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The Role of Cultural Awareness in Teaching the Reading Skill

**The Case Study of some Third Year Secondary School Students at
Mila**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Master Degree in
Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Dedications

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Abstract

The current study is about the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill to third year secondary school students. It mainly aims to identify teachers' and students' perspectives towards cultural awareness and its contribution in promoting the reading skill performance. In order to answer the main questions, a mixed method was used. For data gathering, two questionnaires were designed, one of them was distributed to a sample of 15 secondary school teachers, and the other one was directed to a sample of 100 secondary school students. The final findings revealed that both teachers and students share positive perspectives towards cultural awareness and its valuable contribution in fostering foreign language learning and mainly in promoting students' reading performance. Teachers' and students' responses also showed that having cultural backgrounds before dealing with different cultural aspects through different readings would help in enhancing students' cultural awareness which in turn contributes in reducing students' deficiencies in that skill.

Keywords: Cultural Awareness, Cultural Backgrounds, Foreign Language Learning, Reading skill, Third Year Secondary School Students.

List of Abbreviations

CA: Cultural Awareness

CC: Communicative Competence

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESOL: English for Speakers of other Languages

FL: Foreign Language

L 2: Second Language

MCQs: Multiple Choice Questions

Q: Question

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TC: Target Culture

TL: Target Language

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General Introduction

1. Background to the Study

It is undeniable that the English language has become the lingua franca of this era (Harmer, 2001), it has been proven that it is the most dominant language in the world. People worldwide are learning this language aiming to communicate more effectively and appropriately with people from different origins, regardless of the languages they speak and the cultures they belong to. This high demand of the English language has increased the interest of many countries across the world to teach it as a foreign language (EFL).

Commonly, language teaching and learning involve four skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Reading and listening as receptive skills, while speaking and writing as productive skills. Bhatt and Lilian (2016, p. 634) stated:

when a person listens and reads a language than he receives the language and decodes the meaning to perceive the message. Receptive skills refer to understanding of the language through reading and listening.

By considering this definition, the reading skill, is a receptive skill, may gain a great importance in the context of TEFL, since it is a source of knowledge for EFL learners. In this sense, language learning and mainly reading comprehension does not only require the linguistic competence, but instead there are other aspects of the language that need to be taken into consideration. Culture is one of the language aspects that should be integrated in EFL teaching through offering different reading materials to learners, containing different cultural aspects, so that their understanding

and awareness of the language would be guaranteed, in a way that their native culture keeps maintained and preserved, in order to prevent the occurrence of any cultural misunderstanding or may be the ignorance of the native culture. Therefore, cultural awareness is an influential factor that affects both students and teachers in the EFL context, more precisely students' reading skill since they are exposed to different reading materials containing various cultures. By saying awareness it is not only meant that teachers and students should be aware of the target culture and language but also their awareness of their native culture and language. Accordingly, Barkat (2022) asserted that cultural awareness is to be considered as a main and an influential factor in EFL settings, implying that the teaching of the cultural skills is now considered as the fifth language skill in addition to the traditional four language skills. Henceforth, it would be the responsibility of FL teachers to be culturally aware and to raise their students' cultural awareness by giving them a cultural background before introducing any reading material that may include a new culture, to enhance their cultural understanding with an enhancement of their reading skill (no difficulty in understanding new cultural concepts).

2. Statement of the Problem

It is an inevitable reality that a language cannot be taught or learned in isolation from culture. Giang (2000, p. 328) stated that: "language and culture make a living organism; language is flesh, and culture is blood. Without culture, language would be dead; without language, culture would have no shape", this means that culture is among the language aspects that needs to be accounted for when teaching a foreign language, particularly while teaching the reading skill, since learners are exposed to different texts containing different cultural aspects. Thus, it is noticeable that students do not only need knowledge and rules of grammar and vocabulary in

the learning process, but also need some cultural backgrounds about the target language in order to understand the language properly and to use it in its appropriate social and cultural contexts. Based on that it is of a crucial importance for teachers to show the differences and the similarities between the Arabic culture and the Western culture, since cultural awareness plays a vital role in EFL teaching in the fact that it helps teachers in teaching the reading skill to their students effectively, as it helps students in enhancing their reading comprehension by acquiring new terminology or new cultural concepts with being able to pronounce different words, and use and understanding their meaning in variant contexts while reading or writing, and mainly having a cultural background about the target language and culture in order to be aware of their native language and culture. Implying that it is a challenging activity for EFL learners to comprehend any reading text without being aware of the culture integrated in it. Therefore, the reading skill enhancement would not be achieved unless learners are aware of the target culture and their own culture, and being aware of the similarities and the differences between them. In spite of the huge amount of advantages that cultural awareness has in improving the students' reading skill, most EFL teachers and learners still consider it as a separate component of the educational process.

3. Aim of the Study

The current study aims to explore the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill to third year secondary school students in some secondary schools in Mila, mainly knowing the teachers' and the students' perspectives towards cultural awareness and its role in promoting students' reading performance. As it aims to shed light on how learners are exposed to different readings representing various cultural aspects and how they perceive and respond to them, and more precisely to see

whether teachers provide their students with cultural backgrounds about the text to be introduced, whether they emphasize the cultural concepts that may occur in different texts and which may cause difficulties in pronunciation or in understanding the text.

4. Research Questions

The present research attempts and triggers to answer two fundamental questions which are in hand divided into some sub-questions in order to achieve the aim of this study:

1. Does culture integration in foreign language learning raises the students' cultural awareness?

- Is there any culture integrated in foreign language learning while teaching reading?
- Are teachers and learners satisfied about the integration of culture in teaching a foreign language, particularly the reading skill?
- Do teachers provide their students with cultural backgrounds before introducing different texts, in order to raise their cultural awareness and to level up their reading skill performance?

2. Does cultural awareness contribute in enhancing EFL students' levels of performance in the reading skill?

- What are the teachers' and the students' perspectives towards cultural awareness and its contribution in the reading skill performance?

5. Research Means and Tools

To carry out this study, a mixed method of research is used, combining both the qualitative and the quantitative types of research. A questionnaire is given to some secondary school teachers, and another questionnaire is given to some secondary school students, in order to see their perspectives towards cultural awareness and its role and effects on the reading skill performance.

6. Significance of the Study

This research spots a light on the importance of cultural awareness in teaching English in general and the reading skill more precisely. It helps EFL teachers to provide students with a valuable understanding of different cultures while dealing with different readings.

The results attract the teachers' attention to consider the cultural aspects of language before dealing with any readings. Thus, providing more understanding and respect to other cultures with an enhancement of the reading skill.

7. Structure of the Study

In an attempt to examine the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill to third year secondary school students, this research paper is divided into two main chapters; the theoretical part and the practical part, each of them contributes significantly in answering its questions.

The first chapter provides a review of literature to the theme of this dissertation, it is in hand divided into two main sections, the first one provides a comprehensive understanding of the reading skill, how this skill is implemented in the classroom and how it contributes in developing other language skills. The second section is demonstrated to the cultural awareness, it focuses on the importance of

integrating culture into foreign language classes and on the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill; which is the heart of this study.

The second chapter then sets the ground of this research paper, it is also divided into two sections; one devoted for the research methodology through which this dissertation will be done, as it deals with one of the research means which is the teachers' questionnaire, while the second section is devoted to represent the second research instrument which is the students' questionnaire, as well as the main findings of this research. Based on the main findings of this research paper, a general conclusion of the study, its limitation and its recommendations are presented.

Chapter One: Reading Skill and Cultural Awareness

Introduction

In today's globalized world, learning a foreign language and the ability to communicate across world boundaries transcends mere necessity, it is no longer a practical need but a crucial skill that opens the doors to new cultures, people, and opportunities, it fosters empathy and understanding and creates a global collaboration among members from different cultures and societies. The English language is one of the most in-demand languages, it has become the lingua franca that is globally used. As a result, many countries integrated it in their classes as a foreign language. This language learning involves four main skills named as: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, each of which has its own validity and significance. Reading is the most prominent skill, it is considered as a source of knowledge that has a valuable impact on foreign language learning. Besides, students are exposed to different cultural aspects of various cultures through different readings. Therefore, having a cultural background knowledge on what is being read is of an essential contribution in promoting students' cultural awareness which, in hand, plays a vital role in their reading skill performance, in the fact that it helps them in enhancing their comprehension of various reading materials, it helps them to understand different concepts and themes that might be confusing or ambiguous in a text, to pronounce different words and comprehend the intended meaning of the text making the reading experience more beneficial, and more precisely enhancing their understanding and empathy towards different perspectives and viewpoints around the world.

Section One: Reading Skill

1.1.1. Definition of Reading

Reading is a broad activity that is done for various purposes, it is a very important skill that should be mastered and developed for its massive benefits. In this sense, researchers provided various definitions to the term reading. According to Johnson (2008), reading means using texts to create meaning. He defined the skill in terms of two key words: meaning and creation, arguing that creating meaning on what is said is essential since it is the main purpose behind reading if not reading is useless. In addition, he stated that During this process, the visual information found on the text integrate with the non-visual information on the readers mind to create meaning. Besides, he declared that reading is a developing skill that needs practice to become better as time goes through. Moreover, Cline et al. (2006, p. 2) stated:

reading is decoding and understanding written texts. Decoding requires translating symbols of the written system (including braille) into the spoken words they represent. Understanding is determined by the purpose for reading, the context, the nature of the text, and the reader's strategies and knowledge.

Sheeba and Ahmad (2018) gave another definition of reading emphasizing the importance of comprehension during this process, they declared that reading is a process of interaction between the reader and the text, leading to comprehension, this comprehension occurs when the reader uses different skills and strategies that help him to interpret and grasp meaning. In this context, Madani (2016, p. 132) reported: " reading comprehension is not only a process of decoding a text only and building a particular understanding, it can be viewed as a process which involves skills and

strategies by which the reader reconstructs equitably the message encoded by the author".

1.1.2. Types of Reading

According to Patel & Jain (2008), there are four types of reading: intensive reading, extensive reading, silent reading, and aloud reading.

1.1.2.1. Intensive Reading. Harmer (2007) defined this type of reading as a reading that takes place inside the classroom, it focuses on a detailed analysis of a reading text including its vocabulary and grammar to fully understand its meaning. This type of reading is usually accompanied by activities to foster understanding, for example: asking learners questions about the text, or asking them to extract some specific information from the text. Patel and Jain (2008) stated that intensive reading is done under the teacher's guidance and it is related to further progress in language learning, it provides a basis for explaining structural difficulties, expanding vocabulary knowledge and helping students to enhance their speaking and writing ability by encouraging them to engage in different texts, and thus they can refine their understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions.

1.1.2.2. Extensive Reading. The purpose of this type of reading is to train students to read directly and fluently in the target language. Grellet (1981) asserted that extensive reading is a reading that deals with long texts mainly for one's own pleasure, its aim is not to learn or get a specific information, but to build a reading fluency and a global understanding .

Richard and Bamford (2011) gave a clear explanation of the two types, arguing that intensive reading means reading to learn, while extensive reading means learning

to read. The former introduces new language items to students and allows them to learn new vocabulary, grammar, etc. The latter helps them to practice those items and get a deep understanding of them.

1.1.2.3. Aloud Reading. Aloud reading or reading in a loud voice have an important role in language teaching. This type of reading should be trained because it is the basis of correct words' pronunciation. Therefore, teachers should make sure that this type of reading is interesting for students. Thus, teachers should select reading materials that are suitable for their students' levels, with an emphasize on their mistakes during the reading process. In addition, they should provide them with a model of reading in order to improve their understanding and pronunciation (Patel and Jain, 2008).

1.1.2.4. Silent Reading. Silent reading is reading quietly with low voice. Patel and Jain (2008) stated that this type of reading is very important in teaching English, and it is usually done to acquire a lot of information. Besides, they mentioned that this reading is beneficial for learners as it directs their attention to the material they read, increases their knowledge, and making them active and accurate in the skill

1.1.3. Principles in Teaching Reading

Harmer (2007) listed six principles that should be considered when teaching reading:

1. Teachers should encourage their students to read both extensively and intensively.
2. Teachers should provide a good environment for their students in order for them to engage in what they are reading, so to take benefits as much as possible.

3. Students should not focus on the text construction, they only need to respond to what the text is about, they should concentrate on the message of the text.
4. Prediction is very important in reading, it happens before the reading process takes place, students can predict the general content of the book from its cover, headlines, web-page banner, etc. Teachers also should give students hints that help them to predict what is coming.
5. Teachers should select appropriate tasks, questions, and activities that match the topic of the text when using intensive reading. This connection will help learners to avoid getting bored or being uncomfortable with inappropriate tasks.
6. Good teachers take advantage from the reading text as much as possible, they can turn the reading text into interesting lesson sequence using the topic for further discussion, using its language and using different activities.

Following all the principles mentioned above will ensure that learners get all benefits from reading and that their reading skill will be developed. Therefore, both teachers and learners should follow them accurately.

1.1.4. Reading Strategies

Strategies can be defined as "conscious actions that learners take to achieve desired goals or objectives" (Nunan, 2003, p. 77). Reading strategies in hand are defined by Grabe (2009) as conscious processes that are used by readers to solve reading problems. In this sense, Oxford (2017) suggested some strategies that L2 readers use when reading, here are some:

1.1.4.1. Inferring. Inferring or guessing the meaning is a very important strategy in reading. Duffy (2009, p. 122) reported that inferring means figuring out the

hidden ideas that are not directly written on the page, it involves readers guessing and drawing conclusions about what the author is trying to say by using their prior knowledge, the context of the text and some clues provided by the author. This strategy is very beneficial because it makes readers deeply engaged with the material they read and enhances their comprehension.

1.1.4.2. Predicting. Predicting is guessing what the text is about based on different sources. Duffy (2009) declared that this strategy is fundamental for comprehension, readers make prediction based on their prior knowledge and based on the purpose for reading, topic clues and the type of text being read. Prediction is a very important and beneficial strategy because it helps readers to get a general overview and helps them to deeply engage with the material they read as they concentrate all their attention to predict and guess what is happening, and thus creating a comprehensive understanding of different reading materials.

1.1.4.3. Using Imagery. When reading a given material, the reader does not look at words only, but he tries also to imagine and use all his senses and tries to link written words with their visual image in his memory to understand what is happening in the text. when reading a novel for example, readers try to imagine the event, places and people involved in the novel, they can see and hear what is happening as they watch a movie, this will allow them to better understand the sequence of events. Thus, using this strategy is very helpful because it helps readers enjoy what they are reading and support their comprehension as well.

1.1.4.4. Skimming. Skimming is quick reading. According to Watkins (2017) this strategy is usually done to achieve a general understanding of a given reading material, it allows students to take a quick look and move their eyes through the text to identify its main idea without the need to delve into its components. In addition to

the main idea, Slaght and Harben(2009) stated that this strategy helps learners to identify the topic of the text, and allows them to decide how to make a sense of it. This strategy is very useful for learners as it saves time.

1.1.4.5. Scanning. In addition to the previously mentioned strategies, Brown (2000) provided many other reading comprehension strategies. Scanning is among those strategies and it is the most common one. He argued that this strategy is valuable for students, since it involves quickly searching for specific information in a text. This strategy is very helpful and it is used in various domains like vocational or general English when dealing with different genres like schedules, manuals, etc. Teachers may provide students with scanning exercises like asking them to search for dates or names, to find definitions for a specific concept, etc. This will help students to extract specific information without dealing with the whole text and in short period of time.

The use of those strategies during the reading process will not only enhance students' comprehension, but also makes learners proficient readers through promoting their critical thinking skills. Thus, teachers should incorporate different reading activities in their reading session, allowing students to practice different reading strategies to make sure that they take benefits from them as much as possible. Students as well should learn those strategies and apply them successfully.

1.1.5. Reading Activities

Richard (2015) suggested three stages of reading activities when conducting a reading lesson:

1.1.5.1. Pre-Reading Activities. Richard and Schmidt (2010) stated that Pre-reading activities are activities that are carried out by students before reading a text, those activities may pre teach vocabulary, activate prior knowledge, activate reading

strategies, etc. In addition, Richard (2015) reported that pre-reading activities help students through giving them a purpose for reading, activate schemas and provide background knowledge, and also pre teaching them, so to reduce the difficulties encountered while reading. In the same vein, Wallace (1992) stated that those activities do not help readers to understand unknown words only, but they also help them to link what they are reading to what they already know, that is activating their existing schematic knowledge. He also stated that brainstorming is a very popular kind of pre reading tasks which have several advantages: firstly, they require little preparation by the teacher. Secondly, they give students more freedom to recall their prior knowledge and opinions to afford a particular issue, and finally, they help in involving the whole class in the activity. Thus, providing a good practice of the skill in the classroom.

1.1.5.2 While-Reading Activities. They are activities that take place during the reading process. Richard (2015) asserted that these activities help in encouraging students to react on what they are reading, they may require students to revise and adjust their reading based on the difficulties they encounter. While reading activities must be appropriate to the type of the text at hand for instance, in a narrative text learners can be asked to number the sequences of events on a list or a chart. Another useful while reading activity is questioning, it is very useful and not restricted for teachers only, instead both teachers and students may ask questions about the text to provide a valuable understanding of it. Watkins (2017) added that while reading activities provide students with a reason for reading and motivate them to direct attention to the most important parts of the text encouraging them to concentrate on understanding its main ideas.

1.1.5.3. Post-Reading Activities. Post-reading activities are those that take place after reading, they are often activities used to check students' comprehension of a given text. In this sense, Richard (2015) asserted that these activities focus on the text itself including its grammar, vocabulary or discourse organization, and help students to get a deeper understanding of the text's linguistic element, or extract students' reaction to the content of the text. They may also give students a review of the strategies they have used during reading, and help them to adjust new ones when needed. A most common activity during this phase is speaking about the text, allowing students to discuss the main ideas of the text and express their opinions.

By incorporating pre, while and post reading activities, teachers will ensure that students' reading comprehension is deeply enhanced and that reading is more beneficial for them. Each of these stages give students insights and aid them to fully understand the text. Pre reading activities prepare learners and give them a purpose for reading, while reading activities get students engaged with what they read and give them the opportunity to monitor and react on what they read, and post reading activities allow them to reflect on what they read, discuss the text's ideas and themes and allow them to share their ideas and opinions.

1.1.6. Assessing Reading

Assessment has a vital role in the teaching/learning process because it helps teachers to determine how much a student has learned, as it helps them to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching. According to Geoffery (1999, p. 44):

assessment enables decisions to be made concerning the effectiveness of the teaching in terms of the learning that has taken place, it allows teachers to

make decisions that determine the form that any subsequent teaching should take.

Pang et al. (2003) viewed that there are two types of assessment that are needed for effective reading instruction, one is done to find out how well children are reading, and then giving them feedback, the other is done to check and measure their progress. One form of assessment that is done at the beginning of reading involves listening to students when they read aloud, this will help teachers to assess students' word recognition and fluency in reading. Other forms of assessment focus on text comprehension. Moreover, Day (2020) listed different types of assessment that ESOL teachers use to assess reading, those types are related to assessment of classroom learning and they focus on the comprehension or understanding of a reading text, they include:

1.1.6.1. Multiple-Choice Questions MCQ. This type of assessment takes the form of different options, usually three or four, then students are asked to find the correct answer of the question, the other options are called distractors. This type of assessment is easy to score and teachers often write those questions by themselves. MCQs are common and often found in ESOL reading materials, even though they have some disadvantages, such as involving students guessing the right answer without reflecting their real understanding.

1.1.6.2. Short Answer Assessment. Although this type of assessment is difficult to be scored but it is more useful than MCQs. Short answer assessment generally requires students to write brief answers to different questions of the text, this activity increases students' productivity and eliminates the guessing aspect in MCQs which leads to a real assessment of students' comprehension.

1.1.6.3. Sentence Completion Assessment. In this type of assessment students are asked to complete a sentence with either a word or phrase. Like short answer assessment, this activity is somewhat difficult to be scored as students produce their responses by themselves.

1.1.6.4. True or False Assessment. In this type of assessment, students are asked to indicate if a sentence is true or false based on what they read. Similarly with MCQs, this type of assessment has a guessing nature, students have a 50 percent chance of guessing the correct answer, as a result their comprehension will not be truly assessed and their scores will be affected.

In addition to these types of assessment, Sally and Katie (2008, as cited in Madani, 2016) added some tasks that can be used in assessing student's comprehension, this includes:

1.1.6.5. Yes / No Questions. This type of tasks takes the form of questions about the text that should be answered with either "yes" or "no". Those questions are less effective in assessing students real comprehension because they can be answered correctly by chance, for that reason it is recommended by teachers to follow up these questions by other types of questions to make sure that students have understood the text.

1.1.6.6. Matching. Learners in this task are asked to choose different answers from a list of prompts. Prompts may take several forms, they might be statements, headings or question completion. Although this type of tasks is likely to be less familiar to learners, it is still used by many teachers.

1.1.6.7. Wh Questions. This type of questions takes the form of different questions that begin with “wh” such as “where”, “when”, “why”, “who” and “how”. This type of questions is beneficial for learners because it helps them to understand the text’s literal meaning, to identify information within the text, and to make evaluations and personal predictions.

1.1.6.8. Open-Ended Questions. Open-ended questions are commonly used in standardized assessment, they serve to test student’s memory retention and their comprehension of the text. These questions are beneficial in assessing various aspects of comprehension skills such as the ability to make inferences from the text. However, it is important to acknowledge that this type of questions has some disadvantages since students are asked to formulate verbal or written responses which may underestimate their comprehension due to the language deficits they have.

1.1.7. Importance of Reading

Reading is a very important activity. It is a crucial skill that should be learned and developed for various reasons. Patel and Jain (2008) declared that reading is not just a source of information or an activity that is done for pleasure or enjoyment, it is also significant for extending knowledge and enhancing other skills, it also plays a vital role in broadening knowledge and gaining insight into the foreign language culture by exposing readers to diverse perspectives, beliefs, customs, and values around the world. Furthermore, reading is essential for second and foreign language learners who are studying English for academic purposes, they can learn by reading different vocabulary, grammar, syntax ... which are needed for writing speaking and listening tasks (Grabe and Stoller, 2018). In the same vein, Umerah et al. (2016) asserted that teachers should focus on this skill for its massive benefits. Firstly, reading is very

important to enrich vocabulary; the more people read the more they acquire new vocabulary. Secondly, reading is a fundamental skill that makes proficiency in language, it facilitates learning and helps people to become competent in the language, when people read extensively they are exposed to good and creative language use which would enable them to become proficient in language. Exposure to different vocabulary items, new sentence structures, different writing techniques and styles will provide insights into effective language use and improve the writing ability. Lastly, reading improves spelling. Through aloud reading activities, students are exposed to correct spelling, they can learn from their mistakes and from the teacher's feedback, and by repeating words multiple times their spelling ability will be improved. In addition, Mikulecky and Jeffries (1996) stated that reading is a very important skill because it helps people think in English, it is a good activity for practicing English in a non-English speaking country and it prepares for studying in an English native country, and finally it helps to find new ideas, expectations and facts.

Section Two: Cultural Awareness

1.2.1. Culture

1.2.1.1. Definitions of Culture. It is noticeable that whenever a person visits a new place, he observes many new things such as: people's clothing and dressing styles, eating and food habits, etc. After observing, he/she assumes that people's culture in that place is totally different from his own culture. This makes the small word 'culture' an abbreviation for all the life aspects that are shared by people belonging to the same community. Thus, many scholars such as: Peterson (2004), Horn (2009), Tylor (1871)... argued for the complexity of the term 'culture', in the sense that each of them has defined it from his own perspective. To prove this, Horn (2009) stated that culture can

be pragmatically defined as everything which is shared within a given society by means of traditions rather than biological means, claiming that all actual cultures consist of the same aspects and elements: language, art, religion, ... and all cultures are based on traditions. Moreover, Tylor (1871, p. 1) defined culture as: "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society", meaning that culture is that broad field which includes all life aspects that are acquired by man throughout his life as a member of a given society. Additionally, Rieschild (2001 as cited in Adams 2010) confirmed that culture comprises a set of rules that should be acquired by the members of a society in order to act appropriately and in a meaningful way, and that culture is transmitted over time from one generation to another. Moreover, Causadias (2020) introduced the P-Modal in which he defined culture as: "a dynamic whole that creates and is created by people, places, and practices". In other words, people create their own culture through some shared practices in places, and culture determines how people interact and engage in practices and build places.

Furthermore, Peterson (2004) described culture as an Ice-berg, through which he declared that culture has some elements which are visible (tip of the iceberg), and some other elements which are invisible (bottom of the iceberg). The former implies that culture is anything that can be perceived through human's five senses such as: language, food habits, etc. The latter suggests that cultural values determine many themes such as: the notion of time, tolerance for change, importance of harmony, etc.

1.2.1.2. Big "C" and Little "c" Culture. After distinguishing between visible and invisible elements of culture, Peterson (2004) draws the attention to the importance of the cultural themes, dividing them into minor themes and grand themes, which are frequently called: big "C" culture and little "c" culture. He further argued that each of

the two encompasses visible and invisible distinctive features. In this view, on the one hand, the big "C" culture covers some grand themes which are visible like: architecture, geography, classic literature, etc, and some other grand themes which are invisible like: core values, attitudes, etc. On the other hand, the little 'c' culture covers some minor themes which are visible such as: clothing style, hobbies, etc, and some others which are invisible such as: popular issues, view points, opinions, etc.

1.2.1.3. Elements of Culture. It is argued that one needs to get a deeper understanding of what culture is, what are its elements and aspects, what can be adjusted and what should be fixed and maintained, in order to act appropriately in different cultures (Kumari, n.d). Many scholars and researchers such as: Kumari (n.d), Drew (2023), Nasralddin (2023) ... contributed in classifying the basic elements of culture in order to analyse and understand its real sense.

1.2.1.3.1. Language. Language is an important element of culture, there is no culture without its spoken language even if it has no standard or written form. Nevertheless, language influences the effectiveness of people's social interaction and the way in which they respond to concepts and objects (Nasralddin, 2023).

1.2.1.3.2. Symbols. Cultures are full of symbols which stand for expressing and representing a specific situation, emotion, reaction and behaviour. Social interaction would be possible if people share common symbols. Symbols differ from one culture to another, and they are not related to their meanings but they are mostly determined by the culture to which they belong.

1.2.1.3.3. Norms. Different cultures have different norms, they are rules and expectations which guide people's behaviours in a given society. Norms are divided into prescriptive norms which stand for the standards of behaviours that are

considered as important in one society, and the proscriptive norms which refer to the standards of behaviours that are considered less important or forbidden in a society (Kumari, n.d).

1.2.1.3.4. Values. They are the society's ideas or shared judgements about what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. Values have a fundamental influence on the behaviours of people within their social groups (Barophon, n.d).

1.2.1.3.5. Beliefs. A belief is defined as "that specific statement that people hold to be true" (Kumari, n.d. p. 1). In other words, it is a person's faith towards a certain object.

1.2.1.3.6. Taboos. Drew (2023) defined taboos as those things or words that are considered shocking and shameful within a culture, in the sense that people are required to behave appropriately in their cultures. According to Crossman (2019), learning about the taboos of a given culture is important, so that a social cohesion will be kept with the members of the society and the strangers.

1.2.1.3.7. Artifacts. Artifacts are the material objects of a given culture, which constitute the material culture of a particular society. Examples include: economic infrastructures such as: transportation tools, social infrastructures such as: housing and educational system, and financial infrastructures such as: banking and financial services (Kumari, n.d).

1.2.1.3.8. Customs and Traditions. They are the traditional practices of a particular group or society which are passed on from one generation to the next. They include people's traditional practices such as: traditional dishes and cooking techniques,

clothing style, etc. Customs and traditions often reflect the values, beliefs and religion of the society.

1.2.1.4. Types of Culture and Cultural 'Lag'. Basically, culture is divided into two main types, the material and the non-material culture. The former stands for the physical objects (artifacts) that are created by people in a given society such as: means of transportation, and everything which is tangible and used by people. The latter consists of the intangible things that are produced by a given culture like: values and beliefs. In a word, the material culture is subjected to change due to the continuing development, whereas the non-material culture is maintained (Wyghur, 2022). Ogburn (1922) named this phenomenon the 'cultural Lag', which is a social phenomenon that results from the tendency of the material culture to change rapidly, while the non-material culture remains fixed for a longer time, in the fact that physical objects are much easier to change than values and ideals.

1.2.1.5. Characteristics of Culture. The preceding definitions evoke that the concept of culture has a multifaceted nature. Although researchers agreed upon the elements that encapsulate the culture of a given social group, they still have different views about its nature.

1.2.1.5.1. Culture Is Learned. Herskovits (1948, p. 17) cited: "there is a general agreement that culture is learned; that it allows man to adapt himself to his natural setting; that it is greatly variable; that it is manifested in institutions, thought-patterns and material objects", implying that an individual's behaviour is often acquired and learned as he interacts in society. To clarify, (Guchhait, n.d) confirmed that culture is not inherited or biologically determined, it is rather learned and acquired socially by man in a society from the association of others, either consciously or unconsciously.

1.2.1.5.2. Culture Is Shared. Culture is something that is commonly shared, it comprises a set of elements that are adopted and shared equally by all the members of the same territory (Guchhait, n.d).

1.2.1.5.3. Culture Is Transmitted. Culture is capable to be continually transmitted through generations if it keeps preserved and maintained. It is not genetically transmitted but instead through the use of language (Guchhait, n.d).

1.2.1.5.4. Culture Is Dynamic and Constantly Changing. Herskovits (1948) claimed that culture is dynamic in nature, arguing that the only static cultures are the dead ones. Culture never remains static but it is changing with different speeds and causes and it adapts itself to the environment.

1.2.1.5.5 Culture Is Integrated. Culture is basically characterized by a set of its elements that work together in harmony. Cultural aspects are interconnected with each other in the sense that one aspect determines the other. For example people's values are interlinked to their customs, beliefs and religion (Guchhait, n.d).

1.2.1.5.6. Culture Is Social. Guchhait (n.d, p. 1) asserts that: "culture is not an individual phenomenon but it is the product of society". Culture is developed through social interaction and it is acquired through the association of others.

1.2.1.6. Language and Culture

1.2.1.6.1. Definition of Language. Similarly to the concept of culture, many scholars and researchers in the field contributed in identifying what a language is, and each of them tried to describe its nature and its function from a specific angle. In this sense, language is described by Verderber (1999) as a combination of words that are known and used by people belonging to the same area, community or culture.

Moreover, Rabiah (2012, p. 1) stated: "language indicates each of its nation", meaning that a particular language can be used to express its nation's beliefs, norms, traditions, customs and everything related to it. In a word, a specific language can be used to express the culture of its nation.

1.2.1.6.2. *The Interrelationship between Language and Culture.* It is commonly known that culture and thought affect language. In other words, one cannot learn or acquire a foreign language in isolation from culture, since there are some cultural concepts which may exist in one culture and do not exist in the other cultures, and there are some words which are acceptable in one culture, and are considered as taboo words in other cultures, which indicates that language learning and cultural understanding go hand in hand. Thus, culture and language are two basic concepts which are closely related to each other. To clarify, Purba (2011, p. 43) declared: "language and culture are two inseparable entities", meaning that one cannot stand without the other. Brown (1994 as cited in Giang 2000) asserted that language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language, and that culture is simultaneously reflected and shaped by language. Therefore, language and culture cannot be separated without losing the significance of one of them. Moreover, Avara (2022) added that children acquire their native language simultaneously with their native culture, which indicates that the two terms are closely related to each other, and that they are regarded as interdependent components, meaning that learning a new language requires its culture, and vice versa.

1.2.2. *Integrating Culture into Language Teaching*

As evidenced before, language learning does not only require the mastery of the four basic language skills, but competence in the target culture is also of great

importance. Thanasoulas (2010) asserted that foreign language learning involves a combination of competencies including: grammatical competence, communicative competence (CC), language proficiency, as well as, having some attitudes towards other cultures. Thus, cultural-competence, which stands for the ability of someone to absorb the maximum of knowledge about a certain culture, should be highlighted in order to be achieved through foreign language learning. Practitioners in the field proved that foreign language learning is conditioned by culture learning and vice versa. Kramsh (1939 as cited in Thanasoulas, 2010) reported that culture is an important ingredient in foreign language learning so that it is possible for EFL learners to acquire the foreign culture simultaneously with the acquisition of the foreign language.

1.2.2.1. How Culture Is Incorporated in the classroom (Techniques and Materials). Purba (2010), suggested some materials and techniques for presenting culture in the classroom, arguing that cultural activities should be well organized and incorporated into lesson plans in order to raise students' awareness about the target culture and to enrich their knowledge about the target language.

1.2.2.1.1. Authentic Materials. Authentic materials include both printed and non-printed materials such as: films, news podcasts, websites, etc. In foreign language learning, the use of authentic resources from the native speech community helps students to engage in authentic cultural experiences. It is the role of teachers to adapt their use of these materials to suit their language proficiency level, their age, and the relevance of these materials to their own culture.

1.2.2.1.2. Proverbs. Discussing common proverbs of the target culture can help students to see how proverbs of the target cultures are different or similar to proverbs in their own culture. Using proverbs as a way to explain cultural conventions may

also help students to analyse people's beliefs and attitudes towards different objects, as it helps them to explore the values that are often represented in the proverbs of the target culture and comparing them with similar proverbs in their native culture.

1.2.2.1.3. Culture Capsules. Students can be provided with objects or images originated from the target culture and then they are asked to collect information about that object or image, either to conduct a research and investigate it in the classroom, or to write a brief summary and discuss it in an oral presentation to the class. The role of culture capsules is to help students to share authentic insights into the home and cultural life of native speakers of the language.

1.2.2.1.4. Literature. Reading the literary works is considered as an effective means for developing students' understanding of other cultures since they provide readers with authentic insights about other cultures. Carter (1955) pointed out that literature is the bridge to culture understanding. Encouraging and motivating students to read novels, plays, short stories, and poems from other nations and cultures may help them to enrich their knowledge about the target language and culture, enlarging both cultural and linguistic competencies, (cited in Purba, 2010) .

1.2.2.2. Approaches to Teaching Culture. According to Richards & Rodgers (1986, p. 15), an approach can be defined as: "a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught". Many approaches have been used to teach foreign languages throughout history, it is the same when dealing with culture. In this sense, Risager (1998) listed four main approaches to be used when dealing with culture:

1.2.2.2.1. The Foreign Cultural Approach. The main focus of this approach is the culture of the country or countries where the language is used, without dealing neither with the students' own culture and country, nor with the relation between the target countries and cultures and the learners' own. The main aim of this approach is to develop learners' communicative and cultural competences in the target language and culture. This approach kept dominated until the 1980's and later on it was criticized because of the ignorance of other cultures and the students' own culture.

1.2.2.2.2. The Intercultural Approach. The main focus of this approach is to make comparisons among cultures, in which culture is better learned when it is compared to other cultures. This approach teaches the target culture to students with reference to their own culture. Its main aim is to develop the students' intercultural communicative competence which enables them to act as mediators between the two cultures. The intercultural approach was a successful one because it looks at the learners understanding of their own country and culture.

1.2.2.2.3. The Multi - Cultural Approach. The multi-cultural approach is based on the idea that many cultures may exist within the same country. Therefore, it focuses on the cultural and linguistic diversity of the target country as well as the learners' own country and the relation between them. The same as in the intercultural approach, comparison is included in order to develop students' intercultural communicative competence. However, its main aim is to enable students to use the target language as a lingua franca, ie; enabling them to speak with people who belong to the country in which the language is spoken but they belong to a different culture and may be they speak a different language.

1.2.2.2.4. The Trans – Cultural Approach. This approach is based on the belief the cultures in the modern world are interwoven due to the extensive migration and tourism, modern communication systems and technology, and the economic interdependence and globalization. It also reflects the idea that many people use the foreign language as a lingua franca. Therefore, the trans-cultural approach deals with the foreign language as an international language. Its main aim is to develop students' intercultural communicative competence. Hence, it is not necessary to link the foreign language to a specific country or culture.

1.2.2.3. Roles of Teachers When Teaching Culture. It is undeniable that culture teaching is an important component in foreign language teaching, it is now in the fore front of EFL teachers' interests. Thanasoulas (2010) asserted that the cultural ability is now as important as the linguistic ability, linguistic competence alone is not enough for fostering foreign language learning and enriching students' cultural awareness about the target language and their own language. Though teachers are aware of the importance of the target culture teaching in the foreign language classroom and its role in raising students' cultural awareness, they still do not emphasize it and give it the same importance as the other language skills and aspects. Therefore, Chaisri (2013) stated that teachers have a double role to play when teaching the foreign language with reference to its culture, they have first to teach their learners the other cultures in order to understand the world and to be able to express themselves, and then to raise their awareness of the characteristics of other cultures. Students then will be able to relate their native culture to other cultures trying to analyse the differences and the similarities between them, and this will enable them to respect the cultures of other people. Moreover, Thanasoulas (2010) declared that teachers are required to raise their students' intellectual objectivity that is essential in

cross-cultural analysis, to foster their understanding of the target culture from a neutral perspective, and more precisely, to provide students with insights about the target culture each time dealing with new cultural aspects, so to raise their tolerance towards other cultures and to convince them that diversity is something good and acceptable, no one and no culture is better or superior than the other, CA in hand would be enhanced.

1.2.3. Cultural Awareness

1.2.3.1. Definitions of Cultural Awareness (CA). As argued by many scholars, language and culture are inseparable, culture is an integral part in foreign language learning. In order to fully grasp the language, one needs to delve into its cultural background. This is referred to as cultural awareness, it includes the recognition of the similarities and the differences among cultures, starting from one's own culture. Cultural awareness involves the recognition of the cultural values, attitudes, beliefs... of the speech community of the target language and then grasping them in order to develop an awareness of the target language and culture in addition to the own ones. In this sense, one would be able to make a comparison among cultures knowing their similarities and differences, and thus to facilitate the EFL learning. Tomalin and Stimpeliski (1993) declared that cultural awareness is an important factor when communicating with people from different cultures, in the fact that people's behaviour, language and communication are impacted by their cultural backgrounds. Quappe and Cantatore (2005, p.1) asserted: "cultural awareness is the foundation of communication and it involves the ability of standing back from ourselves and becoming aware of our cultural values, beliefs and perceptions". In other words, cultural awareness is an essential component when it comes to interaction with people from different cultures. People see things differently, appropriate behaviours in one culture may seem

inappropriate in the other culture. Moreover, Winkelmen (2005, as cited in Yuliah and Hum 2019) supported that cultural self-awareness involves awareness of one's own cultural aspects and recognizing their influences upon his values, beliefs, and judgements of other cultures. Accordingly, EFL learners should be aware of the target culture while using the English language in order to be proficient target language speakers, starting from understanding their own language cultural differences, moving to the target language cultural differences.

.1.2.3.2. The Necessity of Developing Cultural Awareness. With the globalization of the world, many fields such as: economy, science and technology become interconnected to each other, each of them depends on the other. This makes the English language a global language and the lingua francs of the era. Practitioners in those fields become interested in this language in order to address each other effectively. In this sense, Practitioners across the world need to use the language appropriately and effectively in order to avoid unexpected misunderstanding which can be caused from ignorance of cultural diversity. It is the same thing for foreign language learners who aim to use the language appropriately, they need to develop their cultural competence in the foreign language simultaneously with the linguistic competence. Accordingly, Yuliah (2019) argued that culture teaching has a wide range of advantages that could help in raising students' awareness about the target language in order to use it appropriately and effectively. Firstly, culture teaching is the first step to language acquisition in learning the language itself, structures and expressions of the English language are related to its culture. Therefore, culture competence should be emphasized alongside with the linguistic competence. Secondly, culture teaching would satisfy the students' curiosity about the different environments of the target language speakers. Mainly, foreign language learners are ambitious to know how people from

other cultures behave, and this will increase their tolerance to different cultural factors. Thirdly, culture teaching can make a bridge between students own experience in their native culture and their knowledge about the target culture, and thus to increase their cultural awareness of both cultures.

Thus, English language learners should have a deep understanding of the cultural background of the TL, since cultural awareness can improve their understanding of the cultural background of the English-speaking countries.

1.2.4. The Influence of Cultural Awareness on the Reading Skill

Cultures vary significantly across the world. This variation appear in various aspects such as: customs, traditions, values, communication style and so on. For that reason, when learning a new language it is essential to be aware of these differences. Cultural awareness plays a significant role in this process, particularly during reading. The reading skill in turn plays a ital. role in language learning as it enables learners to acquire new vocabulary, improve pronunciation and enhance grammar. Therefore, cultural awareness is an important component during reading in the sense that it provides context and meaning and allows readers to engage with the material; they try to read the material deeply. Pong et al. (2003) asserted that having a rich cultural knowledge facilitates comprehension and influences the understanding and appreciation of written texts, this cultural knowledge helps in understanding different concepts or topics that are unfamiliar or considered taboo in one culture but are familiar and openly discussed in another. Similarly, Rasmayenti et al, (2022) emphasized the importance of cultural awareness in teaching reading comprehension, their research signalled that students who have prior knowledge and who have learned culture

through cultural content by teachers find it easier to understand the texts they read than those who do not previously have cultural background knowledge.

1.2.4.1. The Influence of CA on Vocabulary. It is argued that vocabulary is the basic component of language and language is the mirror of culture. Therefore, the cultural content will be exhibited on vocabulary in a way or another. National and cultural differences will be inevitably reflected through the explanation of vocabulary. Taking the example of the white colour, in most western countries it indicates noble and moral goodness, while in China it indicates pale and weakness. To clarify, Hamza (2018) stated that there is an interchangeable influence between cultural awareness and vocabulary, in the sense that cultural awareness facilitates the process of acquiring new vocabulary items through being aware of different cultural and national themes, on the other hand, gaining new vocabulary items and learning about different cultural themes would raise cultural awareness. Both cultural awareness and vocabulary are basic components for the development of the reading skill.

1.2.4.2. The Influence of CA on Pronunciation. The ability of pronouncing new words is not concerned with intonation only, but people need to learn a lot to understand the cultural background knowledge of the target language, While dealing with reading texts, teachers should emphasize the practical use of the language, and use the material that are used in the daily life. Even if one may have been well trained in the linguistics of the target language, he may commit mistakes when pronouncing new words which are unfamiliar to him for the sake of lacking related cultural background knowledge (Hamza, 2018). Therefore, cultural awareness is of great importance when dealing with new readings, since it makes learners familiar with different themes, concepts or words, and thus to pronounce them correctly and to reduce the difficulties encountered while reading.

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that the linguistic aspects and rules of the foreign language are not enough for learners to fully and appropriately grasp it, instead it requires having enough knowledge of all the elements of the target language (cultural background of the target language). The latter is considered as the key to raise EFL learners' cultural awareness about the target language. Which can help later in facilitating the teaching / learning process of the foreign language, more precisely the reading skill, since it is considered as the main source of knowledge, as it reduces the difficulties encountered by both learners and teachers when dealing with different readings. The present chapter, which is divided into two sections, provides a review of literature about the reading skill, cultural awareness and its role in enhancing students' reading skill performance. The purpose of the first section is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the often neglected skill of reading. The starting point was a set of definitions of the skill, then delving into its various types, some of its principles, and strategies used by both teachers and students in order to enhance it, as it provides some activities and some assessment tasks that are used in assessing the skill, and finally it spots a light on the importance of teaching this skill in general. The second section then, is to give a general overview about cultural awareness in EFL learning and teaching, starting by providing some definitions of the term 'culture', its types, elements, characteristics, then it delves into its interrelationship with language, emphasizing its integration into EFL education, and the main techniques, materials, and approaches used to teach it. After that, the focus is turned to the concept of cultural awareness, which is the heart of this research paper, highlighting some of its definitions, as well as focusing on its necessity in EFL classrooms.

It can be concluded that cultural awareness is extremely valuable and must not be ignored. On the one hand, CA improves students' performance, encourages them to develop their abilities and to enhance their levels. On the other hand, CA can provide students with insights about the cultural diversity of the world which may help them later in treating and addressing people from various backgrounds. In short, this chapter sheds light on the issue of study from a theoretical point of view, it indicates the role of cultural awareness in enhancing EFL learners' reading skill performance to reduce the reading skill difficulties, which is the concluding title of the whole chapter.

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Introduction

As it is known, any research paper is composed of two main chapters, the first one is devoted to some literature related to its theme, and the second one represents its practical part. The latter sets the ground of this research paper as it shows how the research will be done, and explores its findings. Those findings are the driven to reach the main aim of the current study which is to examine the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill, mainly knowing the teachers' and students' perspectives towards cultural awareness and its role in promoting students' reading skill performance. Therefore, this chapter will firstly presents a detailed explanation of this research methods and samples. Secondly, it provides a detailed analysis of the research instruments followed by an interpretation and a discussion of the obtained results. And finally, based on the research means' findings, a general conclusion of the study, its recommendation, and its limitations are presented.

Section One: Methodology and Teachers' Questionnaire

2.1.1. Research Methodology

On the basis of the aim of this research, a mixed method of research is involved, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection, mainly to examine the different viewpoints that the respondents (teachers and students) may hold, through collecting concrete statistical data and then describing them ending up with convincing answers for the main questions of this study. Accordingly, two questionnaires are organized, the first one is distributed to a sample of secondary school teachers, and the second one is distributed to some of their students, to confirm the results of the two questionnaires and to see mainly whether there is a correlation

between the obtained results, so to guarantee the validity of the general findings of this study.

2.1.2. Population and Sampling

Aiming at gathering the adequate data that serves to accomplish the general aim of this study, the research population is third year secondary school teachers and their students. The participants were randomly chosen from different cities in Mila. The total sample size is 15 teachers and 100 students.

2.1.3. Research Means

To carry out this study, two different questionnaires are used. One for teachers and the other for students.

2.1.3.1. Teachers' Questionnaire

2.1.3.1.1. Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire. The present questionnaire consists of four sections with twenty-two questions. The first section "background information" is made up of two questions, aiming at gathering some background information about teacher including their gender, and their experience in teaching the English language. The second one "the reading skill", consists of seven questions, it is designed to collect perspectives about the implementation of the reading skill in the classroom and its importance in developing other language skills. Moving to the third section which is about cultural awareness, it consists of six questions, it is with the aim of gathering data about teachers' perspectives towards the integration of culture in English language teaching and its role in enhancing students' cultural awareness. The last section "the role of cultural awareness in teaching reading" which is the heart of this study aims at examining the contribution of cultural

awareness in teaching the reading skill from teachers' perspectives, this section ends up with a question that gives teachers the opportunity to add any further suggestions or comments about cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill.

2.1.3.1.2. Administration of the Teachers' Questionnaire. Depending on the years of experience they have spent in teaching English as a foreign language in secondary school, this questionnaire is administrated to a selected sample of fifteen secondary school teachers at Mila in order to examine their perspectives towards cultural awareness and its role in enhancing students' reading skill performance. That is, more accurately to examine the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill to third year secondary school students. The questionnaire was printed then handed out to the teachers at different secondary schools. After that, they submitted it back face to face. The data gathering process took roughly ten days to be completed.

2.1.3.1.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Q 1: Specify your gender

Table 1

Teachers' Gender

Teachers' gender	Participants	Percentages %
Male	2	13.33 %
Female	13	86.66 %
Total	15	100 %

This question is mainly asked to know how gender differences may affect the teaching/ learning process of a foreign language, because males and females may differ

in their openness to the world and its different cultures, and in their way of dealing with different topics and themes. Not surprisingly, only 13.33 % of teachers were males, while the majority of them (86.66 %) were females.

Q 2: How long have you been teaching English at secondary school?

Table 2

Teachers' Work Experience

Teachers' work experience	Participants	Percentages %
1 to 5	3	20 %
5 to 10	3	20 %
10 to 15	3	20 %
More than 15	6	40 %
No experience	0	0 %
Total	15	100 %

This question is intended for collecting data about teachers' work experience in TESL / TEFL because experience can make a difference in the teaching / learning process. As the table showed, all teachers were experienced in EFL teaching, 60 % of them were experienced between 1 to 15 years in teaching the language, while 40 % had more than 15 years in teaching it.

Section Two: The Reading Skill

Q 3: Does reading contribute in the development of other skills?

Table 3

Reading Contribution in the Development of other Skills

Reading contribution in the development of other skills	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	15	100 %
No	0	0 %
Total	15	100 %

The question aims at knowing the teachers' perspectives towards the importance of the reading skill in the development of other language skills. The table revealed that 100 % of the teachers believed that the reading skill is very important in ameliorating the other skills, the majority of them argued that reading enhances mostly the students' writing skill performance through gaining new vocabulary and terminology, and some of them stated that the reading skill, being a receptive skill, may help in promoting both the writing and the speaking skills through acquiring new vocabulary items which can be used afterwards to produce beneficial writings or to develop good communication skills.

Q 4: What is the major purpose behind teaching reading?

Table 4

Major Purpose behind Teaching Reading

Major purpose behind teaching reading	Participants	Percentages %
Developing language proficiency	12	41.37 %
Allowing learners to develop their own vocabulary	11	37.93 %
Enhancing their background knowledge	6	20.68 %
Total	15	100 %

This question triggers to know the main purpose behind teaching the reading skill in EFL instruction. The statistics presented above revealed that twelve participants (41.37 %) claimed that the major purpose behind teaching reading is to develop students' language proficiency, since language proficiency is considered the heart of learning any new language. Eleven teachers (37.93 %) believed that teaching the reading skill in the EFL instruction helps students mostly in developing their own vocabulary in the sense that learners could acquire a huge amount of vocabulary items and expressions through different readings, while six of the participants (40 %) confirmed that the reading skill is of a great value as it enhances students' background knowledge from different angles.

Q 5: Do you encourage and motivate your students to read outside the classroom?

Table 5

Teachers' Encouragement and Motivation to their Students to Read outside the Classroom

Teachers' encouragement and motivation to their students to read outside the classroom	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	15	100 %
No	0	0 %
Total	15	100 %

The question is hold to know whether teachers encourage and motivate their students to read outside the classroom settings or not, because encouragement and motivation are the core of learning any foreign language. The results revealed that all teachers (100 %) opted for the importance of encouraging students to read, implying that suggesting them different books, novels or short stories of different themes would

trigger their interest and make them ambitious to read more, to discover more and to enlarge their background knowledge about those themes, so that other skills would be developed.

Q 6: Which type of reading do you think is the most beneficial for your students to develop their reading skill?

Table 6

Most Beneficial Type of Reading for Students

Most beneficial types of reading for students	Participants	Percentages %
Extensive reading	3	14.28 %
Intensive reading	7	35.33 %
Silent reading	5	23.80 %
Aloud reading	4	19.04 %
All of them	2	9.52 %
Total	21	100 %

Choosing the suitable and the most beneficial type of reading for students may help them to develop their reading skill easily and in a fast way, as it may facilitate the reading process for them. As it was shown in the results, 35.33 % of teachers opted for the intensive reading, may be because of its occurrence inside the classroom settings, which makes it easier for their students to learn more about the language and to practise it in its context. Besides, in the intensive reading, the teacher is always present to guide his students as they read, which guarantees that the information is fully grasped. 23.80 % chose the silent reading, since it is done to acquire a lot of information and to attract students' attention to the hidden meaning of the materials they read. For the aloud reading, it was selected by 19.04 % of the participants,

because it helps students only in enhancing their pronunciation. Whereas only 14.28 % of teachers selected the extensive reading, may be because it occurs outside the classroom, which implied that students are not guided as they read, as a result, their mistakes will not be corrected and they will not be able to ask about ambiguous words and concepts. 9.52 % of the participants chose all of the types mentioned above, in the sense that each type is beneficial in a given piece of reading, and it is not necessary that one type will suit all the students.

Q 7: What are the main strategies used for developing students' reading skill?

Table 7

Main Strategies Used to Develop Students' Reading Skill

Main strategies used to develop students' reading skill	Participants	Percentages %
Skimming	13	27.56 %
Scanning	14	29.78 %
Predicting	7	14.89 %
Inferring	6	12.76 %
Using imagery	7	14.89 %
Total	47	100 %

The table revealed that 29.78 % of teachers selected the scanning strategy, since it attracts students' attention to the important elements and information included in the text. 27.65 % of the respondents selected 'skimming', not surprisingly, because they know that most students are not interested to understand the deep meaning of the reading material, so they ask them just to skim the text, at least to understand its general idea. The same percentage (14.89 %) stood for the two strategies predicting

and using imagery', since the aim behind them is approximately the same which is to use imagination and to predict the coming ideas of the text. Both of them involve students' critical thinking. While only 12.76 % chose the inferring strategy, because students generally do not try to read between lines, they only read to accomplish their tasks. Some teachers suggested another strategy which is deducing, since it leads students to reach a conclusion of what they are reading, as it helps them to link what they have read with logic.

Q 8: Among the following, on which activities do you focus more when teaching reading?

Table 8

Most Emphasized Activities When Teaching Reading

Most emphasized activities when teaching reading	Participants	Percentages %
Pre-reading activities	6	24 %
While-reading activities	13	52 %
Post-reading activities	6	24 %
Total	25	100 %

As it was indicated in the table, half of the teachers (52 %) argued for the usefulness of the while-reading activities, claiming that these activities are not time consuming, since learners can read, acquire knowledge and accomplish tasks at the same time with the guidance of their teachers. 24 % of teachers claimed that the pre-reading activities need more focus, because students will get more knowledge in this stage, which will be used later in the while-reading stage to answer activities, as it makes them familiar with what is coming in the while and post stages. The similar rate of 24 % stood for the post-reading activities, in the fact that they reinforce

students' comprehension, critical thinking and retention of information, as they help them to reflect on what they read, so to produce something beneficial (write, speak).

Q 9: What types of reading comprehension activities do you use in reading sessions?

Table 9

Types of Reading Comprehension Activities

Types of reading comprehension activities	Participants	Percentages %
Multiple choice questions	10	12.65 %
Short answer questions	10	12.65 %
Sentence completion questions	4	5.06 %
True/ false statements	15	18.98 %
Yes / no questions	15	18.98 %
WH questions	15	18.98 %
Open ended questions	4	5.06 %
Matching	6	7.59 %
Total	79	100 5

Since it is important to assess students' reading comprehension skills, this question aims at identifying the reading comprehension activities that are frequently used by teachers to assess their students. The results revealed that the same percentages of teachers (18,98 %) argued for the usefulness of the true / false statements, yes / no questions and the WH questions in assessing students' reading comprehension, since they are the most common ones, the easiest for teachers to score and for students to accomplish. The same percentages (12.65 %) went to the multiple choice activities and the short answer activities. The same thing for the sentence completion questions and the open ended questions, only 5.06 % of teachers opted for

them, may be because they require much time to be answered and not all students' level in the language allow them to accomplish such kind of questions. For the matching activities, it was revealed that only 6 % of teachers rely on them in their assessment. In addition to that, most of teachers suggested two other activities which are the activity of reordering ideas and the inferred questions (looking for words' reference). To clarify, teachers' selection of the frequently used activities can be based on the types of reading they deal with.

Section Three: Cultural Awareness

Q 10: What do you think of the saying: "learning a foreign language is also learning a foreign culture".

The teachers' answers indicated that all of them agreed with the saying, reporting that language is interwind with culture, it reflects its aspects and help in raising students' cultural awareness, fostering empathy and tolerance and allowing students to communicate effectively in different settings. In a word, foreign language learning means acquiring new cultures.

Q 11: In your opinions, what the term culture indicates?

The question at hand is an open ended one that aims at identifying the appropriate meaning of the word culture from the teachers' perspectives. Based on their response, it was revealed that almost all teachers claimed that culture is the umbrella term that encompasses visible and invisible elements of life of a given social group, arguing that it mainly represents identity, history, literature and civilization of a given group. Additionally, some of them affirmed that culture signifies the life style of a certain group including their values, customs and traditions, asserting that

culture includes a set of social rules of a given society that need to be followed in order for its members to behave appropriately.

Q 12: How do you consider the integration of the target culture in the process of EFL teaching and learning?

Table 10

Teachers' Perspectives towards the Integration of Culture in EFL Teaching and Learning.

Teachers' perspectives towards the integration of culture in EFL teaching and learning	Participants	Percentages
Very important	8	53.33 %
Important	6	40 %
Neutral	1	6.66 %
Total	15	100 %

This question aims to identify teachers' perspectives towards the importance of integrating culture into EFL teaching / learning process. Clearly from the results, half of teachers argued that the integration of culture in English language classes is very important, representing the highest percentage (53.33%), mainly because culture and language cannot be separated and culture teaching facilitates language acquisition. 40 % of the respondents said that culture is an important ingredient in language teaching, in the sense that culture teaching does not necessarily guarantee the language acquisition but it is still helpful to some degree in reducing some difficulties; ie: teaching the target language does not necessarily entail teaching its culture. Whereas, one of the respondents (6.66 %) represented a neutral view about the importance of culture integration in foreign language teaching, implying that he is not interested in culture

teaching, he thinks that culture is just one part of language, or perhaps he thinks that culture integration depends on the topic to be dealt with, if the topic is easy to be fully understood, there will be no need to delve into its cultural background.

Q 13: According to you, why is it important to teach culture in an EFL classroom?

Table 11

Importance of Culture Teaching in EFL Classrooms

Importance of teaching culture in EFL classrooms	Participants	Percentages %
To reduce the amount of cultural misunderstanding	9	31.03 %
To give students background knowledge about different cultures	11	37.93 %
To develop the students' tolerance to other cultures	5	17.24 %
To give students an understanding about their own cultural identity	4	13,79 %
Total	29	100 %

Language and culture are interwind, one cannot be taught separately from the other, since it helps learners to acquire the language with a sense of tolerance, respect, and acceptance of other cultures, as it facilitates the teaching / learning process. 31.03% of the participants considered culture teaching as an important aspect in language teaching, claiming that it reduces the amount of cultural misunderstanding. 37.93 % of them argued for its significance in providing students with background knowledge about different cultures. 17.24 % asserted that culture is effective in developing the students' tolerance to other culture. While 13.79 % of teachers stated that foreign

culture teaching may help students to have an understanding about their own cultural identity.

Q 14: What are the main cultural aspects that may affect the foreign language learning?

Table 12

Cultural Aspects that May Affect Language Learning

Cultural aspects that may affect language learning	Participants	Percentages %
Beliefs	10	31,25 %
Values	3	9,37 %
Attitudes	3	9.37 %
Taboos	4	12.5 %
Behaviours and cultural norms	12	37.5 %
Total	32	100 %

In fact, all the aspects mentioned above are aspects of culture and should be all considered because the language is about the correct use of words and correct understanding of ideas and concepts in order to avoid any misunderstanding or errors. What is noticeable from the results obtained is that 37.5 % of teachers stated that behaviours and social norms are of a big influence on language learning, in the sense that they would enable students later to interact with other social groups effectively. 31.25 % of them asserted that language learning is mainly affected by cultural beliefs which can be helpful for students to develop their understanding and respect to other cultures. While the similar rate of 9.37 % of the respondents argued that values and attitudes of the target culture have the same influence on its language learning, mainly because being familiar with the target culture's values and attitudes would help

students to overcome difficulties encountered when dealing with cultural contents. A group of four teachers (12.5 %) claimed that taboos also play a role in foreign language learning, in the sense that learners need to know taboos of the target culture, since taboo words in one culture can be appropriate in other cultures. To clarify, all the aspects of the foreign culture can influence the learning of its language, as argued by teachers.

Q 15: According to you, what are the roles of teachers when dealing with culture inside the classroom?

Table 13

Roles of Teachers When Dealing with Culture

Roles of teachers when dealing with culture	Participants	Percentages%
Raising students' intellectual objectivity towards the culture to be dealt with	8	20.51 %
Fostering students' understanding of that culture from a neutral perspective	3	7.69 %
Giving students insights and backgrounds about that culture before dealing with it	8	20.51 %
Showing them the differences and the similarities between their own culture and the culture to be dealt with	11	28.20 %
Convincing them that cultures are all equal and that diversity is something good	9	23.7 %
Total	29	100 %

Teachers play an effective role in facilitating foreign language learning when different cultural items are included or to be dealt with. As indicated in the table, the highest percentage of teachers representing 28.20 % claimed that the main role of teachers is to show their students the similarities and the differences between their own culture and that of the target language, so to raise their awareness of both of them. 23.07 % of the respondents considered the teachers' role is to convince their students that cultures are all equal and that diversity is something good in order to avoid misunderstandings. Whereas only 7.69 % stated that their role is to foster their students' understanding of the target culture from a neutral perspective in order not to develop any sign of subjectivity or personal judgements about the other cultures. The same percentage of teachers (20.51 %) opted for the two other options which stated that the teachers' role is to raise his students intellectual objectivity towards the culture to be dealt with, and to give them insights and backgrounds about that culture before dealing with it, so to facilitate the learning process and to grasp the language easily.

Q 16: Do you think that culture teaching helps in raising students' cultural awareness?

Table 14

Influence of Culture Teaching on Students Cultural Awareness

Influence of culture teaching on students cultural awareness	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	14	93.33 %
No	1	6.66 %
Total	15	100 %

Since being aware of the target language culture helps students in learning the foreign language effectively and appropriately, culture teaching may serve as a significant factor to reach that purpose. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (93.33 %) claimed that culture teaching has an effective role in enhancing students' cultural awareness of the target language. Teachers supported their responses saying that through incorporating cultural elements in education, learners will build an overall idea about other cultures and gain a deep understanding of different societies and social groups which may foster their empathy, tolerance, and respect to diversity, and thus to develop their communicative competence (CC) and to react appropriately with different cultures. In a contradicted way, one of the respondents (6.66 %) claimed that culture teaching does not enhance students' cultural awareness, may be he thinks that delving into the cultural background of the target language will make learners confused.

Section Four: The Role of Cultural Awareness in Teaching Reading

Q 17: Do you think that culture is an important component to be emphasized when teaching the reading skill?

Table 15

Teachers' Perspectives towards the Importance of Culture in Teaching the Reading Skill

Teachers' perspectives towards the importance of culture in teaching the reading skill	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	15	100 %
No	0	0 %

Total	15	100 %
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As expected, the results showed that all the respondents considered culture as an important component to be emphasized when teaching the reading skill, claiming that language can be viewed as the verbal expression of culture and it is used to maintain it. Culture helps in understanding the objective of a given discourse and to acquire the target language correctly. Moreover, integrating different cultural aspects from different cultures motivate learners to read more through making them ambitious to know more, as it promotes their cultural awareness so as to be open minded and respectful about others. Besides, cultural aspects are reflected through reading texts in a way or another, so their cultural background will affect their reading skill performance.

Q 18: Do you think that being aware of the target language culture enriches students' knowledge that can be used afterwards in reading?

Table 16

Role of CA in Enhancing Students' Knowledge to Facilitate the Reading Process

Role of cultural awareness in enhancing students' knowledge to facilitate the reading process	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	13	86.66 %
No	0	0 %
Neutral	2	13.33 %
Total	15	100 %

Reading, as a receptive skill, can be affected by various factors, cultural awareness is among them since it provides students with cultural backgrounds and make them familiar with the reading material before dealing with it. As expected, non

of the teachers (0 %) stated that CA has no significance in enhancing students' knowledge to develop their reading skill, in the sense that the majority of them (86.66%) opted for its contribution in enhancing students' knowledge that can be used afterwards in reading. Whereas, 13.33 % represented a neutral view.

Q 19: Do you think that your cultural awareness affects your students' reading skill performance?

Table 17

Influence of Teachers' Cultural Awareness on Students' Reading Skill Performance

Influence of teachers' cultural awareness on students' reading skill performance	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	14	93.33 %
No	1	6.66 %
Total	15	100 %

Through this question it was shown that teachers' cultural awareness has a significant role in enhancing students' reading skill performance. From the data obtained, the overwhelming majority of teachers (93.33 %) affirmed that their cultural awareness affects their students' reading skill performance, in the sense that they help them to scan the reading text successfully and it opens new perspectives of discussing, judging and understanding when different cultures are tackled. They also help them to understand the cultural background of the text and stay familiar with different ideas of the text, as they facilitate the difficult believes, attitudes, concepts and idiomatic expressions. Moreover, learners will be engaged and motivated to read when they see themselves reflected. Whereas, the minority of them (6.66 %) argued that teachers' cultural awareness has no influence on their students' reading skill performance.

Q 20: In reading sessions, do you provide your students with cultural backgrounds about the reading text?

Table 18

Providing Students with Cultural Backgrounds about the Reading Texts

Providing students with cultural backgrounds about the reading texts	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	10	66.66 %
No	5	33.93 %
Total	15	100 %

Providing students with cultural background about the reading texts before dealing with them is considered as a key for fostering their understanding and comprehension of the exact meaning of those texts. Therefore, this question serves to answer one of the fundamental questions of this study. The table showed that 66.66 % of teachers tend to attract their students' attention to the different cultural backgrounds behind different themes, mainly because it has a major role in extending students' knowledge about various topics, and making them familiar with new and different cultural concepts that may cause difficulties while reading. Whereas, some teachers (33.33 %) had an opposed view, they do not try to enlarge their students' cultural knowledge about the reading texts, implying that students levels in the language are different and not all of them are able to understand and grasp different topics and themes in the same way and rate, which may lead to complexity and confusion. Besides, they believe that providing students with cultural knowledge before dealing with the reading texts may affect them negatively since there are many differences between cultures, such as: religious issues, so they prefer to be limited in their topics.

Q 21: What are the difficulties you encounter when teaching reading texts with different cultures?

Table 19

Difficulties Encountered When Teaching Reading Texts With Different Cultures

Difficulties encountered when teaching reading texts with different cultures	Participants	Percentages %
Students' disability to interpret the meaning of some expressions	11	34.37 %
Students' difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions	12	37.5 %
Students' inability of grasping the overall meaning or ideas of a given piece of writing	9	28.12 %
Total	32	100 %

It is clearly observed from the tabulated data obtained that the highest number of teachers (12) with the percentage of 37.5% face difficulties due to their students' disability in interpreting the meaning of some new cultural concepts and expressions. 34.37 % of them reported that most of their difficulties are encountered because of their students' difficulties to understand and analyse the idiomatic expressions, since the idiomatic language differs from one culture to another . The rest of the participants (28.12 %) asserted that they struggle to teach reading texts with different cultures due to students' inability of grasping the overall meaning or ideas of a given piece of reading, reporting that the majority of learners are of an average level that does not enable them to understand different contexts.

Q 22: Please don't hesitate to add any further suggestions about cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill.

In the light of the present question, teachers were given the opportunity to give their suggestions and comments that may provide more knowledge which can help to reach the aim and to answer the questions of this study. Only eight among fifteen participants have furnished this question by their suggestions that are summarized and listed as follows:

- Culture is the backbone of any society. Therefore, it should be emphasized in education in order to understand and to be understood.
- Cultural awareness is an important factor in the process of reading.
- Cultural awareness is so effective in reading sessions, it requires teachers to be aware of the topic they deal with (topics should be well-chosen and well-prepared).
- Teachers should be culturally aware and limited to the topics they teach (they should avoid religious issues that may cause confusion and complexity)
- Cultural awareness is among the important factors that should be emphasized in foreign language classrooms, more precisely during reading sessions, since reading is the main source of knowledge.
- Although the reading skill is important, it is less emphasized during the teaching/learning process. Besides, time given to reading sessions does not allow students to use their prior knowledge and cultural backgrounds to analyse texts, as it does not allow teachers to raise their students CA each time dealing with a new cultural aspect.

2.1.3.1.4. Discussion of the Main Results. Cultural awareness is generally ignored in foreign language education, mainly due to the time constraints and students' level in the language. After the analysis and the interpretation of the teachers' questionnaire, significant results have been revealed. In the first section it is revealed that the overwhelming majority of teachers are females, most of them are experienced in TEFL, having more than fifteen (15) years in teaching the language.

The results of the second section, which is about the reading skill, revealed that all teachers agree upon the importance of the reading skill and its contribution in developing the other language skills, arguing that it primarily helps students in developing their language proficiency. Thus, almost all of them confirmed that they always tend to encourage their students to read outside the classroom settings. Besides, they reported that they mostly emphasize the intensive type of reading, incorporating mainly the scanning strategy in order to attract their students' attention to the specific elements of the reading material, with focusing on the while-reading activities in assessing their students' comprehension of knowledge.

The findings of the third section, which is devoted for cultural awareness, showed that all teachers are aware of the interwind relationship of language and culture, showing their positive attitudes towards culture and its integration in EFL settings, as well as its role in enhancing students' cultural awareness. Moreover, they argued that foreign language learning is mainly affected by the behaviours and the social norms of the target language. Added to that, the overwhelming majority of them argued that their cultural awareness is of a great impact on their students', reporting that their main role is to show their students the differences and the similarities between the TC and that of their own.

The concluding section, which is highlighted to identify teachers' perspectives towards CA and its contribution in the teaching of the reading skill, implied that all teachers agree upon the importance of CA in teaching the reading skill, claiming that most of them tend to provide their students with cultural backgrounds about the reading texts before dealing with them, in order to reduce the difficulties encountered mainly due to students' disability to understand idiomatic and cultural expressions.

Section Two: Students Questionnaire and Main Findings

2.2.1. Students' Questionnaire

2.2.1.1. Description of the Students' Questionnaire. The current questionnaire is divided into four main sections, with twenty-one questions. The first section, which consists of four question, is concerned with collecting some data about the informants, including their gender, as well as their language learning abilities and deficiencies. The second section in hand, contains five questions, aiming mainly to examine the incorporation of the reading skill as well as identifying students' view points towards this skill and its importance in developing other language skills. The third section, which comprises seven questions, is primarily concerned with the examination of students' perspectives towards culture and its role in fostering foreign language learning and enhancing students' cultural awareness. The last section, which is entitled "the influence of cultural awareness on the reading skill", is made up of five questions. It is considered as the main section of this questionnaire, since it sets the ground of this study and spots light on its fundamental issues, highlighting how cultural awareness helps in developing students' reading skill performance. This section ends up with a question that gives students the opportunity to take part in this research by giving their suggestions and comments about the topic under study.

2.2.1.2. Administration of the Students' Questionnaire. Because secondary school students are considered as beginners of the language, this questionnaire is printed and handed out to students inside their classes. The topic was presented and the questions were explained to students, by giving them the chance to answer each of them carefully. The entire process of data collection took more than ten days to be completed.

2.2.1.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Q 1: Specify your gender

Table 20

Students' Gender

Students' gender	Participants	Percentages %
Male	26	26 %
Female	74	74 %
Total	100	100 %

Although asking students about their gender does not really serve the general aim of this study, gender sometimes can make a difference especially when it comes to foreign language learning. Gender differences can influence people's openness to the world and its various cultures, and their acceptance and tolerance of diversity across the world. As revealed in the table, the majority of students (74 %) were females. Whereas, only 26 % of them were males.

Q 2: Do you have any exposure to the English language elsewhere?

Table 21*Students' Exposure to the English Language*

Students' exposure to the English language	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	40	40 %
No	60	60 %
Total	100	100 %

The present question aims at identifying whether students have any exposure to the English language or they are just relying on their teachers at schools. Obviously, the more students are exposed to the language, the better they learn it and acquire it, with being aware of its social norms and its cultural background. As indicated in the results, 60 % of the respondents do not have any exposure to the language elsewhere, while 40 % of them are exposed to the language in other settings in addition to their schools' programmes.

Q 3: How do you evaluate your level in English?

Table 22*Students' Evaluation of their Level in English*

Students' evaluation of their level in English	Participants	Percentages %
Good	19	19 %
Average	58	58 %
Weak	23	23 %
Total	100	100 %

As shown in the results obtained above, it was noticeable that the smallest number of students (19) evaluated their level in the English language as a good level,

from the percentage of (19 %), which means that they get benefits from what they are learning. A number of twenty three (23) students thought that they have a weak level in English, making up 23 % of a whole population, perhaps they see that they are still lacking much practice and they need to improve their learning skills. The highest rate of learners (58 %) revealed that have an average level, which is, to some degree, something satisfying in comparison to their educational level, besides that most of them do not have any additional exposure to the language.

Q 3: Which of the following skills is the most difficult when learning a foreign language?

Table 23

Most Difficult Skills for Learners When Learning a Foreign Language

Most difficult skills for learners when learning a foreign language	Participants	Percentages %
Reading	26	18.70 %
Writing	45	32.37 %
Listening	27	19.42 %
Speaking	41	29.49 %
Total	139	100 %

As it is known, not all language skills are easy to be mastered, students may face difficulties in mastering each of them or may be all of them, which makes them struggling to learn any foreign language. Not surprisingly, as indicated, students face difficulties mostly in the productive skills more than the receptive skills. 32.37 % of students face difficulties in the writing skill, 29.48 % of them struggle with the speaking skill, 19.42 % face difficulties in the listening skill, while 18.70 % of them

struggle with the reading skill, which indicates that either students do not benefit from what they are receiving, or they can not apply what they are receiving in beneficial writing or in effective communication.

Section Two: The Reading Skill

Q 5: Do you think that the reading skill is important and helpful in developing other skills?

Table 24:

Students' Opinion about the Importance of the Reading Skill in Developing other Skills

Students' opinion about the importance of the reading skill in developing other skills	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	93	93 %
No	7	7 %
Total	100	100 %

It is commonly known that reading is the primary source of knowledge for students that may help them in entrenching information and facilitating its understanding. The table indicated that the overwhelming majority of students (93) confirmed that the reading skill is important in developing the other language skills, claiming that the more a person practises reading, the more he acquires knowledge, and through these knowledge he can continuously develop his linguistic skills, since reading helps in enriching vocabulary and practicing grammar which would turn the good readers to good writers and speakers. Whereas, the minority (7 %) had a contradicted view, they saw that the reading skill has no contribution in the

development of other skills, arguing that they sometimes find new grammar patterns, new sentence structures and new words that are used in different contexts, which make them confused about their meaning and real use, causing difficulties and challenges to develop the other language skills.

Q 6: Do your teachers encourage you to read outside the classroom?

Table 25

Students' Encouragement to Read outside the classroom

Students' encouragement to read outside the classroom	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	92	92 %
No	8	8 %
Total	100	100 %

Encouragement has a valuable contribution in developing students' language skills. As expected, the table indicated that the overwhelming majority of students (92 %) are encouraged by their teachers to read, whereas only 8 % of them stated that their teachers do not encourage them to do so, perhaps their teachers see that they are not interested in reading or they do not make efforts to analyse different reading materials and benefit from their knowledge.

Q 7: Which of the following reading activities do your teachers use in their reading sessions?

Table 26

Reading Activities that Teachers Use in their Reading Session

Reading activities that teachers use in their reading sessions	Participants	Percentages %
Multiple choice questions	36	9.39 %
Short answer questions	43	11.22 %
Sentence completion questions	32	8.35 %
True / false statements	61	15.92 %
Yes / No questions	34	19.32 %
WH questions	56	14.62 %
Open ended questions	41	10.70 %
Matching	41	10.70 %
Total	383	100 %

Assessment is considered as the key to level up students' proficiency in the language, through knowing if they are progressing or not, if they are grasping the knowledge provided or not. Thus, this question aims at identifying how frequently students are exposed to reading comprehension activities, and how they may affect their reading skills and comprehension of different reading texts. The data obtained revealed that the most frequently used activities are the yes/no questions with 19.32 %, true/false statements with 15.92 % and the WH questions with 14.62 %, since they are the most common ones. 11.22 % of students opted for the short answer questions, while a similar rate of 10.70 % of students opted for the open ended questions and the matching activities, because they do not always serve the aim behind the reading materials. For example, the open ended questions are usually used to predict events and to give opinions about different themes. Whereas, the lowest percentages stood for the multiple choice questions with 9.39 %, and sentence completion questions with 8.35 %. In addition to the previously mentioned reading activities, some students

suggested additional activities such as, writing short essays about the same themes, or searching for the meaning of different words and phrases and try to use them in different contexts.

Q 8: Which of the following strategies do you prefer when reading?

Table 27

Students' Preferable Strategies When Reading

Students' preferable strategies when reading	Participants	Percentages %
Skimming	25	19.37 %
Scanning	28	21.70 %
Predicting	14	10.85 %
Inferring	14	10.85 %
Using imagery	21	16.27 %
All of them	26	20.15 %
Total	129	100 %

This question is highlighted to examine the most useful reading strategies from students' points of view. The results revealed that 21.70 % of students prefer the scanning strategy, because it helps them to extract the specific information they are looking for without time consuming. 19.37 % of them opted for the skimming strategy since it directs them to understand the general meaning of the text. A similar rate of 10.85 % stood for the predicting and the inferring strategies, perhaps they were selected by few students because they find them difficult since they involve critical thinking and prior knowledge. A considerable number of students, with the percentage of 16.27 % selected the 'using imagery' strategy, implying that they use their imagination to understand the meaning of the text. 20.15 % of students stated that

they tend to use all the strategies above, meaning that each strategy can be helpful and useful in a specific type of reading.

Q 9: Which difficulties do you encounter when reading?

Table 28

Students' Difficulties When Reading

Students' difficulties when reading	Participants	Percentages %
Difficulty in understanding new vocabulary items	64	29.35 %
Difficulty in pronouncing new words	43	19.72 %
Difficulty in understanding idiomatic expressions	62	28.44 %
Difficulty in understanding new cultural concepts	49	22.47 %
Total	218	100 %

Mastering the reading skill is not an easy task for students, especially beginners. This question is to identify the difficulties that students face when reading and which prevent them from understanding and grasping the correct meaning of different readings. The data obtained indicated that students mostly face difficulties in understanding new vocabulary items, representing 29.35 % of the whole population. 28.44 % of them declared that they struggle to understand idiomatic expressions. 22.47 % of students claimed that they face difficulties in understanding new cultural concepts. Whereas, 19.72 % of them declared that their difficulties occur when they try to pronounce new words. Generally, these are the most common difficulties that students encounter when dealing with different readings because of the differences that exist between students' own cultural background and that of the text.

Section Three: Cultural Awareness

Q 10: Do you think that culture is an important factor in fostering foreign language learning?

Table 29

Importance of Culture in Fostering Foreign Language Learning

Importance of culture in fostering foreign language learning	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	79	79 %
No	21	21 %
Total	100	100 %

This question is highlighted to examine students' perspectives towards the importance of culture in fostering foreign language learning. The results revealed that a group of 79 students, presenting the highest percentage of population (79%) opted for the great importance of culture in EFL instruction, considering it as effective as the other language skills, implying that it is an important factor that should be accounted for when learning a foreign language. In a contradicted view, the rest of participants (21%) thought that culture has no contribution in fostering their foreign language learning, in the sense that culture integration in EFL instruction may affect their understanding of the subject matter in a negative way.

Q 11: Does your teacher attract your attention to others' culture during reading sessions?

Table 30

Teachers' Attraction of their Students' Attention to Others' Cultures during Reading Sessions

Teachers' attraction of their students' attention during reading sessions	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	71	71 %
No	29	29 %
Total	100	100 %

This question is concerned with one of the fundamental issues in this study, which is to check whether teachers try to attract their students attention to other cultures during reading sessions or not, providing them with cultural backgrounds about different themes. The data obtained revealed that the majority of the informants, representing 71 % of the whole population, affirmed that their teachers try to attract their attention to others' cultures during reading sessions. Whereas, the minority of them (29 %) opted for the opposite answer, clarifying that their teachers do not give them any cultural backgrounds about the reading texts. To clarify, the results implied that the majority of teachers consider culture as an important factor in EFL teaching, whereas some others see it as a secondary element that does not need much attention during the EFL teaching/learning process.

Q 12: How does culture affect your foreign language learning?

Table31

Effects of Culture Learning on Foreign Language Learning

Effects of culture learning on foreign language learning	Participants	Percentages
Positively	82	82 %
Negatively	18	18 %

Total	100	100 %
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Due to the many variations existing between different cultures, culture learning does not always help in foreign language learning. Therefore, this question is with the aim to examine how culture learning affects foreign language learning, either positively or negatively. The tabulated results showed that the majority of the respondents (82 %) confirmed that culture learning affects their foreign language learning positively, arguing that culture mainly encourages them to think from a new perspective and increases their cultural awareness and sensitivity, as it helps them to know the cultural aspects of the language they are learning. Moreover, culture learning makes it easier for students to learn new vocabulary and new cultural concepts in relation to their contexts, which would help them later to communicate effectively using the language. Whereas, the rest of the respondents (18%) stated that culture learning has a negative effect on their foreign language learning, arguing that delving into the cultural background of the foreign language without paying attention to the differences between cultures may result in changing one's thinking about his cultural identity.

Q 13: Does learning about the foreign culture raise your cultural awareness about the foreign language and your own language and culture?

Table 32

Role of Culture Learning in Raising Students Cultural Awareness about the Foreign Language and their own Language and Culture

Role of culture learning in raising students' cultural awareness about the foreign language and their own language and culture	Participants	Percentages %
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Yes	79	79 %
No	21	21 %
Total	100	100 %

The current question attempts to examine whether culture learning has a contribution in enhancing students' awareness of the target language and culture and their own language and culture. The table indicated that the majority of students (79 %) agreed on the role of culture learning in enhancing their awareness. While the minority of them (21 %) presented a contradicted view. It was implied that most students are aware of the significance of culture learning and its contribution in raising their awareness.

Q 14: Do your teachers try to raise your cultural awareness about the target language?

Table 33

Teachers' Attempts to Raise their Students' Cultural Awareness

Teachers' attempts to raise their students' cultural awareness	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	80	80
No	20	20
Total	100	100 %

The question at hand sheds light on one of the main issues in the current study, which is to check whether teachers try to raise their students' cultural awareness about the target language or not. As it was shown in the table above, the majority of students (80 %) reported that their teachers always try to raise their cultural awareness about the target culture in order to provide them with the maximum of knowledge about the target knowledge, highlighting all its aspects, so to

help them acquire it appropriately and effectively. While, 20 % of them stated that their teachers never try to raise their cultural awareness about the TL, may be their teachers think that their students' level in the language does not allow them to delve into its cultural background.

Q 15: From your own perspectives, what do you expect from your teachers for raising your cultural awareness about the target language?

Table34

Students' Expectations of Teachers' Roles for Raising Cultural Awareness

Students' expectations of teachers' roles for raising cultural awareness	Participants	Percentages %
Teaching the foreign language in relation to the foreign culture	44	31.42 %
Discussing the similarities and the differences between the native and the foreign cultures	63	45 %
Convincing students that all cultures are equal and diversity is something good not bad	33	23.57 %
Total	140	100 %

Since teachers have a central role in raising their students' cultural awareness, the question at hand aims at knowing what students expect from their teachers in order to enhance their cultural awareness about the target language. The results revealed that 45 % of students reported that the main role of their teachers in raising their cultural awareness about the target language is to discuss the similarities and the differences existing between the target culture and their own culture. 31.42 % of them suggested that their teachers must teach them the foreign language in relation to the

foreign culture, so that to acquire it easily and appropriately. While, the rest of them (23.57 %) suggested that convincing them that all cultures are equal and that diversity is something good not bad is the good way for raising their awareness, since it increases their cultural sensitivity and tolerance to the other cultures and helps them to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding.

Q 16: Do you think that your teachers' cultural awareness affects your cultural awareness?

Table 35

Effects of Teachers' Cultural Awareness on Students'

Effects of teachers' cultural awareness on students'	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	82	82 %
No	18	18 %
Total	100	100 %

Generally speaking, teachers are considered as models and guides for their students during their learning process. Thus, this question is asked mainly to examine whether teachers' cultural awareness affects their students' cultural awareness, from students' perspectives. Not surprisingly, the majority of students (82 %) declared that their teachers' awareness of the target culture influences their awareness as well, claiming that teachers who are knowledgeable about other cultures tend to share and explain to their students better, and introduce vocabulary for them step by step in relation to its context rather than giving them a list of vocabulary to be memorized. Besides, teachers' cultural awareness affects them positively and makes them eager to gain more experience and knowledge. Whereas, the minority of them (18 %) stated that their teachers' cultural awareness does not affect their CA, arguing that teachers who

are culturally aware tend to speak about culture a lot and make things complicated, which make students confused, and thus their CA will not be enhanced and they will face many difficulties during the learning process.

Section Four: The Influence of Cultural Awareness in Teaching the Reading Skill

Q 17: Do you face difficulties with texts presenting a foreign culture?

Table 36

Students' Difficulties When Reading Texts Presenting a Foreign Culture

Students' difficulties when reading texts presenting a foreign culture	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	76	76 %
No	24	24 %
Total	100	100 %

The present question is highlighted to check whether students struggle when reading texts containing a foreign culture. As shown in the results above, 76 % of students face difficulties when reading texts presenting a foreign culture, may be because they do not understand the new cultural concepts and expressions, or may be they struggle to understand the deep meaning of the text. Whereas, only 20 % of them declared that they do not face any difficulties, perhaps they are aware of the culture included or they have background knowledge about the text.

Q 18: Does the target culture awareness help you to overcome those difficulties?

Table 37

Role of the Target CA in Reducing Students' Difficulties

Role of the target CA in reducing students' difficulties	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	80	80 %
No	20	20 %
Total	100	100 %

Through asking this question, it is aimed to see whether the target culture awareness helps students to overcome their reading skill deficiencies or not. The statistics showed that the majority of the participants, 80 % of the whole population, reported that having a cultural awareness about the target language reduces the amount of difficulties encountered when reading different texts representing different cultures, claiming that giving any kind of information a cultural background makes it related to the mind, so to higher up the chances of retaining that information, besides that cultural awareness gives at least 50 % of the understanding of terms found in the text. In a contradicted view, the rest of the respondents (20 %) stated that cultural awareness is of no contribution in reducing their difficulties.

Q 19: How does cultural awareness contribute in promoting your reading skill performance?

Table 38

Role of Cultural Awareness in Promoting Students' Reading Skill Performance

Role of CA in promoting students' reading skill performance	Participants	Percentages %
It helps in understanding new vocabulary	70	28.11 %
It helps in pronouncing new words	59	23.69 %
It helps in understanding new cultural concepts and	58	23.29 %

idiomatic expressions		
It helps in understanding the deep meaning of the text	62	24.89 %
Total	249	100 %

Theoretically speaking, cultural awareness has a great role in fostering foreign language learning. Therefore, the aim of this question is to shed light on the role of cultural awareness in promoting students' reading skill performance rather than the other language skills. The results showed that a group of 70 students, representing the highest percentage (28.11 %) of the whole population, stated that CA helps them mostly in understanding new vocabulary items that may occur through different readings. 24.89 % of them affirmed that CA helps them in understanding the deep meaning of the text. 23.69 % of students said that it helps them in pronouncing new words. While the rest of the informants with the rate of 23.29 % agreed that CA helps them in understanding new cultural concepts and idiomatic expressions. In short, it is shown that CA has a significant contribution in promoting students' reading skill performance affecting their capacities in the skill in a way or another.

Q 20: Do you try to read in order to raise your cultural awareness?

Table 39

Students' Attempts to Raise Cultural Awareness

Students' attempts to raise cultural awareness	Participants	Percentages %
Yes	65	65 %
No	35	35 %
Total	100	100 %

The aim of this question is to identify whether students try to read for the sake of raising their cultural awareness in the target language or they don't. The table revealed that most students (65 %) tend to read in order to raise their cultural awareness. Whereas, 35 % of them are not interested in raising their cultural awareness, perhaps they find it difficult to read texts presenting different cultures. As it was shown, the results were satisfying to some extent, since reading is the main source of knowledge for students and cultural awareness is an influential factor in their acquisition and learning of the foreign language.

- If yes, which type of readings do you prefer?

Table 40

Preferable Types of Readings for Students to Raise Cultural Awareness

Preferable types of readings for students to raise cultural awareness	Participants	Percentages %
Reading English books	20	20.20 %
Reading short stories	43	43.43 %
Reading novels	36	36.36 %
Total	99	100 %

It is noticeable from the table that 43.43 % of students prefer to read short stories because they find them enjoyable and easy to understand their events. 36.36 % of them reported that they prefer reading novels, mainly because novels generally contain fictional events which reflects the author's own culture and thinking, and that makes it entertaining for students to read them and grasp their events in addition to building a cultural background. While, only 20 % prefer reading English books, perhaps they find them boring and do not trigger their curiosity and interest.

Q 21: Please add any further suggestions about cultural awareness and its role in promoting your reading skill.

In the light of this question, students were given the opportunity to give their suggestions and comments about the subject of this study, only 6 students among 100 gave their responses and their suggestions, which are listed as follows:

- No matter how people deny it, culture is always a big part of the language.
- Every one should read more, educate themselves and consume content presented in their target language.
- Cultural awareness becomes an important factor in modern life due to the globalization of the world. Therefore, it should be emphasized in the educational process.
- CA not only promotes students' reading skill performance, but it helps as well in avoiding cultural misunderstandings.

2.2.1.4. Discussion of The Main Results. The results obtained from the students' questionnaire are of great importance to reach goals of the present study. The first section revealed that most students are females, most of them do not have any exposure to the language, with most of them of an average level in English.

Moving to the next section, which attempts to provide some insights about the students' reading skill performance, it is revealed that the overwhelming majority of them are aware of the importance of the reading skill in developing their language skills, reporting that they are always encouraged by their teachers to read outside the classroom settings in order to reduce their difficulties in the skill. In order to accomplish their aim behind reading, students tend to use different strategies depending on the reading material, in order to fully grasp its meaning and understand its ideas.

The third section which is entitled cultural awareness, is highlighted primarily to examine the importance of culture in TEFL, as well as its role in enhancing students' CA. According to the findings, the majority of students value the importance of culture learning in fostering their foreign language learning. Furthermore, almost all of the informants reported that their teachers generally attract their attention to others' cultures in order to raise their cultural awareness about the TL and their own language and culture, emphasizing that the main role of their teachers when dealing with culture is mainly to discuss the similarities and the differences between the foreign and the native culture. From students' own perspectives, their teachers' cultural awareness has a significant role in enhancing their own CA.

In The last section, which is about the influence of cultural awareness on the reading skill, students' responses revealed that cultural awareness has a positive influence on their reading skill performance, helping them mostly to understand the new vocabulary items that are introduced through different readings. Moreover, most students showed that they are interested in reading in order to raise their cultural awareness of the target language.

Conclusion

To conclude, from the analysis and the interpretation of the two data tools used in this research work, significant results can be summarized. First, both secondary school teachers and students show positive perspectives towards culture integration into foreign language classes, and both of them appreciate the significant role it plays in enhancing foreign language learning. Second, it is shown that a considerable attention is put on the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill, in the sense that most secondary school teachers tend to provide their students with cultural

backgrounds about the reading texts, aiming to reduce the amount of difficulties faced when reading texts presenting as foreign culture, and raising students' cultural awareness about the target culture and their own culture. Finally, teachers have proven that CA is a major factor that should be enhanced when teaching the reading skill, though most of them agree that this foreign language component is somehow ignored during the reading process due to time constraints and other factors that prevent them from delving into the foreign language culture.

2.2.2. Recommendations

In order to use the language appropriately and effectively, both EFL learners and teachers should give the same importance to the foreign language culture as they do with its linguistic system. Accordingly, the coming are some pedagogical recommendations for both FL teachers and learners in order to solve problems related to students' cultural awareness, and to reduce the amount of difficulties faced by teachers and students when dealing with cultural content through different readings:

1. It is clear that language and culture are interrelated, so teachers and learners should focus more on the cultural background of the foreign language in order to raise students' cultural awareness of both the TC and their own culture, recognizing the similarities and the differences existing between the two.
2. The often neglected skill of reading, should be given much importance and more time during the instructional process in order to guarantee that students have fully grasped the meaning of the reading material, as well as analysing its aspects.

3. Teachers need to push and encourage their students to develop their cultural awareness about the target language culture, for fostering foreign language learning and its appropriate use.

2.2.3. Limitations of The Study

This study as any other research paper has a number of limitations. First, the factor of time was the major constraints throughout all of the phases of the study. Second, most third year secondary school students left their schools earlier which caused many struggles during the data collection phase, and that makes it challenging for us to vary our students sample from different secondary schools. Third, the sample of teachers was so limited, most of them apologised to answer our questionnaires due to the many works they had, besides that most of those who responded did not pay much attention to answer the questions carefully.

2.2.4. General Conclusion

The present research paper is themed with examining the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill to third year secondary school students, mainly identifying the teachers' and the students' perspectives towards cultural awareness and its contribution in promoting students' reading skill performance, as well as checking whether teachers provide their students with cultural backgrounds about the given reading material in order to reduce their reading deficiencies.

Taking into account the obtained findings from the first instrument of the field work which is the teachers' questionnaire, it is revealed that there is a general agreement among secondary schools teachers about the integration of the cultural

content in TEFL, as well as the significant role that it plays in fostering foreign language learning, particularly the reading skill, through enhancing students' cultural awareness about the target language. Accordingly, it is assumed that considerable attention is put on cultural awareness, in the sense that almost all teachers share positive perspectives towards cultural awareness and its valuable contribution in promoting students' reading skill performance, through reducing the amount of difficulties faced when reading texts presenting cultural contents. As it is noted that most teachers tend to provide their students with cultural backgrounds about the reading texts, trying to raise their cultural awareness about the target language, and showing them the similarities and the differences existing between their own culture and that of the target language, so to avoid cultural misunderstandings, and to reduce the reading difficulties.

The data obtained from the analysis of the second instrument of the research, which is a questionnaire distributed to a sample of some secondary school students, it is shown that there is a general agreement and correlation between students' and teachers' perspectives towards cultural awareness and its effective role in promoting students' reading skill performance.

Conclusively, it is noted that the importance of cultural awareness is proved from both teachers' and students' points of view. Whereas, most teachers reported that though the concept of cultural awareness has a great importance in ameliorating their students' reading skill performance and in facilitating the teaching process for them, it is still ignored and neglected in EFL teaching due to time constraints that do not allow teachers to provide their students with cultural backgrounds and to raise their cultural awareness each time dealing with cultural content, as well as because of the

level of language proficiency that most students have, and that does not allow them to delve into the cultural backgrounds of different themes.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is a fundamental part in our study which aims to examine the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill to third year secondary school students, and mainly to know the teachers' and the students' perspectives towards cultural awareness and its effects on students' reading skill performance. You are kindly requested to provide answers, either by putting a [✓] in the appropriate box, or by providing a full statement where necessary.

Thank you in advance for taking part in our study and for the precious time you gave.

Section One: Background Information

1. Specify your gender

Male

Female

2. How long have you been teaching English at secondary school?

a) From 1 to 5 years

b) From 5 to 10 years

c) From 10 to 15 years

d) More than 15 years

e) No experience (first year)

Section Two: Reading Skill

3. Does reading contribute in the development of other skills?

Yes

No

If yes, Which skill among the four skill will develop most?

.....

4. What is the major purpose behind teaching reading?

a) Developing language proficiency

b) Allowing learners to develop their own vocabulary

c) Enhancing their background knowledge

d) Others

5. Do you encourage and motivate your students to read outside the classroom?

Yes

No

Justify

.....
.....

6. Which type of reading do you think is the most beneficial for your students to develop their reading skill?

a) Extensive reading

b) Intensive reading

- c) Silent reading
- d) Aloud reading
- e) All

7. What are the main strategies used for developing students' reading skill?

- a) Skimming b) Scanning c) Predicting
- d) Inferring d) Using imagery
- f) Others.....

8. Among the following, on which activities do you focus more when teaching reading?

- a) Pre-reading activities
- b) While-reading activities
- c) Post-reading activities

Explain and exemplify.....

9. What types of reading comprehension activities do you use in reading sessions?

- a) Multiple choice questions b) Short answer questions
- c) Sentence completion question d) True/ false statements
- e) Yes/ No questions f) WH questions
- g) Open ended questions h) Matching

e) Others

Section Three: Cultural Awareness

10. What do you think of the saying: "learning a foreign language is also learning a foreign culture"?

.....
.....

11. In your opinions, what the term culture indicates?

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

12. How do you consider the integration of the target culture in the process of EFL teaching and learning?

- a) Very important b) Important c) Neutral

13. According to you, why is it important to teach culture in an EFL classroom?

- a) To reduce the amount of cultural misunderstanding
b) To give students background knowledge about different cultures
c) To develop the students' tolerance to other cultures
d) To give students an understanding about their own cultural identity

14. What are the main cultural aspects that may affect the foreign language learning?

- a) Beliefs b) Values c) Attitudes
d) Taboos e) behaviours and social norms

15. According to you, what are the roles of teachers when dealing with culture inside the classroom?

- b) Raising students' intellectual objectivity towards the culture to be dealt with
- c) Fostering students' understanding of that culture from a neutral perspective
- d) Giving them insights and backgrounds about that culture before dealing with it
- e) Showing them the differences and the similarities between their own culture and the culture to be dealt with
- f) Convincing them that cultures are all equal and that diversity is something good
- g) Others

16. Do you think that culture teaching helps in raising students' cultural awareness?

Yes

No

If yes, how?

.....
.....

Section Four: The Role of Cultural Awareness in Teaching Reading

17. Do you think that culture is an important component to be emphasized when teaching the reading skill?

Yes

No

Why?.....

.....

18. Do you think that being aware of the target language culture enriches students' knowledge that can be used afterwards in reading?

Yes

No

Neutral

19. Do you think that your cultural awareness affects your students' reading skill performance?

Yes

No

If yes, in what way?

.....

20. In reading sessions, do you provide your students with cultural backgrounds about the reading texts?

Yes

No

Why?

.....

.....

21. What are the difficulties you encounter when teaching reading texts with different cultures?

h) Students' disability to interpret the meaning of some expressions

i) Students' difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions

j) Students inability of grasping the overall meaning or ideas of a given piece of writing

k) Others..... .

22. Please don't hesitate to add any further suggestions about cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill

.....

.....

.....

Appendix B

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

We would be deeply grateful if you fill in the following questionnaire for a research that aims to examine the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill and how it helps in promoting the reading skill performance. Your answers will be of much help in the completion of our study. Please tick [✓] the right answer(s) or write full statement(s) whenever necessary.

Thank you in advance for your time, efforts and collaboration.

Section One: Background Information

1. Specify your gender

a) Male

b) Female

2. Do you have any exposure to the English language elsewhere?

Yes

No

3. How do you evaluate your level in English?

a) Good

b) Average

c) Weak

4. Which of the following skills is the most difficult when learning a foreign language?

a) Reading

b) Writing

c) Listening

d) Speaking

Section Two: Reading Skill

5. Do you think that the reading skill is important and helpful in developing other skills?

Yes

No

Justify

.....
.....

6. Do your teachers encourage you to read outside the classroom?

Yes

No

7. Which of the following reading activities do your teachers use in their reading sessions?

a) Multiple choice questions

b) Short answer questions

c) Sentence completion question

d) True/ false statements

e) Yes/ No questions

f) WH questions

g) Open ended questions

h) Matching

e) Others

8. Which of the following strategies do you prefer when reading?

a) Skimming

b) Scanning

c) Predicting

d) inferring

e) Using imagery

d) All of them

9. Which difficulties do you encounter when reading?

- a) Difficulty in understanding new vocabulary items
- b) Difficulty in pronouncing new n words
- c) Difficulty in understanding idiomatic expressions
- d) Difficulty in understanding new cultural concepts

Section Three: Cultural Awareness

10. Do you think that culture is an important factor in fostering foreign language learning?

Yes No

11. Does your teacher attract your attention to others' culture during reading sessions?

Yes No

12. How does culture learning affect your foreign language learning?

a) Positively b) Negatively

Why

.....

13. Does learning about the foreign culture raise your cultural awareness about the foreign language and about your own language and culture?

Yes No

14. Do your teachers try to raise your cultural awareness about the target language?

Yes

No

15. From your own perspective, what do you expect from your teachers for raising your cultural awareness about the target language?

a) Teaching the foreign language in relation to the foreign culture

b) Discussing the similarities and the differences between the foreign culture and the native culture

c) Convincing students that all cultures are equal and diversity is something good not bad

16. Do you think that your teachers' cultural awareness affects your cultural awareness?

Yes

No

Justify

.....
.....

Section Four: The Influence of Cultural Awareness on the Reading Skill

17. Do you face difficulties when reading texts presenting a foreign culture?

Yes

No

18. Does the target culture awareness help you to overcome those difficulties?

Yes

No

Justify

.....
.....

19. How does cultural awareness contribute in promoting your reading skill performance?

- a) It helps in understanding new vocabulary
- b) It helps in pronouncing new words
- c) It helps in understanding new cultural concepts and idiomatic expressions
- d) It helps in understanding the deep meaning of the text

20. Do you try to read in order to raise your cultural awareness?

Yes

No

If yes, which type of readings do you prefer?

- a) Reading English books
- b) Reading short stories
- c) Reading novels

21. Please add any further suggestions about cultural awareness and its role in promoting your reading skill.....

.....
.....

Appendix C

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is a fundamental part in our study which aims to examine the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill to third year secondary school students, and mainly to know the teachers' and the students' perspectives towards cultural awareness and its effects on students' reading skill performance. You are kindly requested to provide answers, either by putting a [✓] in the appropriate box, or by providing a full statement where necessary.

Thank you in advance for taking part in our study and for the precious time you gave.

Section One: Background Information

1. Specify your gender

Male

, Female

2. How long have you been teaching English at secondary school?

a) From 1 to 5 years

b) From 5 to 10 years

c) From 10 to 15 years

d) More than 15 years

e) No experience (first year)

Section Two: Reading Skill

3. Does reading contribute in the development of other skills?

Yes , No

If yes, Which skill among the four skill will develop most?

mostly speaking and listening skills.....

4. What is the major purpose behind teaching reading?

- a) Developing language proficiency
- b) Allowing learners to develop their own vocabulary
- c) Enhancing their background knowledge
- d) Others */*.....

5. Do you encourage and motivate your students to read outside the classroom?

Yes , No

Justify

*Yes. I do, in order to enhance their vocabulary.....
(knowledge). As a result, the other skills will be developed.*

6. Which type of reading do you think is the most beneficial for your students to develop their reading skill?

- a) Extensive reading
- b) Intensive reading
- c) Silent reading
- d) Aloud reading
- e) All

7. What are the main strategies used for developing students' reading skill?

- a) Skimming
- b) Scanning
- c) Predicting
- d) Inferring
- d) Using imagery
- f) Others...../.....

8. Among the following, on which activities do you focus more when teaching reading?

- a) Pre-reading activities
- b) While-reading activities
- c) Post-reading activities

Explain and

exemplify.. To attract s.s.' attention so get them involved in the topic, so post-reading acts will be easily tackled.

9. What types of reading comprehension activities do you use in reading sessions?

- a) Multiple choice questions
- b) Short answer questions
- c) Sentence completion question
- d) True/ false statements
- e) Yes/ No questions
- f) WH questions
- g) Open ended questions
- h) Matching
- e) Others ... Inferred Qs (Indirect questions).....

Section Three: Cultural Awareness

10. What do you think of the saying: "learning a foreign language is also learning a foreign culture"?

yes, the saying is true. Foreign languages are the unique key that open the doors to the whole world at its different cultures.

11. In your opinions, what the term culture indicates?

The lifestyle of a given social group (values, customs, traditions) and their social rules that need to be followed in order to behave appropriately in their culture.

12. How do you consider the integration of the target culture in the process of EFL teaching and learning?

- a) Very important , b) Important , c) Neutral

13. According to you, why is it important to teach culture in an EFL classroom?

- a) To reduce the amount of cultural misunderstanding
b) To give students background knowledge about different cultures
c) To develop the students' tolerance to other cultures
d) To give students an understanding about their own cultural identity

14. What are the main cultural aspects that may affect the foreign language learning?

- a) Beliefs , b) Values , c) Attitudes
d) Taboos , e) behaviours and social norms

15. According to you, what are the roles of teachers when dealing with culture inside the classroom?

- b) Raising students' intellectual objectivity towards the culture to be dealt with
- c) Fostering students' understanding of that culture from a neutral perspective
- d) Giving them insights and backgrounds about that culture before dealing with it
- e) Showing them the differences and the similarities between their own culture and the culture to be dealt with
- f) Convincing them that cultures are all equal and that diversity is something good
- g) Others

16. Do you think that culture teaching helps in raising students' cultural awareness?

Yes , No

If yes, how?

.....It shows them how to react with different.....
.....cultures.....

Section Four: The Role of Cultural Awareness in Teaching Reading

17. Do you think that culture is an important component to be emphasized when teaching the reading skill?

Yes , No

Why? *Because their ss's cultural knowledge surely affects their reading skill.*

18. Do you think that being aware of the target language culture enriches students' knowledge that can be used afterwards in reading?

Yes , No , Neutral

19. Do you think that your cultural awareness affects your students' reading skill performance?

Yes , No

If yes, in what way?

Yes, ... since we are tackling different cultures, students are young if they have ~~any~~ good cultural awareness, they will perform as good as possible.

20. In reading sessions, do you provide your students with cultural backgrounds about the reading texts?

Yes , No

Why?

...to reduce the amount of difficulties they face when dealing with any cultural content.

21. What are the difficulties you encounter when teaching reading texts with different cultures?

h) Students' disability to interpret the meaning of some expressions

- i) Students' difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions
- j) Students inability of grasping the overall meaning or ideas of a given piece of writing
- k) Others.....

22. Please don't hesitate to add any further suggestions about cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill

• It is totally important.....
• Cultural awareness is so important and necessary in teaching the reading skill, that teachers must be aware of the topics they deal with (topics should be well-chosen) -

Appendix D

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

We would be deeply grateful if you fill in the following questionnaire for a research that aims to examine the role of cultural awareness in teaching the reading skill and how it helps in promoting the reading skill performance. Your answers will be of much help in the completion of our study. Please tick [✓] the right answer(s) or write full statement(s) whenever necessary.

Thank you in advance for your time, efforts and collaboration.

Section One: Background Information

1. Specify your gender

a) Male

, b) Female

2. Do you have any exposure to the English language elsewhere?

Yes

, No

3. How do you evaluate your level in English?

a) Good

, b) Average

, c) Weak

4. Which of the following skills is the most difficult when learning a foreign language?

a) Reading

, b) Writing

, c) Listening

, d) Speaking

Section Two: Reading Skill

5. Do you think that the reading skill is important and helpful in developing other skills?

Yes , No

Justify

Reading is one of the most important activities that a person practices to learn and acquire knowledge, and through this knowledge the reader can continuously develop his linguistic skills.

6. Do your teachers encourage you to read outside the classroom?

Yes , No

7. Which of the following reading activities do your teachers use in their reading sessions?

- a) Multiple choice questions , b) Short answer questions
c) Sentence completion question , d) True/ false statements
e) Yes/ No questions , f) WH questions
g) Open ended questions , h) Matching
e) Others *writing short essays*

8. Which of the following strategies do you prefer when reading?

- a) Skimming , b) Scanning , c) Predicting
d) inferring , e) Using imagery , d) All of them

9. Which difficulties do you encounter when reading?

- a) Difficulty in understanding new vocabulary items
- b) Difficulty in pronouncing new n words
- c) Difficulty in understanding idiomatic expressions
- d) Difficulty in understanding new cultural concepts

Section Three: Cultural Awareness

10. Do you think that culture is an important factor in fostering foreign language learning?

Yes , No

11. Does your teacher attract your attention to others' culture during reading sessions?

Yes , No

12. How does culture learning affect your foreign language learning?

a) Positively , b) Negatively

Why

Because it helps me learn about the customs and values that belong to a different society. It encourages me to think from a new perspective and increase my cultural sensitivity.

13. Does learning about the foreign culture raise your cultural awareness about the foreign language and about your own language and culture?

Yes , No

14. Do your teachers try to raise your cultural awareness about the target language?

Yes , No

15. From your own perspective, what do you expect from your teachers for raising your cultural awareness about the target language?

- a) Teaching the foreign language in relation to the foreign culture
- b) Discussing the similarities and the differences between the foreign culture and the native culture
- c) Convincing students that all cultures are equal and diversity is something good not bad

16. Do you think that your teachers' cultural awareness affects your cultural awareness?

Yes , No

Justify

Because a teacher who's knowledgeable other cultures tends to share and explain to students better and introduce vocabulary to them field by field rather than giving them a useless vocab list to somehow memorize it

Section Four: The Influence of Cultural Awareness on the Reading Skill

17. Do you face difficulties when reading texts presenting a foreign culture?

Yes , No

18. Does the target culture awareness help you to overcome those difficulties?

Yes

, No

Justify

Because giving any kind of information a cultural background makes it relating to the mind and higher up the chances of retaining that info.

19. How does cultural awareness contribute in promoting your reading skill performance?

- a) It helps in understanding new vocabulary
- b) It helps in pronouncing new words
- c) It helps in understanding new cultural concepts and idiomatic expressions
- d) It helps in understanding the deep meaning of the text

20. Do you try to read in order to raise your cultural awareness?

Yes

, No

If yes, which type of readings do you prefer?

- a) Reading English books
- b) Reading short stories
- c) Reading novels

21. Please add any further suggestions about cultural awareness and its role in

promoting your reading skill. We must pay attention to cultural awareness because it helps us to progress and improve our language "English", so we can use it effectively.

Good luck 😊

ملخص

تعد الدراسة الحالية بحثا في فحص دور الوعي الثقافي في تعليم مهارة القراءة لطلاب السنة الثالثة في المرحلة الثانوية, وتهدف بشكل رئيسي الى تحديد وجهات نظر المعلمين و الطلاب تجاهه و مساهمته في تعزيز اداء مهارة القراءة. لتحقيق هدف هذه الدراسة تم استخدام طريقة مختلطة لجمع البيانات. تم تصميم استبيانين, احدهما تم توزيعه على عينة مكونة من 15 معلما في المرحلة الثانوية و الاخر تم توجيهه الى عينة مكونة من 100 طالب في المرحلة الثانوية. كشفت النتائج النهائية ان كل من المعلمين و الطلاب يتشاركون وجهات نظر ايجابية تجاه الوعي الثقافي و مساهمته القيمة في تعزيز تعلم اللغة الاجنبية و بشكل رئيسي في تعزيز اداء مهارة القراءة لدى الطلاب. كما اظهرت ردود المعلمين و الطلاب ان امتلاك خلفيات ثقافية قبل التعامل مع جوانب ثقافية مختلفة خلال قراءات متنوعة يساعد في تعزيز الوعي الثقافي لدى الطلاب مما يساعد بدوره في تقليل نقص الطلاب في المهارة.

كلمات مفتاحية: الوعي الثقافي, الخلفيات الثقافية, تعلم اللغات الاجنبية, مهارة القراءة, طلاب الصف الثالث

ثانوي.

Résumé

La présente étude est une recherche sur l'examen du rôle de la conscience culturelle dans l'enseignement de la lecture aux élèves de troisième année du secondaire, visant principalement à identifier les perspectives des enseignants et des élèves en matière de lecture. Il et sa contribution à la promotion de la performance des compétences en lecture. Pour atteindre l'objectif de cette étude et répondre à ses principales questions, une méthode mixte a été utilisée. Pour la collecte des données, deux questionnaires ont été conçus, l'un d'eux a été distribué à un échantillon de 15 enseignants du secondaire et l'autre à un échantillon de 100 élèves du secondaire. Les résultats finaux ont révélé que les enseignants et les étudiants partagent des perspectives positives à l'égard de la sensibilisation culturelle et de sa contribution précieuse à la promotion de l'apprentissage des langues étrangères, principalement en ce qui concerne l'amélioration des performances en lecture des élèves. Les réponses des enseignants et des étudiants ont également montré qu'avoir des connaissances culturelles avant de traiter différents aspects culturels à travers différentes lectures contribueraient à améliorer la conscience culturelle des étudiants, ce qui aiderait à réduire leurs lacunes dans cette compétence.

Mots Clés: Sensibilisation Culturelle, Origines Culturelle, Apprentissage de Langue étrangère, Compétence en Lecture, élève de Troisième années de Secondaire.