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Introduction

It is widely recognized that the field of foreign language teaching in the last decades has witnessed a major shift in linguistic research from focussing on grammatical or structural approaches to a more communicative and functional emphasis. These fundamental changes reflect a new view in which language is treated as a communicative ability rather than an isolated set of grammatical rules. Following these developments, the field of foreign language teaching has welcomed the arrival of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLT) . As its ultimate aim is developing the learners ' communicative competence. Within CLT framework teaching and learning a foreign language should be about how to use language appropriately for communicative purposes in real –life situation. Following ideas proposed by CLT contending that language and culture are inseparable, research made it evident that, we can not go about fostering *" communicative competence "* in the foreign language without taking into account its speakers' culture which may enhance or even inhibit communication. In that context, Byram and Moran (1994:04) state that " *knowledge of the grammatical system of a language [grammatical competence] has to be complemented by an understanding of culture specific meaning. [communicative rather cultural competence*" .

Therefore, " *students will master a language only when they learn both its linguistic and cultural norms* " (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003:1-2).

In that context, Politzer's keen observation should not go unnoticed : *"if we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates , we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning* " (cited in Thanassoulas, 2003:1) .

This means that EFL learners need to be aware, for example , of the culturally appropriate ways of address, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone. Furthermore, they should be aware that behaviour and intonation pattern that are appropriate in their own language may be different in English .

Lessard Clouston (1997) confirms it by assuming that, " *We should and do teach our students the foreign language culture in our classes when our goal is communicative competence. Not only is culture part and parcel of the process ,but the educational value of it within Foreign language education is great* "

1- Statement of the Problem

Given the important role of culture in communication as well as in foreign language teaching highlighted in influential publications in the field of foreign language teaching by author such as (Byram 1989, Byram and Moran 1994, Kramsch 1993, Byram and Fleming 1998, Fantini 1997.)

And   following Hinkel's notion (1999:2) that   " .... *Language teachers have become increasingly aware that a second language or foreign language can rarely be learned or taught without addressing the culture of community in which it is used* ".

The secondary school English syllabus issued by the Ministry of Education (2006) underlines the importance of encouraging positive attitudes towards other cultures and puts emphasis on making students open their minds for discovering the values of English speaking countries.

While the recognition of the importance of teaching culture in EEL classes, is quite noticeable in both influential publications and current official documents such as the national syllabus. It is quite apparent, form the researcher' s experience with   teaching English at the   secondary   school, that English teaching is extremely exam-centred. And since exams do not usually test cultural knowledge, teachers mostly focus on skills needed for taking exams. Thus, only grammatical and lexical competences are taken into account,   culture   related activities are often relegated to the end of language teaching unit or taught implicitly .

The experience of the researcher of the present dissertation as an English teacher at Kais secondary school   indicates that second year students lack the basic knowledge of English speaking countries (for example, the names, the location on the map, main towns). Or even forms of greetings and farewells, appropriate ways of complaining, requesting , criticizing , and thanking, in English.

Therefore, there tends to be a gap between declared objectives in the syllabus, on the one hand , and classroom practice on the other .This in fact raises some questions :

1- How much importance do EFL teachers at *Kais* secondary schools attribute to the teaching of English culture **?**

2- How often are activities for teaching culture included in English lessons at the secondary schools **?**

3- Which role does the textbook play in the amount of the cultural content in EFL classes at the secondary school, and what other sources are used to teach culture **?**

2- Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was set for this study:

To what extent English culture is included in teaching English as a foreign language to second year literary stream classes at *Kais* secondary schools.

3- Basic Assumption:

Throughout this study, the researcher will be assuming that EFL teachers at *Kais* secondary schools focus mainly on teaching grammatical competence; the teaching of culture is not frequently included. Thus, it is not an integral part of EFL instruction.

4- Objectives

The main aim of the present research is to get insight into the role of English culture in EFL classes at Kais secondary schools. This overall aim is split into three main subordinate objectives. These objectives are arranged according to the organisation of chapters   :

1- To provide some background information about the teaching of culture in the literature related to foreign language teaching .

2- To offer insight into the current situation of English culture teaching and learning in EFL classes at the secondary schools.

3- To bring the most important ideas and suggestions for integrating culture in EFL classes .

5- Background and Significance of the Study

The current research attempts to investigate the teaching of culture in EFL classes at the level of secondary schools.

Indeed, research in language learning / teaching has recognized the close relationship between language and culture. McLeod, (1976:212) highlights " *By teaching a language ……..one is inevitably already teaching culture implicitly* "
(cited in Thanassoulas ,2003).

Valdes (1990:20) expresses a similar view in claiming that "*there is no way to ovoid teaching culture , when teaching language* "(quoted in Lessard Clouston, 1997)

However, it is worth mentioning that while the significance of culture in language learning has been constantly mentioned theoretically. The specific contents and techniques about culture teaching within the foreign language syllabus still remain unclear for teachers. Since the syllabus does not explicitly provide a detailed description of what and how exactly teachers should teach their students about culture in English classes .

Consequently, teachers either do not talk about the target culture in their lessons or only mention parts of the target culture that have been included in the textbook . Culture still stands for a small percentage in the English syllabus.

Therefore, the topic of the current research is significant to secondary school teachers as it attempts to:

First, provide the most relevant ideas and suggestions on the teaching of culture.

Second, it also attempts to determine the role which English lessons play in transmitting the target culture .

Furthermore, the results of the study will provide clear insight into the situation of culture teaching /learning in EFL classes at the secondary schools. Thus, a better understanding of the role of culture in FL learning will be brought .

If guidelines for culture teaching and empirical evidences about positive effects of culture lessons on language learning can be provided, teachers may be more willing to teach culture .

6- Limitation of the Study

The current study is mainly concerned with investigating to what extent English culture is included in teaching English as Foreign Language to second year literary stream classes at *Kais* secondary schools during the school year 2006 – 2007 . In order to shed light on the issue, both teachers' and students' opinions in the three secondary schools were investigated. Hence, any conclusions drawn from the study will be limited to the targeted population . The researcher reminds the reader that the findings are not an over generalisation but just an attempt and an ultimate insight into the situation . Further research like Doctoral Thesis would be a very important step to give it a professional maturation and exploration.

7- Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in relation to their use in the current study.

Culture : The set of practices, codes and values that mark a particular nation or group: the sum of a nation or group's most highly thought of works of literature, art, music, etc .

A difference is something made between "high" or capital "C" culture of literature and arts, and small "c" culture of attitudes, values, beliefs, and every days lifestyles .

(*Richards and Schmildt ,2003. Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics).*

Communicative Competence : The knowledge and ability one needs to understand and use linguistic resources in ways that are structurally well formed, socially and contextually appropriate, and culturally feasible in communicative contexts constitutive of the different groups and communities of which one is a member. (Hall , 2002)

Intercultural Communicative Competence(ICC): The ability to interact effectively in a foreign language with members of cultures different to our own (Byram 1997). This includes the skills of being able to discover and understand

the symbolic meaning which is attributed to behaviour in different cultures . It also involves an awareness that one's own way of seeing the world is not natural or normal but culturally determined .

ICC has been token up eagerly by many educators at it has served to highlight the important role of culture in communication and in foreign language education .

***Grammatical competence*:** Knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and semantics of a language. *(Richards and Schmildt ,2003. Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics).*

8- Research Methodology

8-1 Choice of the Method

Taking into account that different types of research call for different research methodologies. The latter depends mainly on the aim of the research work, the type of the data needed, and the population under investigation. Since the aim of this research is to examine the current situation of teaching /learning culture in EFL classes to secondary school literary stream learners, the descriptive method seems to be the appropriate one . This method will be useful in getting insight into the current ways, the materials used for teaching culture in English lessons, as well as the teachers' and learners' perceptions of the issue. Moreover, this method is also relevant in collecting data about subjects under-investigation. Nonetheless, the research findings may provide a theoretical basis for future research that may opt for other methods use like the experimental one .

8-2 Population

As the purpose of this research is to examine the role of culture in teaching English as a foreign language to second year literary stream student's at Kais secondary schools, both teachers' and students' at Kais Secondary Schools opinions about the subject under-investigation are of relevance to the study. Hence, both populations are concerned by the study.

8-2-1 Student's Sample

This study deals mainly with Second Year Literary Stream students at Kais Secondary Schools, enrolled for the school year (2006/2007). These learners are 16-18 years old boys and girls. They have four English sessions a week, each session lasts for one hour.

Their exact number is 132 divided out to four groups in three secondary schools .

The reason for the choice of these learners is twofold:

    - First, English is taught as one of the major subject matters for literary stream classes, which means that teachers are expected to have more time to deal with culture -related activities.

    - Second, although second year classes use the same textbook "Getting Through " for both literary and scientific streams. The topics dealt with are not the same, they have few topics in common, thus, it is better to limit the investigation for one stream.

    The fact of using a questionnaire allows the researcher to deal with the whole population . Hence, the questionnaire will be given to all second year literary stream students at Kais Secondary Schools .

8-2-2 Teacher's Sample

    This study concerns also English teachers who are currently teaching English at Kais Secondary Schools. As the purpose of the study is to get all the teachers' opinions. A total of seven teachers are concerned, regarding their small number, a sample is needless for the administration of the questionnaire. The same population of teachers will be concerned by the interview

8-3 Data Gathering Tools

In the light of considerations discussed earlier, and in order to achieve the previously stated objectives. The tools for collecting data used in this research are as follows:

8-3-1 Questionnaires

Two questionnaires are used in the present research .Both populations, i.e., teachers and learners were required to fill in a questionnaire form .

Using the questionnaire in the current research seems to be appropriate . Since, it is quicker to administer and can be distributed to a large population at the same time .

According to Zarate et., al (2004) " *The questionnaire as a research tool should satisfy very precise objectives .It proves appropriate if the aim is identifying certain factors , to determine their presence, or absence , or to assess the relevance , frequency and generalisation of information obtained* " p.37 .

8-3-2 Teachers' Questionnaire:

It is designed with the purpose to obtain professional data as well as background information about teachers, that are relevant to the objectives of the research. It investigates teachers' opinions regarding the current situation of teaching English as a foreign language at the secondary school. It also explores the activities used to teach culture and their frequency in their classes, as well as their general opinions on the cultural content within the textbook used.

8-3-3 Students' Questionnaire :

It is designed to obtain data regarding the students' language learning experiences, and motivation for studying English as well as the learning of culture. It is also intended to elicit information about the student's background.

8-3-4 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaires

To check the questionnaires' validity both versions of the questionnaires, i.e., the teachers and the students were piloted before administering them to the whole population.

- The teachers' questionnaire was given to a sample of two EFL teachers representative of the whole population . (seven teachers).

- The students questionnaire was piloted on a sample of 30 students representing one group (class) .

In the piloting stage the informants were asked the following questions:

- Were the instructions clear and easy to follow ?

- Were the questions clear ?

- Were they able to answer all the questions ?

- Did they find any of the questions embarrassing or irrelevant ?

- How long did the questionnaire take them to complete ?

However, as with all questionnaires there may be some threats to validity, as a result of the participants overgeneralization.

8-4 Teachers' Interview

Teachers' interview is useful in the present study because it enriches the study as a whole . It provides deeper insight into the teachers' perceptions of the role of teaching English language culture on the basis of the text book. It is also intended to complement and validate the data collected through the questionnaire.