).

Stern H,(1983) , argues that ;culture was frequently interpreted in a dual sense: (a) as the personal development, through language learning of a cultivated mind: the training of “reasoning power”, “intelligence imagination” and the artistic faculties” (IAAM 1929) and (b)as the knowledge of the history and the institutions of foreign people and of their psychology as expressed in their ideals and standards, and of their contribution to civilization (Fife, 1931). There was no conflict between these two conceptions; indeed, they were often combined as, for example , in this expression of a cultural objective: language teaching should be lead to a certain widening of outlook brought about by a sympathetic presentment of the life and history of foreign nations ...’(IAAM 1929). Stern H,(1983: 249).

2-3-1 : The Importance of Teaching Culture in EFL

Nieto (2010) claims that "tendency to link, language, literacy and culture is giving us a richer picture of learning". Nieto (2010:3) . So the researcher sees that in order to reach high levels of achievement in learning and teaching foreign language it is essential to integrate the notion of culture in language syllabus. Lazar G(1993) in the same direction also states that:

"although students may find it easier to respond personally to a text from within their own culture, there is a strong argument for saying that exposing students to literature from other cultures is an enriching and exciting way of increasing their awareness of different values, beliefs, social structures and so on". (Lazar G 1993:51) .

Lado , brooks, Rivers and Chastain as cited in Stern, H, 1983) have all firmly stated that "cultural understanding and cross cultural understanding and cross cultural comparisons are a necessary component of language pedagogy". (Stern, H, 1983:250).

Studying culture is useful for teaching students to understand their own culture Kitao (2000) claims that "studying culture gives students linking for the people of that culture" "helps avoid stereotypes" and is a part of general education. Since having a close contact with the target culture and its speakers is rare opportunity for all foreign language learners (Karhru, 1992),says : learners cannot appreciate the importance of learning the cultural aspects of communication unless they visit a foreign country and experience the difficulties. Nonverbal aspects of target culture are sometimes acquired from movies and TV serials, which are far from being helpful for communicative purpose or may sometimes develop misconceptions or stereotype. (*Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS,2013-V13.P:20-24)*)

Tomalin (2008) is of the opinion that international role of the English language and globalization are the two main reasons to teach culture as "fifth language skill". In addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing.



"what the fifth language skill teaches you is the mindset and techniques to adapt your use of English to learn about, understand and appreciate the values, ways of doing things and unique qualities of other cultures. It involves understanding how to use language to accept differences, to be flexible and tolerant of ways of doing things which might be different to yours.

(Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS,2013-V13.P:20-24)

As noted in Journal of English Teaching JET, 2011). There are three fundamental reasons we can put forth to answer the question of why is incorporating culture in a ESL/EFL classroom inevitable?; first culture and language are inseparable. Pulitzer, (as cited in Brooks, 1960) points out:

"As language teachers we must be interested in the study of culture not because we necessary want to teach the culture of the other country, but because we have to teach it. If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the students attaches to wrong meaning; for unless he warned, unless he receives cultural instruction, he will associate American concepts or objectives with the foreign symbols".

Journal of English Teaching JET, V1, 2011:44-56).

Concurrent with that, Brown (1994) emphasize "... a language is a part of 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".

Finally, Cultural learning is very effective to increase learners' motivation – which greatly affects every learning

process. Culture classes do have a great role in achieving high motivation because most learners like culturally based activities such as singing , dancing, role playing or doing research on other countries and peoples. This reinforced by Hammer (1982) that teaching about the target culture when teaching the target language piques the interest of students and acts as a motivator.

(Journal of English Language Teaching, 2011:44-56).

Communicative Competence The term 'communicative competence' was first introduced by Hymes in (1972) as a sociolinguistic concept in reaction to the concept of 'linguistic competence' which was proposed by Chomsky in 1965. Chomsky's concept was "concerned with the tacit knowledge of language structure" but "omits almost everything of socio-cultural, significance" (Brumfit.C.J.et al, 1979:).

Communicative Language Teaching

The communicative approach has a linguistic background and like other approaches it has methodological basis (Brumfit , 1983) states two assumptions that underlie it " the first assumption is that we are concerned in the classroom with language use , not language knowledge ."The second is the view that we can learn language most effectively by using it in realistic situations ".(Brumfit , 1983 : 90).

Culture and Communicative Competence Reinforcement:

Verhoeven, Ludo(1998)"The handbook of sociolinguistics" claims that "In order to help children to extend their communicative competence teachers must focus on both pragmatic and linguistic aspects of various speech acts.

Pragmatic aspects include the cultural values and norms underlying speech acts in varying communicative contexts. e.g. the use of politeness expressions in varying contexts. Linguistic aspects include the repertoire of both direct and indirect speech. Two teaching devices seem to be important in helping children extend their communicative repertoire. One is the instruction, including modeling, imitation training and role playing. Instructions may provide the framework within which children's communicative activities are maintained, restricted and elaborated. The second relevant teaching strategy is semantically contingent responding. By repeating or extending children's initiatives, responding to occasional questions and consistent queries by the child, and conforming children's assertions; the child's development of both language and communication can be supported.

Descriptive Statistics

Statement	N	Mean	Sd. Deviation	Variance
It is essential to integrate FL cultural expressions in the syllabus.	40	1.80	.966	.933
FL cultural expressions add to reading comprehension skills.	40	1.08	.350	.122
FL cultural expressions develop students' communicative fluency.	40	1.15	.427	.182
FL cultural expressions reinforce students' lexical competence.	40	1.40	.632	.400
FL cultural expressions promote students' ability of associating meanings.	40	1.42	.636	.404
FL cultural expressions don't add to students' vocabulary.	40	2.63	.705	.497
FL cultural expressions help students develop language skills in general.	40	1.20	.564	.318
Knowing FL culture helps students interact properly with language speech acts.	40	1.23	.530	.281

Data Analysis and Discussion:

The researcher has collected data by using a questionnaire which consists of twenty statements in order to investigate the importance of teaching Foreign Language cultural expressions in developing secondary school students' communicative competence. The questionnaire was given to 30 respondents who represent the teachers' community at Sudanese secondary schools.

The following table shows the mean and standard deviation and variance for the following study Hypotheses: The following hypotheses are postulated:

- 1- Teaching foreign language culture reinforces secondary school students' communicative competence.
- 2- Teaching foreign language culture motivates secondary school students to communicate fluently.
- 3- Teaching foreign language culture enriches secondary school students' insight.

Knowing FL culture enhances using social rules of the language properly.	40	1.35	.580	.336
FL culture isn't sufficiently existed in the syllabus.	40	1.52	.784	.615
Cultural topics do not encourage students to learn English.	40	2.43	.844	.712
Teaching FL culture enables students to express their attitudes.	40	1.20	.516	.267
Students aren't interested in FL cultural activities.	40	1.97	.920	.846
Teaching FL culture enables students to express their ideas.	40	1.13	.404	.163
FL culture enriches students' cultural interest.	40	1.58	.813	.661
Knowing FL culture develops students' language cultural awareness.	40	1.23	.577	.333
Teaching FL culture develops students' language critical thinking.	40	1.48	.679	.461
Knowing FL culture enhances students' interpretative abilities .	40	1.33	.572	.328
FL culture represents a good atmosphere for cultural didacticism.	40	1.60	.709	.503
FL culture raises students' ability of understanding native speakers.	40	1.33	.730	.533

From the above table, it is obvious that the calculated value of chi-square for the significance of the differences for the respondents' answers in the (10) statements is greater than the tabulated value of chi-square at the degree of freedom (4) and the significant value level (5%) which indicates that, there are statistically significant differences at the level (5%) among the answers of the respondents which indicates that the hypotheses of the study are confirmed.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The researcher found that:

- a- Cultural expressions play essential roles in reinforcing communicative competence among students at secondary schools .
Culture contributes to the language learning process.
According to the research results, the researcher recommended the following:
- a) Teachers should be trained to encourage the students to retell what they have

read to improve their communicative competence.

- b) English language syllabus should be based on culture.

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