

***Chapter V : Teachers' Interview Results and Analysis***

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## **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the analysis of the results obtained from the teachers' interview. The participants were asked to answer seven open-ended questions to elicit specific information of their perception of the role of culture in EFL learning and teaching.

The responses to the open - ended questions of the interview and their corresponding analysis will be presented in turns.

### **V.1. Type of the Interview**

Broadly speaking, an interview can be described as, "*the elicitation of data by one person from another through person-to- person encounters* "(Nunan, 1992:231).

However, interviews come in many different forms, they range from unstructured, semi-structured to structured interviews. The choice of a given type is determined by the nature of the research and the degree of control the interviewer wishes to exert (ibid).

The structured interview consists of a list of set questions in a predetermined order prepared previously by the researcher.

In this study, the researcher has opted for a structured interview, as data gathering tools. One of the main advantages of a structured interview is that gives the interviewer a degree of power and control over the course of the interview. Besides, misunderstanding, or lack of understanding, can be immediately sorted out during the exchange of information. (M.J Wallace, 2001)

### **V.2. Aim of the Interview**

The main aim of the interview was to provide the researcher with in-depth understanding of the teachers' perceptions of the role of culture in EFL classes. The interview served also as a way to validate the teachers' answers previously stated in the questionnaire.

The combination of a questionnaire and interview can help the two tools complement each other and enhance the possibility of obtaining both

quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaires and interviews are thus often used in complementary fashion. Questionnaires may be followed up for in-depth interviews, so that ideas may be explored more thoroughly. (M.J. Wallace, 2001).

### **V.3. Interview Procedure**

The interview was piloted with two English teachers before conducting it with the whole population the reason behind this is to have an idea about how long it will take.

The interview was conducted during the period from the fourth to the fifth June, 2007. In the teachers' room at Soufi Abdelhafidh secondary school.(during this period teachers were invigilating in BEM exam) . Each interview took an average of 20 minutes teachers were free to speak their minds, they were also free to use French or Arabic in case they felt "out of words" in English.

During the interview, both the researcher and the respondents had the opportunity to ask for further information so as to ensure a full understanding and clear description.

The fact of using a structured interview helped the researcher in taking notes. This was just us filling in a questionnaire.

### **V.4. Description of the Interview**

A total of six teachers were asked to answer seven open-ended questions related to their perception of the role of culture in EFL learning/teaching .The interview was conducted with only six teachers because one of the teachers had apologized for not taking part in the interview due to personal reasons.

**Question One**, " How much importance do you attach to teaching culture compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills? Why ?" This question is used to know the importance attributed to teaching culture by teachers compared to other aspects of the language teaching in the class.

**Question Two**, " What cultural knowledge do you pass to your learners besides the one included in the textbook ?"

It was asked to know other ways (if any) used by teachers to help students to know and understand the foreign culture.

**Question Three,** “When teaching elements of the target culture, do you relate the topic to the learners’ culture ? for what purpose ? ”

It was asked to know the teachers degree of reference to the learners own culture and their encouragement of intercultural understanding.

**Question Four,** “What are your learners’ reactions towards the target culture? ”

It was used to know students attitudes towards the foreign culture.

**Question Five,** “Which aspects of the target culture do you consider most important in teaching a foreign language ? why ?”

This question was intended to know the topics /aspects of the foreign culture that teachers attribute more importance.

**Question Six,** “Do you feel that you have been ‘taught’ enough about English language culture in your English graduation classes ? .This question was asked to know the teachers foreign language cultural repertoire.

**Question Seven,** “Do you feel the foreign culture as threatening ? ”

was asked to know teachers' attitudes towards the foreign culture 's impact on their students.

## V.5. Analysis of Teachers' Responses

**Question One**, “*How much importance do you attach to the teaching of culture compared to teaching grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills ? Why?*”.

Generally, the answers to this question express two different views towards the importance of culture teaching compared to grammar, vocabulary and the four skills.

Responses were divided between those who think that teaching culture is less important than grammar, vocabulary and the four skills. And those who think it is equally important to teach culture as to teach grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills.

Teachers gave their arguments as far as their views are concerned. Most of the respondents gave more importance to teach grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills since they are essential for developing the students' linguistic level and they are currently tested in exams.

As one of the respondents says, “in my view students at this level are expected to master the linguistic tools that would enable them pass their tests and exams”.

Another teacher reveals, “due to time constraints and the over loaded curriculum, I find myself unconsciously giving more importance to other aspects than culture”.

Another teacher believes that it is difficult to transmit the target culture since s/he is not a native speaker.

Another teacher further adds by saying, “the students' limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary leads me to give them more importance compared to culture”.

On the other hand, several explanations were given on why the teaching of culture should be given an equal importance as other skills.

One teacher said, “language is all the time associated with its culture one can not deny the importance of including cultural elements in English lessons to enable students to communicate appropriately and to foster attitudes of curiosity, openness and tolerance towards other cultures .”

Another teacher shares the same opinion by saying , “personally, I believe in the strong relationship between the language and its culture and the impact this has on classroom motivation as well as creating interest among learners. I noticed this through my experience when incorporating some culture related activities such as games, songs, and fairy tales.”

On the whole, the impression given by those teachers who attached equal importance to culture teaching is that this is theoretically speaking than what they actually do in practice during English classes.

These teachers think well of the importance of culture, but do not systematically teach it in the same way that they teach grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills this is due to number of reasons such as the overloaded curriculum, the time allocated and the students language deficiency.

**Question Two,** “ *What cultural knowledge do you pass to your learners besides the one included in the textbook ?* ”

Without any surprise, almost unanimously, the respondents declared not using any extra-sources. They are limited by the cultural content included in the textbook.

This was said explicitly by some teachers:

“It’s quite interesting to know about the culture associated to the language we teach . However, I limit myself to the cultural information included in the students textbook. I don’t have time to check extra-sources . ”

Nevertheless, teachers recognize the usefulness of extra-sources such as the internet, watching TV programmes, reading newspapers or magazines from the English speaking countries.

Teachers commented that they sometimes create opportunities for learners to understand the English language culture such as :

- Asking students to compare an aspect of their own culture with the same in the foreign language culture.
- Asking students to describe an aspect of their own culture in the foreign language.
- Asking students to think what it would be like to live a foreign culture.
- Asking students to think about the image which the media promote of the foreign country.

One teacher adds , “ I often comment on the way in which the foreign or native culture is presented in the material I’ m using and I add further information about the topic if I have ”.

**Question Three** , “*When teaching elements of the target culture, do you relate the topic to the learners’ culture ? for what purpose ?* ”

When asked about relating cultural topics from the target culture to the students own culture, most of the teachers admitted that they make such reference frequently, often stimulated by the students’ questions .Teachers gave examples of proverbs and their corresponding alternatives.

Some respondents point out that once students recognize the cultural element in target language and its corresponding alternative in their own culture this will raise their awareness about cultural differences existing between both cultures and help them understand better.

One teacher says, “a good knowledge of both cultures will help learners to raise their awareness towards cultural differences. ”

On the other hand, teachers find that it is not always necessary to relate all cultural topics to the students own.

**Question Four,** *“What are your learners’ reactions towards the target culture? ”*

On the whole, teachers’ responses to this question reveal that students are largely unaware of the differences and distinctions between their own culture and that of the foreign language.

This does not put aside the fact that students are motivated and interested to learn more about English speaking countries culture. Their positive attitude may be due to the ideas or images they got from the media (TV channels, movies, the Internet...).

According to one teacher students often ask him about some cultural topics they watch on TV or famous expressions they hear in songs and this would challenge the teacher in some cases.

**Question Five,** *“Which aspects of the target culture do you consider most important in teaching a foreign language ? why ?”*

The responses given by the teachers allowed to draw a summary about given topics that seem to be of interest to both teachers and students . According to teachers different aspects of culture have their importance and the students should have opportunities to know about them. Aspects cited by teachers can be classified into two broad categories :

First , topics related to civilisation / big ‘C’ culture such as traditions and customs, history , geography and literature.

Second, topics related to small ‘c’ culture and certain language behaviour such as: social rules and behaviour, politeness and good manners, formal/ informal language, non-verbal behaviour.

On the whole, teachers stressed the importance of sociolinguistic knowledge on developing the students communicative competence . Some teachers claimed that: “students’ sociolinguistic knowledge is too limited. I think students should have opportunities to know useful phrases expressing how to



make a polite request or offer, how to greet someone formally/informally, how to say when somebody sneezes , how to express gratitude verbally and non verbally.”

Nevertheless, the time allocated and the overloaded curriculum does not allow to address every thing.

**Question Six,** *“Do you think that you have been ‘taught’ enough about English language culture in your English graduation classes ? .*

Teachers have criticised unanimously their university courses especially British and American civilisation and literature for teaching them a knowledge that was of little interest to them as well as to the learner .

Teachers seemed to be dissatisfied of the kind of knowledge given for them during their graduation.

They said these courses lack the pragmatic knowledge thus, they don't provide useful information for real-life situations. As one of the teachers concludes, “ in my opinion teaching culture requires a considerable training as well as material, in addition to the strategies adequate for presentation of culture related activities. This could be achieved only through pre-service and in-service training ”.

**Question Seven,** *“Do you feel the foreign culture as threatening ? ”*

Generally, the answers to this question are divided into two views, some teachers think that the learning of culture helps students to overcome cultural differences, it also helps to build a spirit of openness and tolerance towards other cultures among students.

On the contrary some teachers expressed their fear of cultural invasion which threatens the students' own cultural identity.

## **V.6. Discussion of the Findings**

The teachers' interview was conducted with two main aims:

Firstly, to get deeper insight into the teachers' perceptions of the role of teaching English language culture on the basis of the textbook.

Secondly, to complement and confirm the results stated previously in the questionnaire.

The analysis of the responses to the interview, supplied by teachers of English at Kais Secondary Schools allowed to draw certain conclusions:

- Although, most of teachers revealed not emphasizing on cultural input in their lessons compared to grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills, almost the majority of them recognized the important role of culture for communication in a foreign language, hence, recognized the significance of integrating cultural issues in EFL classes.

- Teachers make certain emphasis on small 'c' culture issues related to students sociolinguistic competence.

- Nevertheless, the impression given by teachers is that this is theoretically speaking. What is actually going on in their classes is mainly based on teaching grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills.

The interview brought out the importance of providing teachers with the necessary material and adequate training for presenting culture related activities. Hence, the importance of pre-service and in-service training is also stressed. This was clearly understood by the teachers' dissatisfaction of the kind of information they got during their university courses.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter, two points worth mentioning; first the interview fulfilled its aim in providing further insight into teacher's views about the situation of culture teaching at the secondary school. Their responses complemented the ones obtained via the questionnaire. Second, teachers revealed that teaching culture is limited due to a host of reasons among which are:

The overloaded curriculum, lack of time, lack of adequate training, fear of not knowing enough about the target culture and unavailability of didactic aids and material.

Consequently, a confirmation of the hypothesis is obtained via teachers' responses.