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**Investigating the Role of the Subject Cultural Studies in
Developing Students' Intercultural Reading Skills**

*The case of Third year License Students and Second year Master
Students of Didactics of Foreign languages of English at Abdelhamid
Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem*

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Degree in Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my precious and lovely parents who supported me by all that I needed during my learning journey.

I would like to thank my sisters Yasmine and Nour El Houda and my brother Mohamed for their motivation and moral support.

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to investigate and explore the status of culture teaching in EFL classes as well as to investigate the role of the content of the cultural syllabus in developing student intercultural reading skills. To carry out this research, a multiple case study has been used in the department of English at the University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis of Mostaganem, where third year license students and second year master students of Didactics of Foreign languages have been selected as a sample. During data collection, the researcher used two research instruments, namely a questionnaire and interview. Students' questionnaire is tended to explore third year students' awareness and recognition of other cultures when reading. Whereas students' interview is an attempt to investigate the role of the cultural syllabus' content in helping learners to read along the cultural dimension of the language and whether it could help them to develop intercultural reading skills. The results indicate that most of third year students focus on language only when reading in contrast to master two students who are likely to take the cultural aspect of the reading process. The results show also that the content of the cultural syllabus proves, to a given extent, to be effective and helpful in developing learners' intercultural reading skills.

Key words: English culture, cultural syllabus 'content, reading process, intercultural reading.

List of Abbreviations

IC: Intercultural Competence

ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence

IR: Intensive Reading

ER: Extensive Reading

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General Introduction

Due to the process of globalization, the world has undergone some radical changes especially in the field of language teaching and learning over the past few decades. Indeed, teaching a foreign language has no longer been focusing on the acquisition of the linguistic and communicative competence; it is rather, to enable learners to use the language in its appropriate social and cultural context. As a matter of fact, foreign language teaching and learning process would be unsuccessful and ineffective without the introduction of culture in EFL classrooms.

In the same line of thought, culturally based textbooks are considered as one of the most important tools for foreign language teaching since it provides the learners not only with the linguistic knowledge but also with the cultural background of the target culture, as it can a source for developing learners' intercultural competence. In fact, considerable research has revealed that EFL learners can benefit from their readings in many ways. They will engage actively and deeply in the foreign language and culture, they will be able to have an analytical understanding of their own and others' culture. Besides, they will evaluate, interpret and reflect on their understandings. Consequently, it will promote learners' willingness to read and learn about the foreign culture and enhance their skills of critical reading and develop their intercultural competence as well.

This research aims first at investigating the status of culture teaching and learning in EFL classrooms. Second, it aims at investigating the role of the content of the cultural syllabus in helping learners to develop their intercultural reading skill in EFL classrooms. In this vein, we formulate the research questions as follow:

1. Do learners of third year license practice reading along the cultural dimension of language?
2. Do students of second year master take into account the cultural aspect of the reading process?
3. Do the content of the cultural syllabus help learners become intercultural readers?

Seeking to answer those questions, we hypothesized that:

1. Most of the students with license degree focus on language only.
2. Master two students are likely to take the cultural aspect when reading.
3. To a given extent the content of the cultural syllabus help learners become intercultural readers.

The present research study is divided into three major parts; a theoretical part which includes one chapter about the review of the related literature. Then, an empirical part which includes two chapters, one is devoted to the methodology of this research, the research methods followed in undertaking this research in addition to the sampling and the different tools used for the collection of data. The last part, however; is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the collected data from third year students' questionnaire and second year master students' interview followed by a set of recommendations related to the effective incorporation of culture teaching and ICC in EFL classrooms.

Chapter One

The Literature Review

Chapter One: Review of literature

1. Introduction

Interculturality as an approach to language teaching and learning gained ascendancy in the field of education in general and in teaching of foreign languages in particular during the few past decades. Indeed, teaching a foreign language has become tightly related to teach its culture, build a cultural awareness, recognize and accept the hidden dimensions of cultures.

The present chapter aims at clarifying the concept of interculturality and tries to shed light on some of its key elements. First, it gives an overview about culture and interculturality, its background history, intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence as well. Second, it sheds light on the reading and critical reading skill, its types and strategies. Finally, the last part highlights the concept of intercultural reading and tackles the importance of reading in developing the student's interculturality.

1.1. Definitions of Culture

The word culture is a notoriously complicated concept which has different meanings. For some anthropologists and other behavioral scientists, culture is the full range of learned human behaviors patterns. The term was first used by Edward Tylor, English anthropologist, in his book of "Primitive culture" published in the 1871. Tylor defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, Law, custom, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society" (1871, p.01). According to Taylor's definition, culture is the sum of total of habits, qualities and abilities that a person learns from the group in which he lives and hence the group is the main source of any culture. In addition, culture is not limited to men. Women posses and create it as well.

In line with this, Carter(1993) claims that culture is "a set of beliefs and attitudes which are prevalent within a society or section of society... culture embraces the habits, customs, social behavior, knowledge and assumptions associated with group of people. The cultural forms of that group are the artifacts and texts" (p.19). Based on the definition provided by Carter, one may distinguish between the visible aspects of culture which refers to the literature, art, customs and everyday life that is shared by members of a society and the invisible aspects which refer to the norms, beliefs and attitudes.

Greetz' conception of culture largely highlights the inseparability of language and culture, he defines culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in a symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life"(1973,p.89). That is to say that culture is a historical and inheritance transmission of shared concept and meanings encoded in symbols, letters or words. These shared meanings are represented in the language that people use to interact with each other. Hence, language is a crucial means of transmitting a group's culture.

Kramersch on the other hand, perceives culture as "a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting"(Kramersch, 1998, p.10).Kramersch stresses on her definition that there is set of standards and principles through which the individuals recognize themselves as members of a social group, living in the same area and sharing the same history, concepts, meanings and values as well.

From the above definitions, culture may be understood as a complex whole and an interdisciplinary concept that includes visible and invisible aspects which characterize and define a certain group of people.

1.2. Big “C” and Small “c”

Dealing with various definitions of culture, it is worthwhile to distinguish between big "C" and small "c" culture. According to Richards and Rodgers (1999), culture is divided into two main types: culture with capital "C" and culture with small "c"; the first one refers to bulk of literature and arts, while the second includes the sum of attitudes, norms and values i.e. the total way of life.

For many scholars and researchers, these two types of culture should be addressed in language teaching courses. In this line of thought, Lafayette (1975) suggests objectives of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom. He defines those that fit the big “C” category comprise recognizing and explaining geographical monuments, historical events and institutions. The little “c” goals he suggests include eating, shopping, greeting, acting in everyday situations which are considered as everyday active cultural patterns.

Brooks (1968) highlights the crucial importance of big "C" and small "c" to teachers. According to him, culture with capital "C" refers to MLA culture which signifies Music, Literature and Art. While the little "c" culture relates to everything in human life which is under the name BBV: beliefs, behavior and values.

1.3. The Interrelationship between Language and Culture

Language and culture are so close that are being identified as synonyms (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992). On the one hand, language is used to express people’s cultural thoughts, knowledge and beliefs; on the other hand, culture is embedded in language. In order to illustrate such connection, different metaphors have been used by many scholars, such as the concept of “iceberg” in which language stands for the visible part while culture represents the concealed part.

To show the interrelatedness of language and culture, Byram (1989) asserts that language is an instrument to express speakers' knowledge and how they perceive the world. In addition, Brown (2007) claims that “one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (p.189) I.e. it is very important to know that language is culture and culture is language and that one cannot exist with losing its significance.

In the same vein, Kramsch (1998) identifies three close links between language and culture. First, “language expresses cultural reality”; words are used to describe one's experience, facts and ideas. Words and utterances mirror their user's attitudes, beliefs and views that are shared by the other members of the group. Second, “language embodies cultural reality”; it means that the members give meaning to their experience by the medium of communication that opt for. They create comprehensible meanings to the community they belong to. Third, “language symbolizes cultural reality”; speakers view their language as a symbol of their social identity.

To sum up, the interwoven relationship between language and culture is documented as very important, which implies that language can neither be fully learnt nor appropriately used without enough cultural knowledge.

1.4. Interculturality and Interculturalism

The terms interculturality and interculturalism are used unchangeably to refer to any aspect of any interaction between any cultures, this definition implies a correlation between culture, language and interculturality.

“Interculturalism refers to the support for cross-cultural dialogue and challenging self segregation tendencies within cultures. Interculturalism involves moving beyond mere passive acceptance of mutual fact of multiple culture effectively existing in a society and instead promotes dialogue and interaction between cultures”(interculturalism, 2019, para.01).It means that interculturalism (interculturality) refers to the existence and contact between different cultures in which its main goals is to create an area of interaction, communication and respect for the others in addition to the idea that everyone regardless of his culture will be part of a society.

Interculturality is also linked with the idea of hybrid identities and fusion cultures in which people and groups create and recreate new cultural patterns that take up elements of formerly distinct and separated norms, values, behaviors and lifestyles. In this vein, Powell and Sze (2004) maintain that:

Interculturality acknowledges and enables cultures to have currency, to be exchanged, to circulate, to be modified and evolve. Understanding how cultures move around in a society, introduce social changes, and facilitates cultural integration requires an interdisciplinary approach: one that includes the obviously primary concerns of human rights, citizenship, work, education, health and housing, one that also develops inclusive policies and supports the development of creative expression. (p.01)

To sum up, Interculturality is the field of study that involves two or more cultures which can co-exist in a society and promote dialogue and interaction as well between cultures.

1.5. The Background History of Interculturality

The concept of interculturalism is not new and can be traced back to 1924; it arose in response to criticisms of existing policies of multiculturalism as stated by the Wikipedia “intraculturalism has arisen in response to criticisms of existing policies of multiculturalism, such as criticisms that such policies had failed to create inclusion of different cultures within society”. Thus, interculturality (interculturalism) entered to the scene to replace multiculturalism and provides a new paradigm for thinking about race and diversity with a new set of policies and programmers. As highlighted by Cantle (2012):

Interculturalism is more than a simple set of policies and programmers. As one of the ‘intercultural city’ reports points out it is about changing mindsets, creating new opportunities across cultures [...] to support intercultural activity [...] it’s about thinking, planning and acting interculturally. Perhaps, more importantly still, it is about envisioning the world as we want it to be, rather than determined by our separate past histories.(p.212)

In clearer terms, Interculturalism paves the way for new policies and programmers that have been ignored by multiculturalism. Emphasizing on the fact that the concept of interculturalism becomes crucial and hard to be ignored since its main goal is to change individuals’ thinking and create new mindsets and enabling them to integrate in any given situation.

1.6. Intercultural Aspects and Dimensions

1.6.1. Intercultural Aspects

The intercultural aspects are also known as intercultural competence component. They are developed by Darla K. Deardorff which includes:

- *Knowledge* :
 - a. Cultural self-awareness: the influence of one’s culture on one’s identity and his perception to the world.
 - b. Culture specific knowledge: understanding and having information about other cultures.
 - c. Sociolinguistic awareness: learning language skills and how to adjust one’s speech so as to adapt with others.
- *Skills* :
 - a. Processing of knowledge: refers to the fact of being observant, viewing and identifying the world from other cultures as well as having the skill of respect in appreciating other cultures and to avoid stereotypes and prejudices.
- *Internal outcomes*: are the result of the acquired attitudes, knowledge and skills consisting of flexibility, adaptability, and empathy and ethno-relative perspective.
- *External outcomes*: The ingathering of the attitudes, knowledge and skills as well as the internal outcomes which are demonstrated and attribute to the individual observable behavior and ways of communication in intercultural an situation.

1.6.2. Intercultural Dimensions

Intercultural dimensions represent the development of learners as intercultural speakers or mediators which means they should develop intercultural competence as well as the linguistic competence in order to help them to engage with complexity and different identities and enable them to understand and accept people from different cultures with distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors. In brief, the intercultural dimensions are the keys to a successful communication (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002).

A model of dimensions was drawn by (Byram et al, 2002) which is known also as the components of intercultural competence. It shows that the components of IC are knowledge, skills and attitudes complemented by the values that the individual holds which are part of one's social identities as illustrated in the following figure:

	Skills Of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre)	
Knowledge Of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (les savoirs)	Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)	Attitudes Curiosity and openness (savoir être)
	Skills Of discovering and/or interact (savoir apprendre/faire)	

Figure 1: The Intercultural Dimensions of IC

The figure above represents the intercultural dimensions of IC that portrays the components of ICC. The first element is the attitudes (savoir être) which have been defined as “curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other culture and belief about one's own” (Byram, 1997.p.35). These attitudes play a crucial role attaining an effective intercultural communication.

The second element is knowledge (les savoirs) which is of two types: “knowledge about social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country” as well as “ knowledge of the general processes of societal and individual interaction”(Byram,1997 p.35). The first category is knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one's own country and in the interlocutor's country, whereas the second one, it involves knowledge about concepts and processes taking into account both the linguistic system and the cultural knowledge during an intercultural interaction.

The third elements are skills which have been divided by Byram (1997) into two types. First, there are skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre) which have been defined as “the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own”. Second, skills of discovering and

interacting (*savoir apprendre/faire*); those skills are understood as “the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction” (ibid). In general, the individual should be able to acquire cultural knowledge, interpret other cultural practices, beliefs and values and relate them to one’s own, then employ all the elements in real time communication.

The last element is critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*) which embraces a critical evaluation of foreign cultures and one’s own; their values, cultural aspects also their practices and how this influence the individual’s view of other people values.

Thus, intercultural aspects and dimensions are developed in educational settings, their goals is to help learners to acquire the linguistic competence needed to interact in an appropriate way and to develop their intercultural competence.

1.7. Intercultural competence

A plethora of definitions and conceptualizations have been attempted to determine the nature of intercultural competence and explain the importance to develop it among foreign language learners and intercultural mediators so as to enable them to act in various cultural situations. Regarding this point, Deardorff (2001) states that “there are countless definitions and frame works published on intercultural competence” (p.66).

As cited in Zenagui (2007), Intercultural competence refers to “the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (p.18). It involves the ability of understanding, behaving and accepting people of different social identities.

A broad definition was proposed by Bennett (2011) in which IC comprises three dimensions. The first one refers to the cognitive dimension which is defined as the person’s understanding and awareness about his native culture and the target one. The second dimension or the affective dimension represents the emotional aspect, motivation and curiosity to explore and discover new cultures. Whereas the third one refers to the behavioral dimension, it represents the person’s skills during the intercultural interactions.

In its broadest sense, Intercultural competence can be defined as “a complex of abilities to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from one self” (Fantini, 2006.p.12). That is to say that intercultural competence focuses on the performance which reflects the individual’s competence which is abstract when interacting beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries.

In short, intercultural competence refers to the individual’s ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries involving an understanding of one’s own and others cultures in order to achieve communication goals in an effective and appropriate way toward others.

1.8. Intercultural communicative competence

The term intercultural communicative competence appears as an extension to the term communicative competence. Hall (2002) states that the communicative competence entails “both knowledge and ability that individuals need to understand and use linguistic resources in ways that are structurally well formed, socially and contextually appropriate” (p.105).

Hence, the concept of communicative competence is used to refer to what a speaker needs to know so as to communicate effectively in culturally significant situations and in appropriate contexts.

Byram (1997) coined the concept of intercultural communicative competence in order to make a distinction between the two notions intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence. Emphasizing on the fact that, intercultural competence refers to the ability to communicate with people from different cultures, whereas intercultural communicative competence refers to the ability to understand cultures including one's own and to use this understanding to communicate with people from other cultures successfully. Furthermore, Fantini (2006) asserts that ICC is "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (p.12). That is to say that ICC is a set of complex capacities necessary for effective and appropriate interactions with speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Wiseman in another respect includes motivation as an additional element in his definition of intercultural communicative competence. According to him, intercultural communicative competence refers to "the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures" (Wiseman, 2002, p.208). He suggests these three elements are essential for effective and appropriate interaction in intercultural situations.

1.9. Definition of Reading skill

Reading is said to be the most important skill in English language. It is the primary channel of learning a language; however, it is used more by EFL learners who always need to read various printed materials such as: books, stories, articles, poems and so on. Urquhart & Weir (1998) define reading as "the process of perceiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print" (p.22). This means that the main objective of reading is to enable readers to decipher the coded messages in the text and to deduce what the writer exactly intends.

According to Grabe (1991) reading can be seen as "an active process of comprehending where student need to be taught strategies to read more effectively, for example, guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc"(p.377). That is to say that reading can be seen as an interactive process between the reader and the text in which the reader need to use strategies as skimming, inferring and guessing to understand the meaning of the text. Thoroughly, reading can be defined as "the process of getting out of the text as nearly as possible the message the writer put into it" (Nuttal, 1996, p.4). This implies the fact that comprehension is an important outcome of reading because the purpose of reading is to obtain knowledge.

However, Nuttal as cited in Aebresold and Field (1997) has said that "reading is an infection disease it caught not taught and you cannot catch it from someone who has not got it" (p.15). From his saying, reading is a complex process which is hard to acquire since it relies on various elements that the reader has in order to create the general meaning of the text. In connection with this, Dubin (1982) claims that reading is "a multifaceted complex

skill made up of a number of psychological, physical and social elements” (p.125). Those elements are crucial in transcending learners’ current level of comprehension and making them embrace another world where their thinking process changes in terms of language features as well as the way people think.

1.10. Types of Reading

Reading can be divided into two major types: Extensive reading and Intensive reading.

1.10.1. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is a careful and depth reading that students do inside the classroom under the supervision of the teacher. As affirmed by Long and Richards (1987) intensive reading is “a detailed in class analysis, led by teacher, of vocabulary and grammar points in a short passage” (p.125). Similarly, Powell (2005) defines it as “the careful reading of short, complex texts for detailed understanding and skills practice” (p.28). Therefore, IR is all about reading short passages to understand particular points and obtain a detailed comprehension. Furthermore, IR is a purposeful reading which focuses on learning language items such as grammar and vocabulary (Nation, 2009). Students read intensively so as to increase their knowledge of language features, develop and monitor their reading strategies.

1.10.2. Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is commonly known as reading for pleasure. According to Carrel et al (1997) extensive reading is a rapid and lifelong reading for large amounts of material including books and novels. Its aim is to obtain the general idea of the text and it is reading for pleasure like reading novels, stories or magazines (Grabe, 2009). In addition to this, Constantino (1995) points out that ER is an activity of reading texts so as to obtain the general comprehension and the message conveyed throughout the text instead of stressing the meaning of individual words.

On the whole, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) claim that ER is an autonomous activity connected to students’ choice and pleasure in reading. Through this process, students can develop their level of comprehension and increase their background knowledge as they are exposed to various subjects (Nuttal, 2005).

1.11. Reading techniques

Reading involves some techniques which are implemented according to particular purposes. In this concern, researchers have revealed two main reading techniques:

1.11.1. Skimming

Brown (2001) noted that skimming is a reading strategy in which students pass their eyes quickly across the whole text for a gist. This technique of reading is very effective and useful to get the main idea from the text. Similarly, Beale (2013) stated that “skimming refers to looking for the general or main idea. Skimming is used when a person is not interested so much in total comprehension, but is instead trying to locate essential points and major details” (p.02). Accordingly, skimming means looking at the text to find the overall meaning of the text. Cohen (2015) explains that this teaching requires us to read the first or two lines of each paragraph or a chapter. Hence, readers do not need to read the whole text as it is rather they need just to look quickly at it and get an overview of the main ideas (Djuwarish, 2006).

1.11.2. Scanning

Scanning is a purposeful technique of reading which aims at looking for a particular piece of information without reading throughout the whole text (Brown, 2001). Similarly, Beale (2013) draws attention to the fact that scanning is beneficial technique which saves time. Therefore, scanning allows you to read specific words that answer your question (Mikulckey & Jeffries, 2009). In addition to this, Beale (2013) emphasis on using one's hand or figure which help the reader locate the necessary information and to swoop down on particular facts. Thus, scanning is an effective technique used to seek specific data related to a particular issue.

1.12. Reading strategies

Reading strategies are commonly defined more simply as processes that are consciously controlled by researchers to solve reading problems. In this regard, most researchers agreed on the following set of strategies that readers should apply:

- Identify the purpose and the goal in reading (Cohen, 2015; Grabe, 2009).
- Question everything by examining the evidence used and the assumptions (Cohen, 2015).
- Read between the lines to get the whole idea of the text because sometimes the writer cannot include all possible information about a topic or a situation (Cohen, 2015; Browne & keeley, 2007).
- Underline the most important ideas of each paragraph (Cohen, 2015; Grabe, 2009).
- Use dictionaries whenever finding ambiguous terms to be defined (Browne & keeley, 2007).
- Evaluate the text by questioning the background of the author and the credibility of the sources (Grabe, 2009; Mikuleckey & Jeffries, 2007).
- Write one sentence summary of each paragraph to b more organized (Cohen, 2015).
- Summarize the key ideas then combine them in one's own words (Cohen, 2015; Mikuleckey & Jeffries, 2007).

1.13. Critical Reading

Critical reading is simply defined as an active process which involves an interaction with the text by analyzing, interpreting and evaluating ideas. Cohen (2015) describes critical readers as active readers, they tend to evaluate and assess the strengths and weakness of the ideas and evidence presented by the author. In a similar path, Duncan claims that critical readers tend to use their critical thinking skills in order to question the text they are reading and their understanding as well. The purpose of critical reading does not mean to criticize and judge every piece of information rather its aim is to get a deeper understanding of the text by evaluating and questioning what you are reading (UNSW.edu.au,2019)

1.14. Critical Reading strategies

- Identify the purpose and the reasons of your reading because it can help to organize both your reading and the use of it (Cohen, 2015; Mikulcky & Jeffries, 2007).
- Survey and consider how the text is formulated and presented (Cohen, 2015; writing.edu).
- Check when the text is written and the source of the material (Cohen, 2015; Mikulckey & Jeffries, 2007).
- Evaluate the text through questioning and examining the author's authority and background in order to know if the writer is qualified or not (Cohen, 2015; Mikulckey & Jeffries, 2007).
- Compare the information of the text with what you already know (Mikulckey & Jeffries, 2007).
- Engage with the text by highlighting key ideas and points (Cohen, 2015; Grabe, 2009).
- Separate parts of arguments, thesis ideas, evidence and counterarguments then grasp how these parts support the writer's thesis (writing.edu; Cohen, 2015).
- Use dictionaries to look up for ambiguous terms and concepts (Writing.edu; Browne & keeley, 2007).
- Examine the writer opinions and recognize his bias so as to make a fair judgement about the validity of the writer's ideas and how it can affect facts and arguments that are presented (Cohen, 2015; Mikulckey & Jeffries, 2007; writing.edu).
- Make notes and summaries of each paragraph to be more organized and discover your own ideas (Cohen, 2015; Mikulckey & Jeffries, 2007).
- Elaborate on the summaries and notes taken by adding other ideas and illustrations from previous knowledge (Cohen, 2015).

1.15. Intercultural Reading

Intercultural reading is a combination of two major concepts which are critical reading and interculturality. In clearer terms, it is the ability to read critically culturally-based textbooks in which it involves a personal interaction and deep engagement with texts. Accordingly, intercultural readers will read and explore other cultures, discover new knowledge and construct new interpretations of the text being read. Besides, they will recognize the similarities and differences between their native and non-native culture. In this vein, Garza (2008) indicated that "it is mutually beneficial for students with culture being learned and students who are learning new culture to embrace the differences in culture based on the knowledge obtained via reading" (as cited in Singh, 2016, p.28). Indeed, competent intercultural readers should understand and accept cultural differences because this will affect their skills, beliefs and attitudes. Moreover, intercultural reading is very important for learners since it enables them to analyze and evaluate different perspectives and beliefs rather just learning the factual information contained in them. Therefore, readers will develop their own perspectives, their own understandings and adopt multiple beliefs and attitudes.

1.16. Reading as a teaching-learning process

Reading is a complex activity because it involves two processes: recognition and comprehension. It is one of the educational and learning goal due to the fact the knowledge the students gain from, the opportunities given and the opening up to the new world. However, it is important to set other objectives in order to make a shift from learning to read

to reading to learn. Schleppegrell and Bowman (1986) state the objectives of teaching reading:

- Learners should be able to prove their comprehension of the texts and finding the writer's view point.
- Learners should be able to scan the text quickly to capture necessary information.
- Learners should be able to grasp and use large amount of vocabulary in the subject area.

Reading has various benefits in improving students' language learning, it engages students in higher cognitive level of thinking as it builds their world knowledge. Nuttal (2005) states that the aim of reading program is to satisfy students reading in foreign language and enable them to read at appropriate speed and to understand different types of texts through offering adequate reading instruction.

Thus, teachers should provide their students with the techniques that help and enable them improve autonomous reading.

1.17. The role of reading in developing Intercultural Competence

Reading plays a crucial role in human beings' personal and social lives. It is considered as one of the most effective way to improve one' literacy, acquire new knowledge and develop ICC. Therefore, the role of reading in developing ICC is well described by Lázár stating that "ICC can be actually enhanced in EFL through different means such as speaking with members of a particular cultural background and using textbooks" (as cited in Gomez, 2011, p.50). This means that intercultural competence can be developed in different ways not only via speaking, but it can be developed via reading through the use of textbooks. Supporting this view, Kramersch (2001) claimed that "students should be exposed to different types of readings like textbooks, newspapers and magazines because they offer opportunities for the negotiation of meaning while learning about different cultural representations" (cited in Gomez, 2011, p.52). Indeed, textbooks help learners to explore, analyze ideas and beliefs, and compare between their own culture and the target one in addition learners will be aware of other cultural perspectives. In return, students will be able to adapt with foreign cultures and accommodate with different people. Thus, students will develop empathy, open-mindedness and respect for other cultures.

1.18. Conclusion :

This chapter provided an overview about culture, interculturality and reading skill. Part of it was concerned with the clarification of what culture and interculturality is as well as the intercultural competence and communicative competence. Then, the other part was devoted to cover a thorough description of reading, critical and intercultural reading skill. The last part explored the role of reading in developing intercultural competence. The next chapter will prepare the ground to the practical part of this research to closely examine and investigate how the content of the cultural syllabus can develop students' intercultural reading skills.

Chapter Two

Research Methodology

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

2. Introduction

After discussing and reviewing the literature on this topic, this chapter is tended to present the practical side of the present research work; as a starting point, it presents the research methodology followed in the collection of data including the approaches and methods that were chosen to undertake this research. Moreover, it provides a description of the selected context and population that contributed to the present study. Then, it addresses the procedures of data collection which consists of a questionnaire and an interview. Data collected from both tools are analyzed afterwards.

2.1. Research Methodology

In order to conduct a considerable study and achieve an effective piece of research, one of the most challenges a researcher faces is choosing the appropriate research methodology that best fit the research objectives. This dissertation was conducted in the form of multiple case studies dealing with third year license students and second year master students of Didactics of Foreign languages at the department of English Language, Mostaganem. The reason behind choosing such type of research is that it focuses on understanding the phenomenon, the similarities and differences as well between cases under one research work within its natural settings and objectives. Strake (1995) defines it as “several cases within the same project” (p.04). This entails that multiple case study is a collection of cases which aims at studying and comparing several cases under one research work. Besides, it allows to wider exploring of research questions and theoretical evolution (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). One of the main advantages of choosing this type of case study is that it creates a more convincing, strong and reliable evidence despite its consumption of time.

In the present research, the researcher has opted for a mixed methods approach which entails a combination of quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The main difference between the two paradigms is said to be in numbers. The quantitative research aims at explaining phenomenon based on collecting numerical data. As explained by Kothari (2004) who states that “quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount” (p.03). As for the qualitative research, it is concerned with tools which seek to gain an in-depth understanding of underlying reasons, motivations, opinions and attitudes about a particular topic (Kothari, 2004). Indeed, using several research methods is very essential in gathering evidence and evaluating findings so as to provide an adequate data about a certain phenomenon.

2.3. Procedure

The present research was carried out with third year license students and second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages at the department of English at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem. This study was conducted in relation to

lectures of the module Intercultural Studies and Didactics. Those lectures took place during the first semester along ten sessions. The first instrument used was a questionnaire addressed to third year license students and an interview as a second instrument conducted with ten students of second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages.

2.3. Context of the study

The research work was conducted with third year license students and second year master students of Didactics of Foreign languages at the department of English, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem during the academic year 2019-2020. This study aims to investigate the situation of culture teaching in EFL classes as well as to investigate the role of the cultural syllabus' content of the subject Intercultural Studies and Didactics in developing students' intercultural reading skills. The content of the syllabus were mainly chapters of the reading sessions that was implemented only in teaching the module of Intercultural studies and didactics. The next part is devoted to cover a detailed description of the cultural syllabus and its content.

2.3.1. The cultural syllabus

The cultural syllabus is a teaching tool which contains a summary of the cultural topics to be covered during the academic course or lecture. It describes what to be taught and what to be achieved through teaching and learning. It is worth to note that the most important objective of the cultural syllabus is to encourage students to read critically and raise their awareness about the most important issues related to intercultural Studies and Didactics.

2.3.1.1. The content of the cultural syllabus

According to the syllabus of Intercultural Studies and Didactics provided by the teacher, the content of the cultural syllabus is mainly chapters taken from selected books which are about language, culture and intercultural communication. The main books and chapters that were tackled during the first semester are two books about intercultural learning are cited below:

Book 01: Language and culture by Claire Kramersch (1998)

➤ Chapter 01: The relationship of language and culture

This chapter highlights the interrelationship between language and culture with one completing, reflecting and embodying the other. In addition, it compares between culture and nature in relation to the poem of Emily Dickinson showing how they are interconnected. Also, it highlights the crucial role discourse community play in giving power and control to culture and how this latter determines people as insiders and outsiders. The last pointed discussed in this chapter is the linguistic relativity" whorfinian hypothesis" which refers to how language affects one's thoughts and meanings.

➤ Chapter 07: Current Issues

This chapter highlights two main issues which are the native speaker and cultural authenticity. First, kramersch questions the identity and the authority of the native speaker by focusing around two main concepts: cultural authenticity and cultural appropriateness. Second, she identifies other notions including cross-cultural, intercultural and multicultural communication.

Book 02: Language learning in an intercultural perspectives: Approaches through drama and ethnography edited by M. Byram & M.Fleming (1998)

➤ Chapter 01: The privilege of the intercultural speaker

This chapter is concerned with two main significant issues. First, it criticizes the native speaker as being the ideal person among foreign language learners. Second, Kramsch argues that the desired outcome of language learning is no more a native speaker but rather an intercultural speaker. So instead of imitating native speakers and ignoring learners' personal and social identities, foreign language teachers should enable their learners to understand, relate and interpret the similarities and differences between one's own culture and the others culture.

➤ Chapter 02: Cultural practices of Everyday life: the language learner as ethnographer

This chapter examines the importance of the ethnographic approach in foreign language learning which its aim is to encourage learners to recognize and understand the cultural practices and ideas of the other groups. Also, it examines the importance of making students standing in a third place; mediators between their culture and the target one, which enables them to express their own meanings and discover their own identities.

2.4. Sample population

Before introducing the sample population involved in this study, one should first define what is meant by sample population. According to Frey et al (2000) a sample is a group of individuals selected to participate in a research work. It should be "representative in the sense that each sampled unit will represent the characteristics of a known number of units in the population" (Lohr, 1999, p.03). In this study, the researcher involved two groups of participants; the first group of informants entail 14 third year license students (nine females and five males) whereas the second group of informants involve 10 second year master students of Didactics and Foreign languages (two males and nine females) who belong to Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University. These particular groups of students were randomly selected in order to make the research more reliable and objective.

2.5. Data collection instruments

In the current work and for the purpose of having reliable data, a combination of research methods and instruments has been used. These instruments include: a questionnaire addressed to third year students and an interview conducted with second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages.

2.5.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire is the first tool we have opted to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Brown (as cited in Dornyei, 2007, p.91) describes the questionnaire as "any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting among existing answers". It is one of the favored tools used to collect data needed for a particular research work. In this respect, Wray and Bloomer (2006) views the questionnaire as the most useful research instrument which can be used in different fields and for different purposes as it is effective in collecting

data from various sources. Furthermore, questionnaires have advantages over other types of research instruments in the sense they provide a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining a considerable amount of information from a great number of people.

2.5.1.1. Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire designed for this study is composed of eleven questions and a practical exercise which is composed of four questions, as questionnaires do not necessarily contain only questions (Dornyei, 2007). The number and the aim of the questions as well as the practical exercise are considered to be adequate for the purpose of the study. The questionnaire embodies both close-ended and open-ended questions to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. Close-ended questions represent the type of questions in which the respondents are asked to pick one answer from a given number of options, or by giving a yes or no answer. While open-ended questions are intended to ask respondents to formulate their own answers and express freely their opinions and adding further explanations in the space given. The questionnaire is segmented into four sections and each section serves a vital importance to the research.

➤ Section One: Background Information (Q1-Q2)

This section is devoted to the participants' personal information to have background knowledge about their gender and their level.

➤ Section Two: Knowledge about English language and culture (Q1-Q4)

The second section targets students' knowledge about English language and culture. The first question aims to know if the participants are using the language as a medium of communication outside their classrooms. In the case of a yes, the students have been asked to identify those with whom they generally tend to use English with as a medium of communication by selecting multiple choices of the suggestions provided whether with their classmates, people who understand it or with native speakers. The second question investigates whether informants are familiar with the English language culture. In the case of a yes, the informants have been asked to identify the sources they used to know about that culture. The third question is tended to reveal the obstacles students face when learning English language. The suggested answers include: grammar, vocabulary and other sources by explaining the reason behind such obstacle. The last question seeks to discover the meaning of culture. The given choices include: art, theatre, dancing, etc or the way of life of a given social group including customs and traditions, or culture is both of the suggested answers.

➤ Section Three: Reading Practices (Q1-Q5)

In this section, students are asked about their reading practices. The first question attempts to know whether or not reading is an important activity in language learning allowing participants to justify their answers. The second question seeks to discover the modules in which students do reading activities in. In the case of a yes, participants are asked to identify the obstacles they generally encounter by selecting multiple choices of the suggestions given and adding others if any. The third question investigates if students read or not and which aspect of language they focus on whether grammar, vocabulary or meaning or others if any. The fourth question attempts to know students opinions and attitudes toward the integration of the reading program and how they expect their teachers help them practice

reading. The last question aims to know students' views concerning the role of reading in developing their language proficiency.

➤ **Section Four: practical exercise**

This section is concerned with reading and culture. The researcher has designed a practical exercise to evaluate the comprehension level and whether they take into account culture when they read. The exercise is based on a text entitled "where do you want to learn English?" it is taken from a webpage Rong Chang Free ESL Stories and Short Stories. The researcher has omitted the title of the text so as to identify students' ability in understanding and making general predictions of the content of the text as well as to show their ability in using the reading strategies. Besides, the researcher has also modified the text by replacing some words by idioms so as to know if students are familiar with idioms or not since this latter are part of culture.

The text is divided into four separated passages and followed by four questions. These questions are short response questions which require students to write their own responses. The researcher has designed four questions to the text which are as follow:

- **Question (1)** is tended to evaluate students' comprehension of the given material.
- **Question (2)** attempts to know the difference between learning English in two different countries.
- **Question (3)** seeks to discover whether students have encountered problems in grammar or vocabulary.
- **Question (4)** requires students to pick out idioms by giving their synonyms according to their meaning in the text.

2.5.2. Interview

In addition to the questionnaire, another retrospection instrument; the structured interview was opted to collect detailed data from our informants. A structured interview is simply defined as the use of pre-planned questions asked to all the respondents in the same order and formats (Corbetta, 2003). According to Kajornboon (2011), this type of interview is considered to be easy to analyze since the researcher has control over the topics as well as the interview's format. Furthermore, using the structured interview is beneficial in the sense that it enables the researcher to examine the respondents' comprehension level about a specific topic.

2.5.2.1. Description of the interview

The interview was conducted with ten students of second year master of didactics and foreign languages so as to investigate the role of content of lectures in developing students' intercultural competence via reading. The interview is composed of ten questions as follows:

Question (1) aims to investigate students' understanding of the notion of IC.

Questions (2) and (3) attempt to know whether or not students liked the content of lectures and if they were motivated while reading about culture.

Question (4) is intended to discover the amount of time students spend in reading chapters of books.

Question (5) enquires whether or not students faced any cultural issues during their readings and whether they were comfortable to discuss them.

Question (6) investigates the extent to which the content of lectures contributed in the development of the most important critical reading skills.

Question (7) attends to discover if students were motivated by their teacher to read critically and what strategies they have applies while reading.

Question (8) seeks to discover if students faced difficulties when reading about culture.

Question (9) aims to know whether the programs about culture helped students to read without ignoring the cultural aspect of the language

Question (10) aims at discovering the activities those FL teachers should integrate in the classroom to develop intercultural competence.

2.5.3. Limitations of this study

Limitations of this study took place during the process of data collection of both tools; the questionnaire and the interview, it spent a lot of time to collect data back because of the pandemic issue “Covid-19”. Only fourteen students have responded to the questionnaire; however it was addressed to thirty students of third year license. In addition to this, it was not possible to conduct a face-to-face interview with the participants of second year master of Didactics and Foreign Languages. To overcome this limitation, an alternative method of communication which is a telephone interview was used. Moreover, the lack of experience as being a researcher created some difficulties to accomplish this work.

2.5.4. Conclusion

After discussing the literature in the first chapter, this thesis presented an expansive view on the practical side of this research. The researcher provided an overview of the research methodology followed in conducting this study, the context in which this study is carried out in addition to the population sampling that took place in the fulfillment of the research work. Next, the chapter offered a description of the instruments employed. After that, the researcher presented some limitations of the present study. Finally, the following chapter will deal with the analysis of what the researcher has collected as data from the sample population, discussion of the findings and recommendations.

Chapter Three

Data Analysis and Recommendations

Chapter Three: Data Analysis and Recommendations

3. Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the collected data from different instruments, namely a questionnaire and an interview for the purpose of examining the trustiness of the hypothesis and answering the research questions. At the end, some suggestions and recommendations will be put forward.

3.1. Data analysis

This section attempts to analyze and discuss the collected data from both students' questionnaire and interview.

3.1.1. Analysis of the students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at investigating whether students practice reading along the cultural dimension of language. It was addressed to forty third year license students at the University of Abdelhamid Ibn Badis of Mostaganem. Each question will be analyzed and discussed separately.

• Section One: Background Information

Q1: Are you male or female?

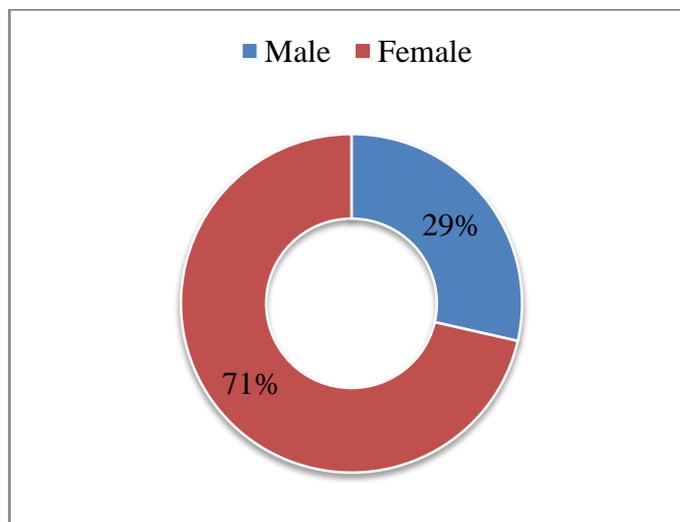


Figure 2: Students' Gender

From the above figure, it is seen that the majority of the sample are girls; out of fourteen participants, ten (71%) in opposition of only four boys (29%). This high number of girls adds nothing to the work but it can be noticed that females are more interested in studying foreign language than boys.

Q2: How do you evaluate your level in English?

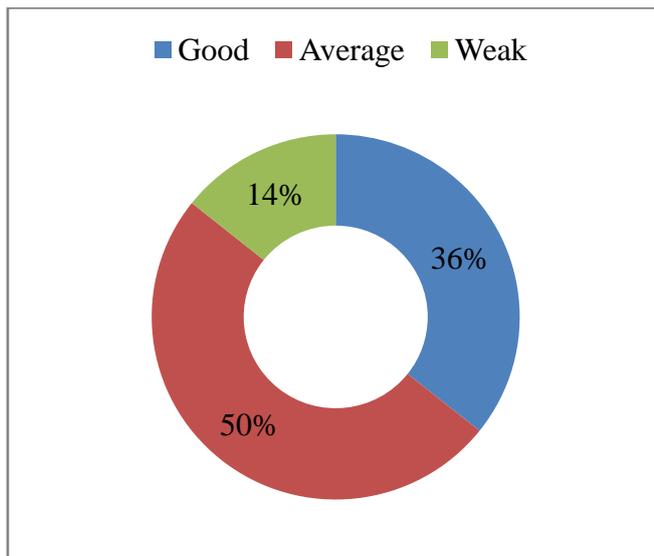


Figure 3: Students' level of English

This question asks the learners to evaluate their levels in English. Seven participants about (50%) have responded that their level in English is average. Whereas five students (36%) answered that they are good in English. Only two students (14%) have placed themselves among the seats of weak learners of the language.

•Section Two: knowledge about English language and culture

Q1: Do you use English as a medium of communication outside the classroom?

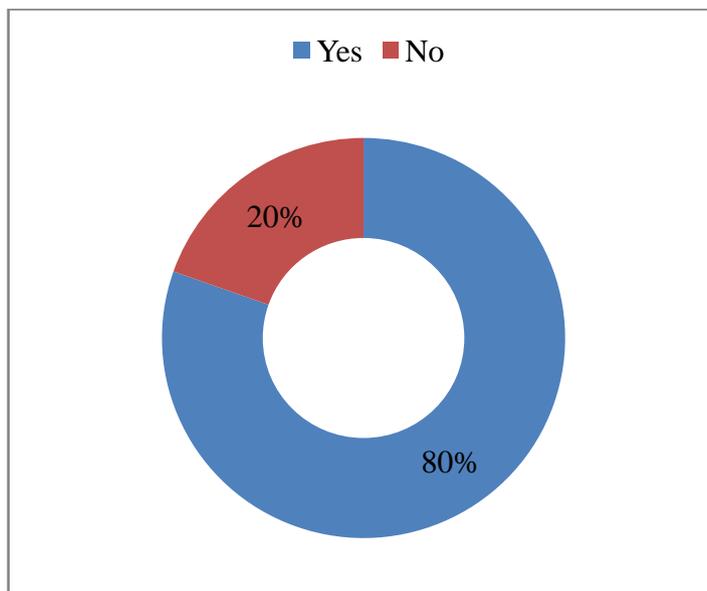


Figure 4: Students' use of English language outside the classroom

The reason behind asking this question is to know if the students use the language as a medium of communication outside their classrooms. The results reveal that twelve

participants (80%) have claimed that they speak English outside their classrooms, while two students with (20%) have asserted that they only use the language inside the classroom. In the case of a Yes, the participants have been asked to identify with whom they generally tend to use English with as a medium of communication by selecting multiple choices of the suggestions provided, as it is shown in the following table:

Suggestions	Repetitions	%
Your classmates	4	33%
People who understand	4	33%
Native speakers	2	17%
People who understand+ Native speakers	2	17%

Table 1: People with whom students use English language

Q2: Are you familiar with English language culture?

a. If yes, from where have you acquired such knowledge?

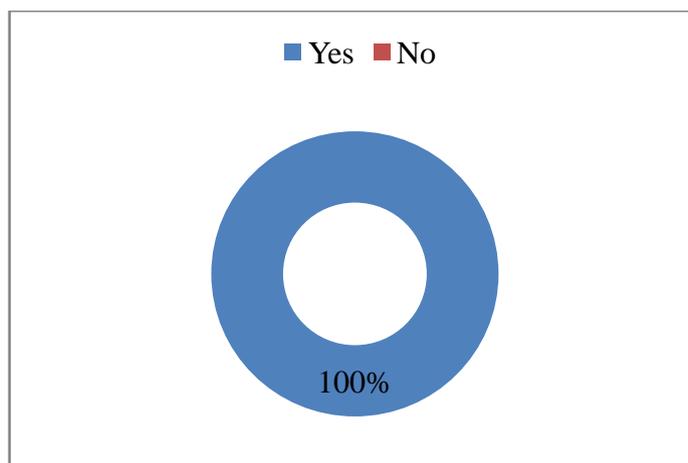


Figure 5: Students' familiarity with the English culture

In this question, the informants have been asked if they are familiar with the English culture. As the chart clarifies, (100%) that is all the participants are familiar with the target culture. In the case of a Yes, the students have been asked to identify the sources they used to know about the English culture, the answers are displayed in the following table:

Suggestions	Repetitions	%
You studies	5	36%
Films and Music	4	28%
Other sources	4	29%

Your studies+ Films and Music + Other sources	1	7%
---	---	----

Table 2: The sources of students' acquisition of the cultural knowledge

This table shows the sources used by the participants to know about the English culture. Five students with the percentage of (36%) have asserted that their cultural knowledge is acquired from academic sources given by their teachers; however, four students (28%) have claimed that their knowledge is acquired via Films and Music. A (29%) that is four students have asserted that their cultural knowledge is coming from other sources such as documentaries, reading books and listening to stories about the English culture from native speakers, while the other (7%) that is one student ha ticked all the choices that had been given.

Q3: What obstacles do you face when learning English language?

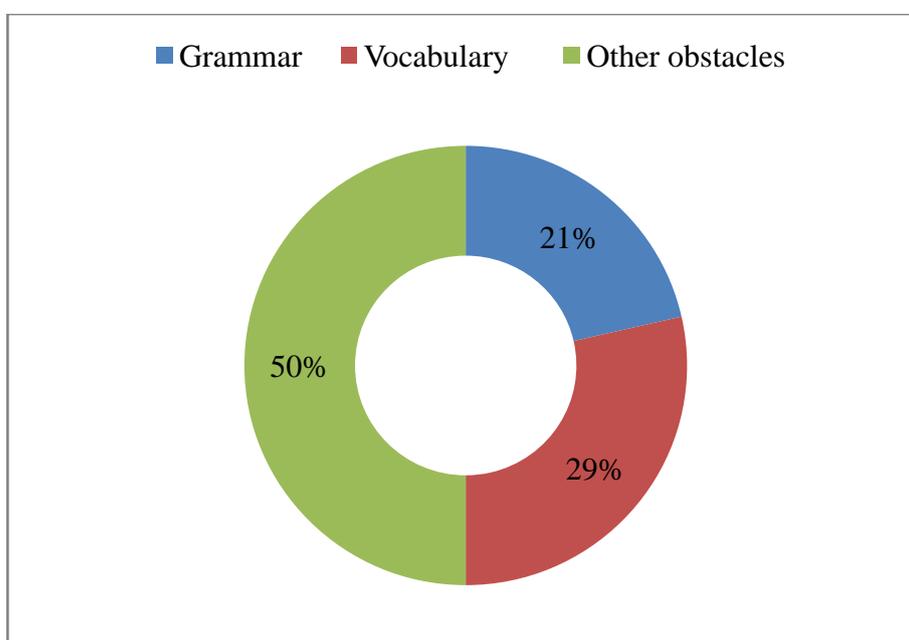


Figure 6: English learning' obstacles faced by students

Concerning this question, the pie above demonstrates that students confront different obstacles that hamper their learning English language learning. The results reveal that (29%) of participants have vocabulary deficits. Besides, (21%) of them have grammar obstacles, while the rest (50%) have opted the last option declaring that they encounter other obstacles such as speaking and writing. Since the question is open, students stated some reasons behind those obstacles as follow:

Those who opted for Vocabulary have claimed that the reason behind this learning obstacle is resulted from memory lost and the complexity of the world knowledge.

Those who opted for Grammar have mentioned that the complexity of the grammatical rules and the time learners take to grasp them is the reason behind such obstacle.

As for those who opted for the last option have stated common obstacles such as speaking and writing skills. The reason behind the first obstacle as mentioned by the participants is mainly due to the lack of self-confidence, shyness, stress and “Glossophobia” which is fear of public speaking. For the second obstacle which is writing skill, the participants have mentioned two main reasons like the lack of writing strategies and

Q4: According to you, the word culture refers to:

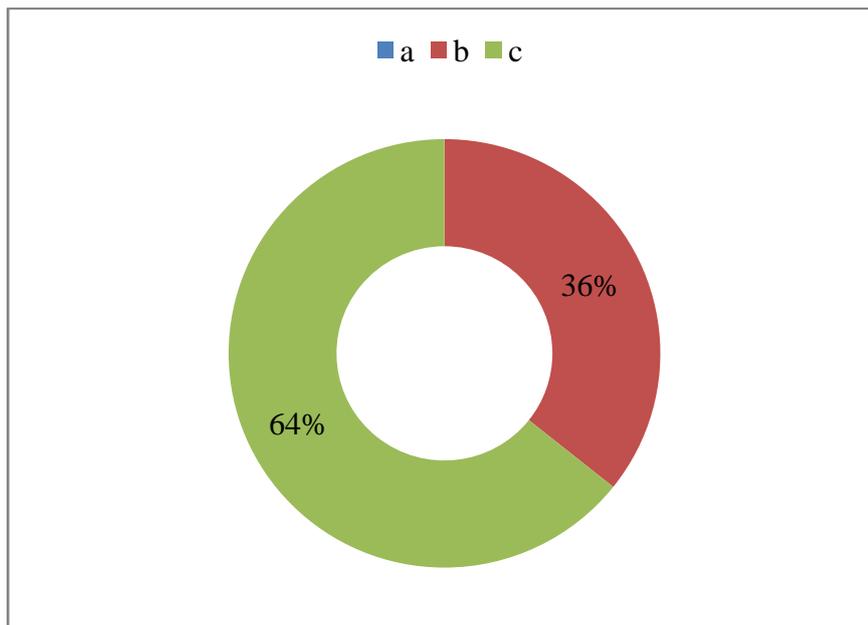


Figure 7: Students' definition of Culture

Concerning the definition of culture, five students representing (36%) opted for the choice (b) which incorporates the way of life of a given social group including their customs and traditions that distinguish one from another. nine students representing (64%), on the other hand, answered that culture involves both definitions. The answers of this question are summarized in the above figure.

•Section Three: Reading Practices

Q1: Reading is considered as the most important activity in any language course and at any level. (Explain)

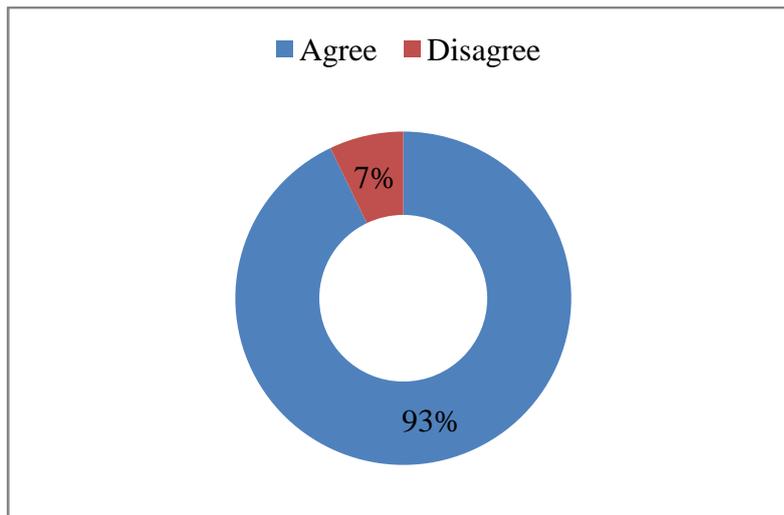


Figure 8: Students' points of view about the importance of reading

Some students consider that reading is the most important activity in language learning. As it is apparent in the above figure, (93%) of participants agreed on the significant importance of reading. And since the question is open-ended, participants justified their answers stating that:

- Reading develops language abilities and expands students' vocabulary volume.
- Reading helps students to instill new words and phrases for writing, increases their fluency and strengthens their commands over the language.
- Reading is an effective tool to develop students' general knowledge since it exposes students to foreign culture and develops their language skills.

As for the (5%), it was devoted to only one female student who disagreed because she thought that reading is not that important activity rather speaking is the most important activity and skill in language learning since it helps students to improve their grammar, vocabulary

Q2: what are the subjects that you have reading activities in?

a. If yes, what obstacles do you generally face?

In this question, the informants have been asked about the modules they have reading activities in. The majority of the students' responses illustrated that there is only three modules in which they practice reading in. Those modules are: Civilization, Literature and written expression.

In the case of a "Yes" answer, the participants have been asked to identify the obstacles they tend to face by selecting multiple choices of the suggestions provided. The answers show that four students (29%) lack the reading strategies that help them to reach successful reading while four of them (29%) relate their obstacles to other lack of vocabulary knowledge. Surely, this hinders their comprehension and causes their reading failure. Besides, (21%) of the informants do not read because they have a problem with grammar structure while other (21%) think that the lack of practice is the cause of their reading problems. In different way, the graph below shows better illustrations:

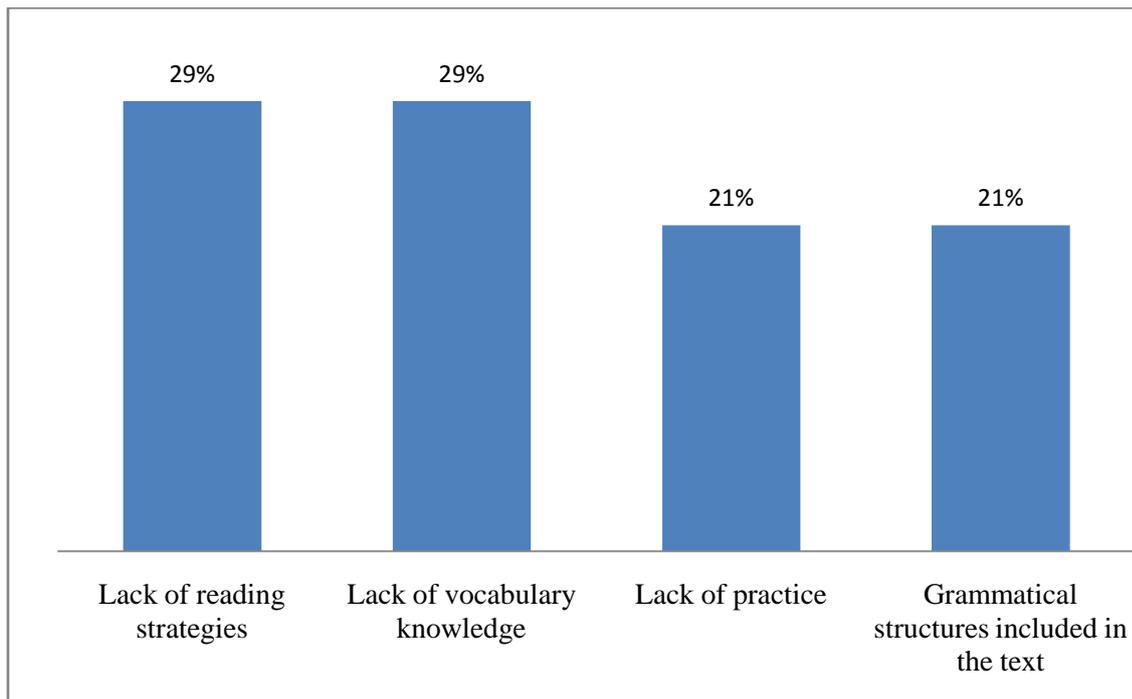


Figure 9: Students' obstacles while practicing reading activities

Q3: Which language aspect do you focus on when reading?

The results displayed in the table below shows that the majority of the students (50%) have claimed that when they read a text they focus on the meaning, while (29%) of them tend to focus on the vocabulary whereas the remains (21%) focus on meaning and vocabulary. However, none of the participants have opted for the grammatical aspect to be focused on while reading. The below table explains better the results:

Language Aspects	Repetitions	%
Grammar	0	0%
Meaning	7	50%
Vocabulary	4	29%
Meaning + Vocabulary	3	21%

Table 3: Students' focus when reading

Q4: Would you agree if your department sets a reading program?

a. If yes, how would you like your teachers help you to read?

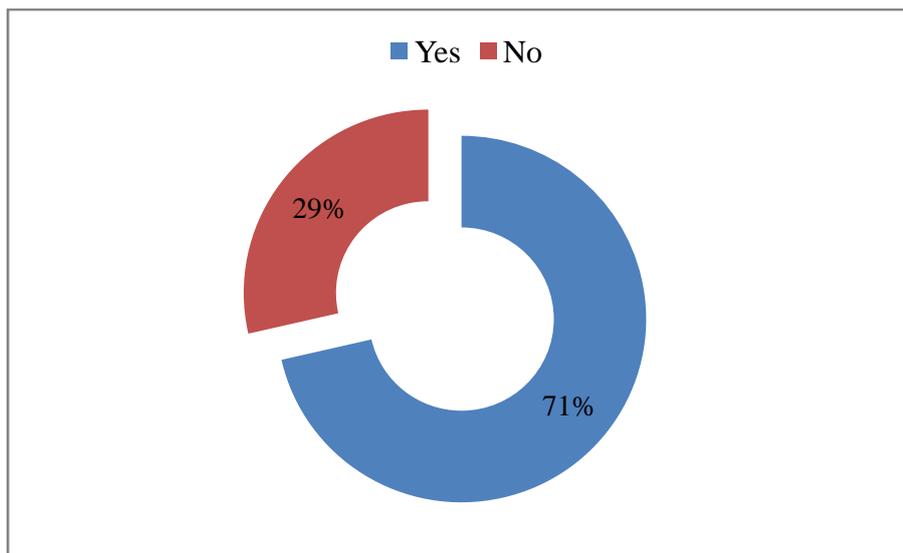


Figure 10: students' attitudes toward the reading program

The results shown on the figure above denotes that most of the participants agree upon the introduction of the reading program. In the case of a “Yes”, the participants have been asked to identify the strategies their teachers should use to help them to read. The following table sums up students' answers concerning their teachers' help strategies:

Students Suggestions for reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bringing and selecting interesting books according to students' choice and interests. ➤ Teachers' guidance, monitoring and motivation during the reading sessions. ➤ Discussing what students have read by giving them time to read. ➤ Teaching students the techniques and strategies of reading. ➤ Encourage and support students to read. ➤ Assess and evaluate students' reading.

Table 4: students' suggestions for reading

This table displays students' suggestions concerning the way their teachers can help them to read. In fact, all the participants want their teachers to select interesting books according to their interests and choice so as to facilitate the comprehension of the content of the material and to be engaged easily in the discussions. Students think that motivation and guidance are the most important and effective strategies that guarantee the reading continuity. Still, most of the students believe that their teachers should teach them the techniques and the strategies of reading.

Q5: Do you think that reading can develop your proficiency in the English language skills? (Explain)

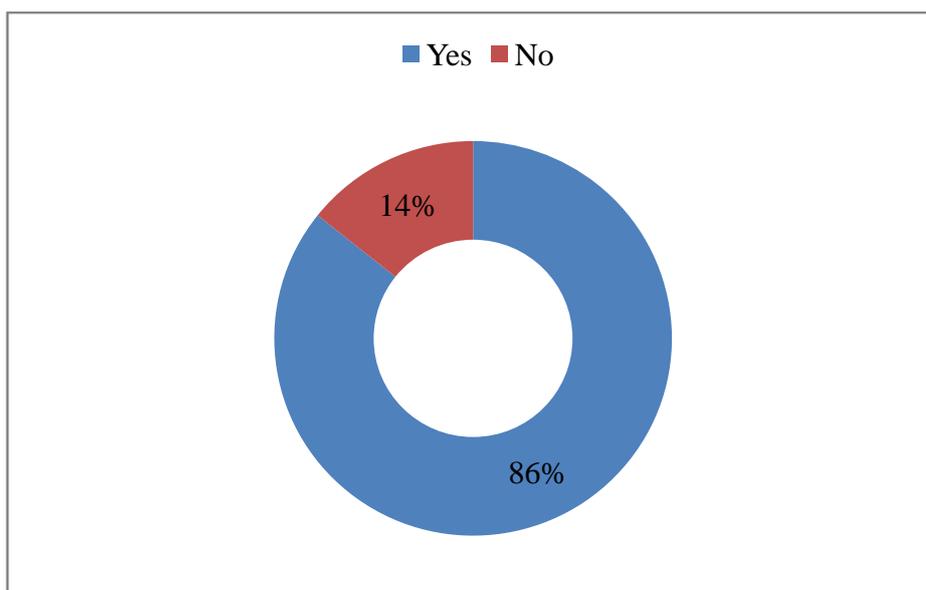


Figure 11: Students' attitudes toward the role of reading in improving their language learning

Apparently, the results above display that the majority of students (86%) are conscious about the role of reading in improving their language proficiency. Most of the participants believe that reading develops their cognitive competence and improve their comprehension abilities. Some believe that the skill of reading plays a crucial role rather other skills due to the fact that it helps them a lot in acquiring vocabulary, learning grammar in context and improving their pronunciation when reading aloud. For instance, they will enrich their vocabulary bulk by learning new words and expressions. As for writing, learners consider that reading as the most useful means to improve their writing skills as they develop better styles of writing at higher levels.

• Section Four: Reading and culture (practical exercise)

Q1: What is the text about?

This question seeks to evaluate participants' comprehension of the material given. According to their answers, it is revealed that the majority of the students have understood what the text speaks about. Students' responses are as follow:

- The best way to study English language.
- The best way to learn English.
- The best way to improve English language.

Q2: what is the difference between learning English in Algeria and in Britain?

This question attempts to reveal whether students have grasped the content of the text or not. Some of the participants' answers are listed as follow:

“Studying in Algeria is free; you can learn English easily and without spending a lot of money whereas in Britain, learning English is too expensive. Besides, you will be surrounded completely by the language wherever you go”

“In Britain, you can learn English easily by listening and communicating to native speakers without going to school. Whereas in Algeria, you have to find the best teacher to improve your English”

“Learning English in Algeria is free and easy; you will not listen to the same language all the time. Besides, you will not change your life mode to improve your English. Whereas in Britain is too expensive to learn that foreign language, you have to listen and speak the language with the citizens of the county”

Q3: after reading the text, have you encountered some problems concerning the grammatical or the vocabulary aspect of the language?

	Number	Percentage
Yes, I have	02	38%
No, I have not	12	63%

Table 5: Students’ reading problems

As it can be observed, the majority of students (63%) acknowledged that they had not encountered any problem concerning language aspects while few of them (38%) had faced some difficulties for both the grammatical and vocabulary aspects of language which had affected their comprehension of the text.

Q4: the text contains some idioms pick them out and give their synonyms in accordance to their meaning in the text?

Idioms	Synonyms
Come to the fore	Important, clear.
Hard-and-Fast	Extremely difficult, requiring much efforts.
Crème de la crème	The best way.

Table 1: Students' guessing about the meaning of idioms from the context

According to students’ responses in the table above, it is revealed that the majority of the participants have not succeeded on guessing the meaning of the idioms, but few of them could guess its meanings from their contexts. This leads to say that students are not familiar with idioms which are part of culture. So, idioms should be given consideration by teachers of the language skills

3.1.2.1. Summary of the main findings

The collected data from students’ questionnaire reveals that the participants use English outside the classroom and they are familiar with the English culture that was acquired

from different sources. The results also show that most of the third year students are conscious of the importance of reading. However, they report that they have some reading obstacles in the modules that they have reading activities in. Such obstacles may include the lack of vocabulary knowledge and reading strategies which causes their reading failure.

In addition the students' answers show that reading can develop their language proficiency. They argue that reading helps them to develop their cognitive competence and improve their comprehension abilities, reading fluency as well as it expands their vocabulary storage. Besides, reading is not rewarded by the department; we should mention that most of the participants agree on setting such a program and including it in the curriculum. This reflects students' consciousness and awareness of the importance of reading in their language learning. Furthermore, some participants view that teachers should select books in accordance with students' choice and interests. This can facilitate the comprehension of the material and create a healthy atmosphere. Also, offering useful classroom reading with focus on the reading strategies, reading fluency and classroom activities.

According to the results obtained from the first hypothesis which is about students' focus while practice reading, it was confirmed that most of third year students tend to focus on language only; students' answers to the practical exercise demonstrate exactly the results.

3.1.2. Analysis of students' Interview

The analysis of the students' interview aims at investigating whether second year master students take into account the cultural aspect of the reading process and whether the content of lectures help them to develop intercultural competence becoming intercultural readers. For this, it was important to conduct a structured interview with ten students of Didactics of Foreign languages and give an overview of the content of the cultural syllabus. We will focus on the most relevant questions that may answer the research question.

Question 1: How would you define intercultural competence?

Given the fact that the aim of this question is to investigate students' recognition of the meaning of intercultural competence. The majority of students attributed to IC as a feature of "interaction", while the rest of the participants which are three students defined it in another way. Some of their answers are listed as follows:

"Intercultural competence is someone's ability to communicate across cultures effectively based on one's knowledge about the target culture".

"Intercultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations".

"IC is a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills that lead to effective and appropriate communication with people from different cultures".

"IC is the ability to understand different cultures including one's own and to use this understanding to communicate effectively".

Question 2: Did you like the content of lectures in the module of Intercultural Studies and Didactics? Explain why?

Eight students replied positive answers, while the other two students acknowledged that they did not like them for several reasons. They justified their answers as follow:

“Yes, I did. It was interesting and inspiring; it helped us to develop critical reading skills; however the language was a bit difficult since it was written by scholars. So, without the teacher’s help we could understand nothing”.

“Yes, very much. It was beneficial for me; it helped me to gain new knowledge about different cultural topics as it improved my linguistic capacities and my writing skills as well”.

“No, I did not like it at al. The chapters we were discussing were difficult to understand. Besides, the language was of high level for us and the content was complex”.

Question 6: To what extent was the content of lectures or the module as a whole helpful in developing critical reading skills? In other words, your skills of analyzing, questioning, comparing and evaluating?

The majority of the interviewees acknowledged that the content of lectures helped them to develop their critical reading skills. Only two students claimed that the content of lectures was not helpful to develop such skills. Some of their answers are listed as follow:

“Well, it was really helpful for me. Before, we used to read passively just to get a general idea of the text given but in the module of intercultural studies, we really learnt exactly how to read; how to analyze, question and compare items in order to get a much detailed understanding as well as to reflect on the content and read it critically”.

“Yes, it helped me somehow”

“Yes, it helped me a lot. Although we were not able to read critically at the beginning but thanks to the teacher’s guide and help we could do it after, not just reading critically even thinking critically since reading requires thinking”.

“No, it did not help me at all. The language and the style of the text were very difficult, I could not even engage with texts”.

Question 7: Have you been encouraged to read critically? If yes, what strategies were advised to use?

Given the fact that the aim of this question is to investigate whether students were motivated by their teacher to read critically and to discover what strategies they could develop during the sessions of reading. Some of their answers are listed as follow:

“Yes, I had the courage to read critically. The strategies I was advised to use are: first, I divide the paragraph into sections getting the main idea of each section to have a general idea of the whole paragraph then I analyze it, evaluate it claiming if I agree or disagree with the writer’ point of view”.

“Yes, I have been encouraged. Well the teacher of intercultural studies told us that when we want to read books about culture or any book, the presence of dictionaries is a must. First of all, we have to read the text carefully in order to understand it, highlighting key words, explaining difficult words by using dictionaries, get the general idea and analyze it “.

“Yes, somehow. Despite the fact that I was not interested and motivated in the reading sessions in addition to the limited time we had for reading and discussions, the teacher has motivated us to read by advising us with some strategies as reading carefully the text, highlighting key words, using dictionaries whenever we come across unclear and difficult words. Also, he told us to visit other sources that are related to those cultural topics”.

Question 8: What makes the process of reading about culture difficult for you?

The majority of students acknowledged that reading about culture was very difficult for them. Only two students claimed that the process of reading was easy and motivational. They justified their answers as follow:

“Culture is a vague concept, although it was somehow difficult to read about it but rather it was very important and beneficial since it provides the learners with the necessary knowledge to boost the understanding of the dynamic of one’s own culture and the target one”.

“Reading about culture is not that easy. From one hand, the language used was complex and unclear which makes you take too much time just to get the general idea of just one paragraph. The writers’ style on the other hand was very dense besides, the insufficient knowledge we have about other cultures and intercultural learning as well”.

“Usually the language used is complex and it is really hard to get the main idea of the chapters we were discussing”.

Question 9: Did the programs about culture help you to read taking into account culture?

The majority of the students replied positive answers claiming that the cultural programs were very helpful for them. Only three students acknowledged that those programs were not that helpful to enable them to read taking into account culture. Some of their answers are listed as follow:

“Yes, it helped me. Before, I used to focus on language only and ignore the cultural aspect which led me to misunderstandings and shortcomings. Thanks to the cultural programs, I become more conscious and aware of the role and importance of culture”.

“Yes, it did help me a lot. The cultural programs were like a steppingstone to develop critical reading skills and to change my insights toward culture which cannot be ignored or neglected”.

“No, it did not help me at all”.

“Yes, it did help me to a given extent. I could read and engage easily with texts, question ideas and analyze the writer’s point of view, evaluate it and compare it to my own one respecting his perspective without ignoring the target culture; i should mediate between my culture and the target one, ending up with a final opinion”.

“Yes, very much. It helped me not only to take culture into account when reading, rather it has affected on me positively. It made me open-minded and more curious to learn about other culture as it developed my knowledge about the target culture”.

3.1.2.1. Summary of the main findings

The data collected from students’ interview helped to confirm both the first and second hypothesis which are most of second year master students are likely to take the cultural aspect when reading and thus, the cultural syllabus helps learners to a given extent to become intercultural readers.

Concerning students’ attitudes and perceptions toward the content of lectures, the majority of them revealed positive perceptions by expressing their likes. This was deeply confirmed by their answers stating that it was very interesting and inspiring which helped them to gain new knowledge about different cultures and cultural topics. Besides, it helped them to develop certain skills of critical reading as it improved their language. Yet, few students responded negatively but quite insightfully. They claimed that the language used by scholars was very advanced and the content was complex which generated difficulties in understanding cultural concepts. The findings showed that the content of lectures was very helpful in developing students’ critical reading skills. Due to those lectures, they became aware about how to read critically. The most important skills students developed includes: the ability of questioning any information they read, analyze idea and identify writers’ points of view, examine and evaluate arguments, relate and compare what they read to their prior knowledge.

Most importantly, the majority of the students acknowledged that their teacher of interculturality was the source of their motivation in showing them how to read critically by using certain strategies. Those strategies include: reading carefully the text, dividing the text into sections to obtain the main idea easily, highlighting key words, using dictionaries and internet, analyzing and relating ideas, and reformulating it to their own words and understandings.

The results come to conclusion that most of the students face difficulties while reading about culture. These difficulties were related chiefly to the complexity of the content, insufficient knowledge in relation to culture and interculturality, and the limited to analyze chapters.

According to students' answers about the cultural program, most of them showed satisfaction towards it since it helped them to read taking into account culture. They assert that culture is a central part of foreign language learning which should not be ignored due to that fact that culture enables students to understand the language itself. Indeed, culture and language are inseparable and go hand in hand. As a matter of fact, the cultural programs had affected students positively by changing their attitudes, skills as well as developing their knowledge about the target culture. Some of the interviewees acknowledged that they became open-minded and more curious to learn about other cultures.

3.2. General discussion of the results

The results have indicated that the content of the cultural syllabus was successful in raising master students' awareness of the importance of culture as a integral part of their English learning; however, culture teaching is ignored and given less importance along the process of foreign language teaching. As a matter of fact, license students tended to ignore the cultural dimension of language and focusing on language only.

Moreover, this study revealed that major reading problems and obstacles learners faced, they were due to the lack of reading strategies and the world knowledge which comprises both the vocabulary and cultural knowledge. Certainly, these obstacles cause learners demotivation and active engagement with texts.

Additionally, the content of the cultural syllabus was very helpful in developing learners' critical reading skills. Despite the difficulties they have faced concerning the complexity of the content and the insufficient knowledge about culture and interculturality. As a matter of fact, the teacher's guidance and motivation played a crucial role in helping students to develop certain skills of critical reading as the skills of questioning, analyzing and evaluating ideas, comparing as well as developing one's own understanding. Those skills enabled learners to engage easily with their readings.

More importantly, the content of the cultural syllabus was successful in a given extent to develop intercultural competence. Most of the learners maintained that the cultural programs helped them to increase positive attitudes towards otherness, namely openness and curiosity. Besides, it has enriched their knowledge about the target culture where students have acquired new concepts and processes of the target culture. Thus, the content of the cultural syllabus could to a given extent help learners to become intercultural readers.

3.3. Recommendations

Drawing on the findings of the current study, the researcher suggests a set of pedagogical recommendations:

Integrating reading comprehension in the curriculum

It was noticed that most of licence and master students were not aware of reading comprehension strategies since they were accustomed to reading texts passively because they do not have the module of reading comprehension which is very important for the development of language skills especially reading as well as their metacognitive awareness. For this reason, we suggest the integration of the reading comprehension module in the curriculum during the three years of licence and the implementation of critical reading as a part of the reading curriculum.

Selecting interesting books for classroom reading

Depending on third year students' suggestions and second year master students' perceptions toward the content of the cultural syllabus and the shortcomings they encountered along their readings. It is suggested for teachers to give the students the freedom in selecting interesting books that fit their preferences and level. Indeed, when students have the chance to select books they are interested in, they are more likely to engage in discussions and share their ideas. Since students can be given the opportunity to choose their reading materials, it is also suggested for teachers to allow students with sufficient time to report back their readings.

The Integration of culture teaching

Most of licence and master students faced difficulties in understanding concepts related to culture because of their insufficient knowledge about the English culture. Thus, we suggest integrating the teaching of culture during the three years of licence. Eventually, teachers should take culture teaching in their classes seriously as part of ELT so as to expose their learners to the target culture and make them more familiar about it and to bridge the gap between their learners' native and target culture. Hence, students will be able to read about other cultures and develop their intercultural competence skills.

Developing Intercultural Competence through the use of Authentic Materials

Some students claimed that they did like neither the activity of reading books nor the content of the cultural syllabus due to the fact it did not increased their motivation to learn and explore other cultures as well as to engage with their readings. In other words, the cultural syllabus of the reading sessions was not that helpful to develop students' intercultural competence. For this reason, we suggest the use of other authentic materials for culture teaching and learners enhancement of IC. However, the selection of those materials should be based on learners' interests and the curriculum' objectives. Therefore, these materials may include role plays, news paper' articles, videos and oral conversations. The proposed materials need to be multicultural in order to learn about other cultures and promote interaction in the classroom and increase motivation and interests as well.

3.4. Conclusion

The third chapter provided a practical analysis and interpretation of the collected data from the research instruments used in this study. In fact, the main findings revealed that second year master students are likely to take the cultural dimension of language when reading in contrast to third year license students who tend to focus on language only when reading. Moreover, it is revealed that the content of the cultural syllabus was effective and helpful in a given extent in developing students' critical reading skills as well as their intercultural competence. Therefore, it could help learners to become intercultural readers.

General Conclusion

Foreign language teaching is a very complex process in which it does not only include the linguistic aspects of the language but also it includes its culture. Hence, it would be irrelevant if learners have insufficient knowledge about the target English culture.

However, the teaching of culture is not given due importance in many Algerian English language classrooms in comparison with other courses. In addition, the teaching of culture is based only on theories which do not lead to an effective learning of the English culture. Consequently, Algerian curriculum and FL teachers should give importance to culture teaching and incorporate it in all modules.

This research work is an attempt to investigate the situation of culture teaching in EFL classes as well as to investigate the role of the cultural syllabus' content in developing learners' intercultural reading skills.

This dissertation consisted of three main chapters. The first chapter was mainly concerned with the theoretical background of the research topic; the first part gave a wealth of conceptualization about the term of culture, interculturality were provided by many scholars followed by a detailed demonstration of the interrelationship between language and culture. Then, it gave an insight about the intercultural aspects and dimension in addition to intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence by providing the most important definitions. The second part was devoted to the reading skill where definitions, types, strategies in addition to the concept of critical reading and its strategies were provided. The last part was concerned with intercultural reading and the role of reading in developing intercultural competence.

The second chapter is the practical part of the research; it was devoted to give a detailed description about the research methodology in which a mixed method was chosen to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the selected participants who included third year licence students and second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages at Mostaganem University. Then, an overview of the content of the cultural syllabus in addition to a description of the sample population and the data collection instruments as well.

The last chapter dealt with the analysis planned the analysis, discussion and interpretation of the main results obtained from both students' questionnaire and interview. First, we analysed and discussed the obtained data from students' questionnaire illustrated with charts, tables and graphs. Then, the most important responses of students' interview were analyses. Finally, a general discussion of all the results was provided briefly followed by some recommendations concerning culture teaching and ICC development.

Certainly, the findings have confirmed the raised hypotheses that most licence students do focus on language only when they read in contrast to second year master who are likely to take the cultural aspect when reading. This confirms that the cultural program was effective in helping students to read along the cultural dimension of language. Therefore, culture is not taking the integral part of the language classroom and learners are more interested in shaping

the linguistic skills rather than culture. Furthermore, the results have revealed that the content of the cultural syllabus was helpful to a given extent to develop learners' intercultural reading skills.

Finally, it is worth to note that this research work does not answer all the questions and solve all the issues related to the topic. However, it opens the doors for further researches that may be tackled from different angles. Also, it may conduct other new recommendations in attempts to raise the faculty's awareness toward the integration of culture teaching in EFL classes.

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Appendix (A)

Students Questionnaire

Dear students:

This questionnaire is a part of a master project. It intends to provide a comprehensive data about the situation of culture teaching and learning in EFL classes as well as to investigate whether students practice reading along the cultural dimension. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions. Besides, you are invited to contribute in this master research by freely providing your proposals and recommendations.

Section one: background information

1. Gender: Male Female
2. How do you evaluate your level in English?
 1. Weak
 2. Average
 3. Good

Section two: Knowledge about English language and culture

1. Do you use English as a medium of communication outside classroom?

Yes No

- If yes, with whom?

Your Classmates people who understand it native speakers

2. Are you familiar with the English language culture (s)?

Yes No

- If yes, from where have you acquired such knowledge?

Your studies film, music other sources

- Please precise?

3. What obstacles do you face when learning English?

Grammar Vocabulary others

- Please precise? Explain why?

.....
.....
.....

4. According to you, the word culture refers to:

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

b. The way of a given social group life including their customs, traditions (types of food, clothing and ceremonies) that distinguish one from another.

c. Culture is both a and b

Section three: Reading practices

1. Reading is considered as the most important activity in any language course and at any level. Yes. No

Explain.....

.....

2. What are the subjects (modules) that you have reading activities in?

.....

- If yes, what reading obstacles and difficulties you generally encounter?

a. Lack of reading strategies

b. Lack of vocabulary knowledge

c. Grammatical structures included in the text

d. Lack of practice

- Others:

3. When you read do you focus on :

Grammar Vocabulary Meaning

- Others:

4. Would you agree if your department sets a reading program?

Yes No

- If yes, how would you like your teachers help you to read?

Explain:

.....

.....

5. Do you think that reading can develop your proficiency in the English language skills?

Yes No

- Please, explain:

.....

.....

Section four: Reading and culture (practical exercise)

Today, millions of people want to learn to improve their English but it is hard-and-fast to find the best method. Is it better to study in Britain or to study in your own country?

The advantages of going to Britain come to the fore. Firstly, you will be able to listen to the language all the time you are in the country. You will be surrounded completely by the language wherever you go. Another advantage is that you have to speak the language with the citizens of that country. In Algeria, it is always possible, in the class, to speak Algerian language if you want to and this has a negative influence on the educational level.

On the other hand, there are also advantages to staying at home for studying. You don't have to make big changes to your life. As well as it is a lot cheaper than going to Britain but it is never possible to achieve the results of living in the UK. If you have a good teacher in

Algeria, I think you can learn in a more concentrated way than being in Britain without going to a school.

To conclude, I think that if you have enough time and enough money, spending some time in the UK is *crème de la crème*. This is simply not possible for most people, so being here in Algeria is the only viable option. The most important thing to do in this situation is to come along your opportunities: to speak only English in the class and to try to use it whenever possible outside classroom.

Questions:

1. What's the text about?
2. What is the difference between learning English in Algeria and in Britain?
3. After reading the text, have you encountered problems concerning the grammatical and the vocabulary aspects of the language?
4. The text contains some idioms, pick them out and give their synonyms according to their meaning in the text.

Appendix (B)

Students' Interview

The aim of this interview is to know your feedback about the content of lectures of the module Intercultural Studies and Didactics in developing intercultural reading skills. Your honest answers will be of great use for this research.

1. How would you define intercultural competence?
2. Did you like the content of lectures in the module of intercultural studies and didactics? Where you motivated while reading about culture?
3. How much of your time do you spend in reading chapters of books chosen by your teacher?
4. Have you faced cultural issues when reading, if yes, have you felt comfortable to talk about it in classroom?
5. To what extent were the content of lectures or the module as a whole helpful in developing critical reading skills? In other words, your skills of analyzing, questioning, comparing and evaluating.
6. Have you been encouraged to read critically? If yes, what strategies were you advised to use?
7. What makes the process of reading or reading about cultures difficult for you?
8. Do the programs about culture help you to read taking into account culture?
9. What kind of activities FL teachers should integrate in the classroom to develop learners' intercultural competence?