
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Target Language Culture Teaching and Learning in Moroccan Universities: Approaches and Challenges

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| ABSTRACT

The present study has two main purposes. The first purpose is to investigate students' and teachers' attitudes towards target language culture learning and teaching. The second purpose is to identify the challenges that may hinder the effective learning and teaching of the target language culture course. It was conducted with 200 students and 6 teachers from two Moroccan universities (Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah and Mohammed First Universities). To collect data, we made use of two data collection methods, namely the questionnaire and the interview. The major results of the study showed that both students and teachers had positive attitudes towards the target language culture course (U.S & British Culture course). The results also showed that the majority of students are not satisfied with both the content and the methodology used in the course. Based on the results, it was clear that the lack of technology and the lack of including some cultural aspects that students perceive to be important to know are among the most serious challenges that hamper achieving the effective learning outcomes of British and U.S Culture courses at the level of the university. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the improvement of the teaching practices related to target language culture teaching and learning in Moroccan universities.

| KEYWORDS

Target language culture; students' attitudes; English in higher education; Learning and Teaching English.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

It's generally held that mastering a language is not only about using grammatically correct words and forms but rather being competent in knowing when to use them and under which circumstances. Mastering a language goes beyond the mastery of syntax and lexicon. According to Hymes (1971), "There are some rules of use without which the rules of grammar will be useless" (p.14). Without the incorporation of culture, foreign language teaching is inaccurate and ineffective; as Polizer (1959) put it, "If teachers teach language without teaching the culture in which it operates, they are teaching symbols to which the students attach the wrong meaning" (100-101). For foreign language learners, the learning experience may seem senseless if they know nothing about the people who speak the target language or the country in which the target language is spoken. Acquiring a new language means a lot more than the manipulation of syntax and lexicon. According to Bada (2000:101), "the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers."

Brooks (1986) discussed the role of culture in language teaching; one of his major contributions to the discussion is his definition of the word culture. He differentiated between Culture with a capitalized "C" and culture with a small "c" (deep and formal culture). The first includes "the geography, history, literature, and great achievements of a country and its culture", whereas the latter concerns "facts having to do with custom, manners, and way of life or life-style" (Bueno, 1996, p362). Hence, little "c" encompasses learned beliefs, values, assumptions, etc.

Hence, throughout the history of language teaching and foreign language learning, the importance of culture instruction has been a central topic of investigation for applied linguists and practitioners. Questions such as what culture to teach and whether students should be taught about the history and geography of the target language country in order to become competent users of the target language. Or they should be introduced to daily life instances of the target language culture like physical distance, taboo words to avoid...etc. In order to become effective users of the target language? Who should teach it, how, and when have been leading questions for ongoing research.

The present study is concerned with investigating the teaching of the target language culture in English as a foreign language context. More particularly, the focus will be on what, why, and how culture is being taught in U.S & British Culture courses at the level of EFL Moroccan university context. In other words, the research paper will investigate the purpose "why", the content "what", the methodology "how", and the outcomes of teaching this course.

The present study is divided into four main chapters. Preceded by a general introduction, the first chapter reviews the literature relevant to our scope of the investigation. The second chapter describes the methodology adopted for the investigation of students' and teachers' perceptions of the target language culture course (U.S & British Culture and Civilization). The third chapter deals with the findings sorted out from the investigation. The fourth chapter summarizes the main findings and provides some pedagogical implications and guidelines for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Culture Instruction in Foreign Language Context

2.1.1 Target Culture Instruction in EFL Classroom

The issue of target culture instruction has been a central topic of research among researchers in the field of foreign language learning and teaching for a long time. The issue has evoked a significant amount of research, and many scholars have contributed to the development of awareness as well as an understanding of the importance of target culture instruction in a foreign language learning context. In this regard, Myles and Mitchell (2004) point out that "language and culture are not separate, but are acquired together, with each providing support for the development of the other" (p.235). Allwright and Bailey (1991) stated that learning a language involves the learning of a new culture. Similarly, Swiderski (1993) argues that whatever presence culture may have in the language classroom, those who enter the classroom expect culture. This idea is ideally substantiated by (Byram,1984), who asserted that teachers of language are also teachers of culture. This argument has been substantiated, though differently, by Buttjst (1982), who emphasized the role of culture instruction in foreign language learning and teaching context by stating that culture learning is actually a key factor in being able to use and master a foreign linguistic system.

However, since the concept of culture is defined differently, and since culture encompasses many aspects, traits and elements, the question of what type of culture to introduce in a foreign language context has been for a long time the guiding and the leading issue of debate and research. In this regard, Chastain (1976) argues that culture as the way people live, commonly introduced as "deep culture", is the most commonly and most highly recommended as the basis for selecting cultural content for second-language classes (p.388). This definition encompasses the type of information that would seem to be of the most interest and of most importance to the typical student enrolled in a second-language class. Evidently, the ultimate goal of culture inclusion in the language teaching context is to make the pupils' interested and aware of the way people live and behave in the target culture. Teachers of English as a foreign language should be made aware that culture goes beyond the "formal culture" or elements of culture with a big "C".

Brooks (2004), one of the leading figures in the field of target culture instruction, has detailed and highlighted the difference and the intersection between big "C" and little "c", which he refers to as the "invisible" and "visible" aspects of culture.

	Big "C" culture Classic or grand themes	Little "c" culture Minor or common themes
Invisible Culture "Bottom of the Iceberg"	Examples: Core values, attitudes or beliefs, society's norms, legal foundations, assumptions, history, cognitive processes	Examples: Popular issues, opinions, viewpoints, preferences or tastes, certain knowledge (trivia, facts)
Visible Culture "tip of the iceberg"	Examples: Architecture, geography, classic literature, presidents or political figures, classical music	Examples: Gestures, body posture, use of space, clothing style, food, hobbies, music, art work

Table 1: Brooks detailed model of iceberg theory

As shown in the table above, Brooks uses other helping expressions such as “bottom of the iceberg, the invisible culture” and “tip of the iceberg, the visible culture” to distinguish between deep and formal culture or culture with a big “C”. It is clearly stated here that there are certain aspects of culture that are visible and easy to get familiar with, while the most important aspects represent the bottom of the iceberg. They are invisible and not easily accessible, particularly for students from other cultures. On the surface, there are cultural elements such as clothing styles, music and lifestyle, while below the surface, there are other elements that are usually taken for granted, such as issues and norms of correct behavior, social expectations, modesty, taboos topics, do’s and don’ts, body language, personal space, attitudes towards pets, animals, and other deeply rooted issues. It’s worth mentioning that the deeper you go towards the bottom of the iceberg, the more significant the cultural aspects become. Hence, it’s of paramount importance that people should consider both edges of the iceberg. Brooks (ibid) gives two main reasons for this: “The bottom of the iceberg is the foundation for what you see at the top. If you understand the underlying causes of why people behave the way they do, you are a little more likely to be able to anticipate how they may act or react in a variety of situations” (p.73). Evidently, the citation illustrates clearly the importance of being aware of those invisible parts of culture, the bottom of the iceberg. It’s only through such awareness that people can make sense of the social patterns of behavior that would make people easily and effectively socialize within a particular foreign culture. Similarly, Weaver (1993) asserted that:

Many, if not most, people think of culture as what is often called “high culture”- art, literature, music and the like. This culture is set in the framework of history and of social, political, and economic structures.... Actually, the most important part of culture for the sojourner is which is internal and hidden...but which governs the behavior they encounter. This dimension of culture can be seen as an iceberg with the tip sticking above the water level of conscious awareness. By far most significant part, however, is unconscious or below the water level of awareness and includes values and thought patterns (p.157).

All in all, the concept of the iceberg is immensely cited in literature, and the terms are quite common among cross-culturalists. The analogy of the iceberg is found very useful in describing the deep and formal elements of culture. However, many scholars and researchers have used other terms when it comes to describing cultural items. According to Lafayette (1996), some researchers distinguish between culture as practice and culture as product. Cultural practices and products are important in learning a foreign language. Cultural practices refer to patterns of behaviour or “what to do, where and when.” Cultural products may be tangible (sculpture) or intangible (system of education). Cultural practices reflect what theories often label as little “c” and culture and cultural products as big “C” (Brooks, 1968).

2.1.2 Aims of Culture Teaching In EFL Context

The goals of culture teaching and learning have gone through many ups and downs since the earlier works on the topic during the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century. Traditionally, the ultimate goal of culture learning was “the memorization of culture facts” (Paige et al. (1996), such as geography, history, major works of art, clothing styles...etc. This traditional goal has shifted to higher order learning outcomes, including: “the acquisition of interactional competence” (p. 4). According to Piege (1997), such learning would include:

- Learning about the self as a cultural being,
- Learning about the culture and its impact on human communication, behavior, and identity,
- Culture-general learning, i.e., learning about universal, cross-cultural phenomena such as cultural adjustment,
- Culture-specific learning, i.e., learning about a particular culture, including its language.
- Learning how to learn, i.e., becoming an effective language and culture learner.

Similarly, Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) have provided ‘seven goals for cultural instruction’. They have argued that culture instruction is meant to meet the following goals: to help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors. First, to help students develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave. Second, help students become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture. Third, help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language. Fourth, help students develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture in terms of supporting evidence. Fifth, stimulate students’ intellectual curiosity about the target culture and encourage empathy towards its people. Finally, cultural instruction helps students develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture (p.7-8).

As stated above, teaching the target culture has many benefits in a foreign language classroom. Not only does it introduce students to different elements of the target culture and familiarize them with the social patterns of the target language, but it also stimulates students’ intellectual curiosity about the learning of the target culture and its language. The inclusion of the target culture in a

foreign language context has been proven to foster the learners' interest in learning the target language and its culture. Culturally-based courses and activities are effective ways to stimulate students' curiosity towards learning about the target language community. More importantly, target culture instruction not only raises students' interest in and curiosity about the target language but also boosts their motivation. According to Chastain (1971), in addition to providing access to the cultural aspect of language, learning culture would help learners relate the abstract sounds and forms of a language to real people and places. Hence, culture courses play a crucial role in a foreign language class. On the one hand, it does help students develop intercultural communication by providing them with learning situations that invite them to observe, compare and reflect on the cultural similarities and differences. On the other hand, culture class has been proven to raise students' motivation to learn the target language.

2.2 Approaches to Target Language Culture Instruction

The most important decision that a teacher may make on their teaching practices is adopting the most suitable for teaching the course content. Hence, adopting the appropriate approach to teaching culture in EFL classrooms must be a reading-based decision by the teacher because all that comes at a later stage will be just an outcome of the approach that a teacher has opted for. At the very outset, an approach is, according to the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2002), "the theory, philosophy and principles underlying a particular set of teaching practices."

Byram and Fleming (1998) highlighted four different approaches to target language instruction teaching: the first is the foreign cultural approach, which has been losing ground since the 1980s; the second is the intercultural approach, which has replaced the foreign-cultural approach, and is the dominant one today; the third approach is the multicultural approach, which has made its first emergence in the 1980s and still not that popular; the fourth one is the transcultural approach, which is the more recent one as a result of internationalism.

The foreign-cultural, also called the "mono-cultural approach", is based on one culture; it focuses on the culture of the country or the countries where the language is spoken. Within this approach, the focus is placed only on the target culture. Students' own culture is being overlooked and marginalized; courses such as British Life and Society or American Life and Institutions can be the best examples of this approach. However, the approach is now losing currency as it doesn't consider students' own culture, and its primary objective is to raise students' awareness of the target culture.

Unlike the mono-cultural approach, which doesn't seek to project the common structures of the different cultures, the intercultural approach is based on the premise that cultures are structurally related and intersected. Besides introducing students to the different aspects of the target culture, the intercultural approach incorporates the teaching of students' own culture. It offers the students opportunities to reflect on the differences and similarities between their own culture and the target language culture. In other terms, it is similar to the comparative approach as their advocators strongly believe that the comparative study of both cultures is the most effective way to understand the patterns of the target language culture.

Buttjes and Byram (1991) argue that instead of providing learners with 'a one-way flow of culture information, they should be encouraged to reflect on their own and foreign culture' (p.13). In addition, comparison gives learners a new perspective of their own language and culture as well as questioning their "taken for granted nature". (p. 6).

Similarly, the multicultural approach puts emphasis on the idea that several cultures exist within one culture. It focuses on the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the target country as well as on the learners' own cultures. Similar to the intercultural approach, comparison is needed, and students are expected to develop a reflective competence to the cultures of their own country. The approach seeks to inform students that cultures are not monolithic. As a result, students are expected to develop an anti-racist attitude towards others' different cultures.

Differently, the transcultural approach is based on the belief that today's cultures are intersected and interwoven due to different reasons, among which are tourism, migration, world-wide communication systems, economic interdependence and globalization. This idea can be manifested by the fact that many people speak foreign languages as lingua franca. The ultimate goal of the approach is to teach the culture to the learners in the pursuit of developing an international communication competence. Foreign languages are not being viewed as linked to a particular culture.

2.3 Challenges of Teaching Culture

It goes without saying that teaching culture is not an easy task. Culture is different, variability, and always a potential source of conflict when one culture enters into contact with another (Kramsch, 1993). In spite of the necessity and the importance of the implementation of the target culture in EFL classrooms, culture instruction is still being marginalized and limited. This can be justified differently by practitioners; different reasons hamper the implementation of culture instruction in the classroom, among which we mention lack of time, lack of trained teachers, and lack of appropriate instructional materials.

Omaggio (2001) has tried to summarize the main challenging factors that hinder culture instruction. First, he argues that culture is complex and elusive and is difficult to include in linear instructional formats. Second, culture requires time that many teachers feel they do not have. Furthermore, culture often requires both teacher and learner to move beyond their level of comfort when confronted with deeper, sometimes controversial issues. Equally significant, the limited incorporation of culture is, according to Stern (1992), due to three major reasons. First, the vastness of culture concepts. Second, the problem of goal determination and lack of accessibility information. Third, questions of syllabus design and finding a place to culture in a predominantly language-oriented curriculum (p.207). Given this, the vastness of the concept of culture makes it difficult for teachers to decide upon which aspects of the target culture to include. Also, the nature of the curriculum is generally language teaching- based. Many teachers argue that the teaching of culture is an optional issue; they believe that students are urgently in need of mastering the four skills: reading and writing, speaking and listening. Thus, the teaching of culture comes at a later stage and shouldn't be at the expense of basic language skills.

Moreover, lack of training is another major factor that hampers the teaching of the target culture in EFL classrooms. For teachers, the task of culture teaching is by no means an easy task. It is, rather, challenging for teachers, and it requires risk taking from both learners and teachers. Instructors feel that they are getting out of their zone of comfort. To substantiate this, Crawford and Lange (1984) argue that teachers may not be adequately trained to teach culture as a major component of the teaching of the target language. Hence, teachers don't have adequate strategies for integrating culture study with language or for creating a viable framework for organizing instruction around cultural themes.

All in all, the teaching of culture is by no means an easy task. It urges EFL teachers to take risks and get out of their zone of comfort. This is due to major factors such as lack of training, the vastness of the culture concept, language-oriented syllabus, and time constraints.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research objectives

The present study has two main objectives. First, it aims at investigating the perceptions of teachers and students of target language culture teaching learning. Second, it aims to explore the issues that may affect the effective incorporation of target culture in EFL classrooms.

3.2 Setting and Participants

In this study, the population sample chosen is Moroccan students of English at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah and Mohamed First University. This population was chosen since it represents the category that studies English majors and that they have had culture courses at the level of university.

Random sampling is the technique used to choose a representative sample of those students. This technique of sampling was chosen because it is more objective and it gives everyone a chance to participate in the study.

The total number of students is two hundred students: 100 students from Mohamed First University in Oujda and the other 100 students from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdelah University Fez. The study includes six university professors from both universities.

3.3 Research approach

Both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches will be used in this study. The quantitative approach will be helpful in determining the number of students and teachers who hold positive/negative attitudes towards the target language culture class., in measuring the extent to which they think culture course is important/unimportant, and in finding out the different factors behind and impacts of their attitudes. On the other hand, the qualitative approach will be useful in eliciting more in-depth explanations about why some students/teachers think that teaching target language culture is important/unimportant, challenging how this affects the methodology and content of the course. Mixing both approaches will increase the validity and reliability of the data and, thus, the quality of the findings.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures:

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The first data collection procedure to be used in this study is the questionnaire. It is a quantitative data collection instrument used to measure the quantity, amount and frequency of something. One of the strengths of using a questionnaire in this study is to elicit quantitative data related to students' and teachers' attitudes regarding the target language culture course., and the reasons behind and impacts of their attitudes

3.4.2 Interview Guide

Since one of the weaknesses of the questionnaire is its limitation with respect to eliciting in depth answers from the respondents, interviews will also be used to collect data. This qualitative data collection procedure allows respondents the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject, and it allows the researcher to elicit in-depth information about the topic.

The results of the students' questionnaire are presented quantitatively, while the results of the teachers' interviews are presented qualitatively. The results obtained from the interview were analyzed qualitatively through content analysis.

4. Results

The present section attempts to present, analyze and discuss the quantitative and qualitative data collected about the attitudes of students towards U.S & British Culture courses. The results of the study yielded that the majority of students hold positive attitudes towards U.S and British culture courses. The figures below illustrate students' attitudes towards the course:

4.1 Students' and teachers' attitudes towards U.S and British Culture course

Figure 1: *The importance of target language culture course, students of Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Fes*

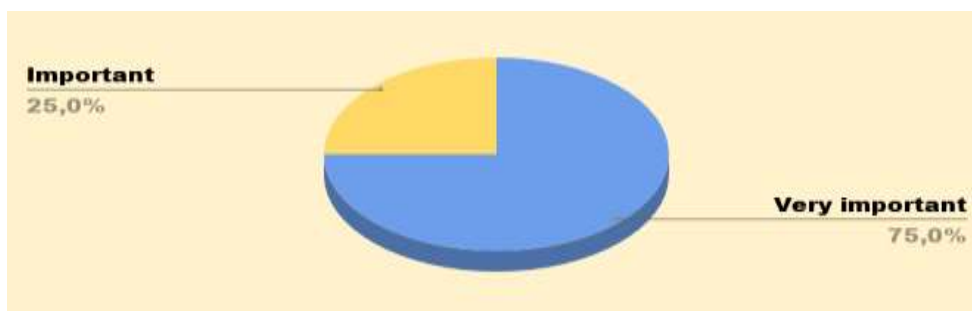
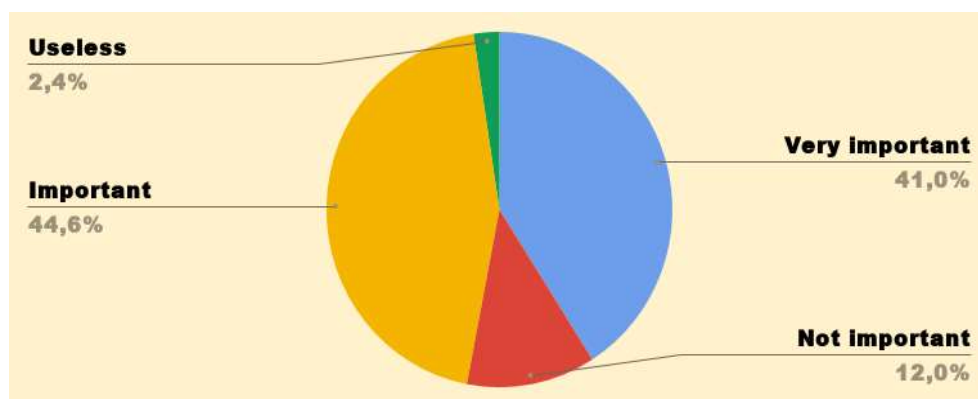


Figure 2: *The importance of target language culture course, students of Mohammed First University, Oujda*



A close analysis of the above-figures demonstrates that all the students, 100% of the respondents, from Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah asserted that target language culture course is either important or very important, while the vast majority of Mohammed First University students, 85 % of the respondents, perceive the target language culture course to be either very important or important. When asked about the importance of target culture learning for EFL students, all the teachers stated it's very important. One interviewee stated that "target culture course is of important for our students, our students are aware of its usefulness in avoiding cultural shock, misunderstanding, stereotypes and potential communication breakdown while interacting with members of the target community". This view has been shared, though differently, by Ouakrime (1992), who argued that the aim of target culture teaching, among others, is 'acquiring knowledge and understanding of the target culture with the ultimate purpose of developing a tolerant attitude towards its community.'

4.1.1 Target language culture as a way to motivate students

The findings of the study have also yielded that target language courses are perceived to be a motivating way to learn English by students. The findings are illustrated in the figures below:

Figure 3: target language culture as a way to motivate students to learn English

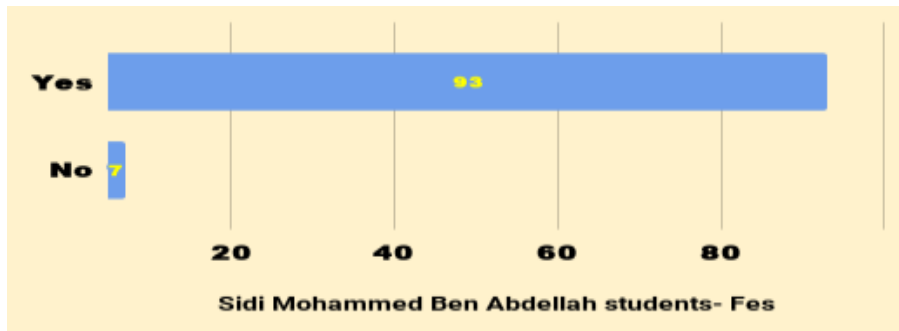
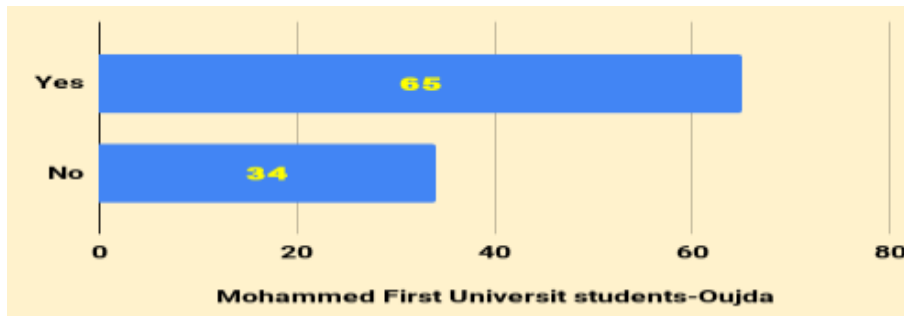


Figure 4: target language culture as a way to motivate students to learn English



The figures above demonstrate that English students perceive the target language courses to be a motivating factor to learn English. Ninety three (93) out of 100 students of University Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah asserted that the target language culture course increases their motivation to learn English, while only sixty five (65) out of 100 students from Mohammed First University agreed with the statement, while the rest have denied the statement. However, this role of target language culture as a way to motivate students to learn the target language has been given substantial space in literature. According to Chastain (1971), in addition to providing access to the cultural aspect of language, learning culture would help learners relate the abstract sounds and forms of a language to real people and places.

These findings were also supported qualitatively; one teacher points out that ‘the course can motivate students if taught effectively, students become more curious to know about the native people, their lives, their culture and their language...’

4.2 The extent to which target language culture teaching and learning is challenging.

4.2.1 Students’ Questionnaires

When asked to give their views about the extent to which the target language culture course is challenging, the majority of the respondents asserted that it’s very challenging. This is clearly demonstrated in the figures below:

Figure 5: the extent to which target language culture learning is challenging, Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University students, Fes

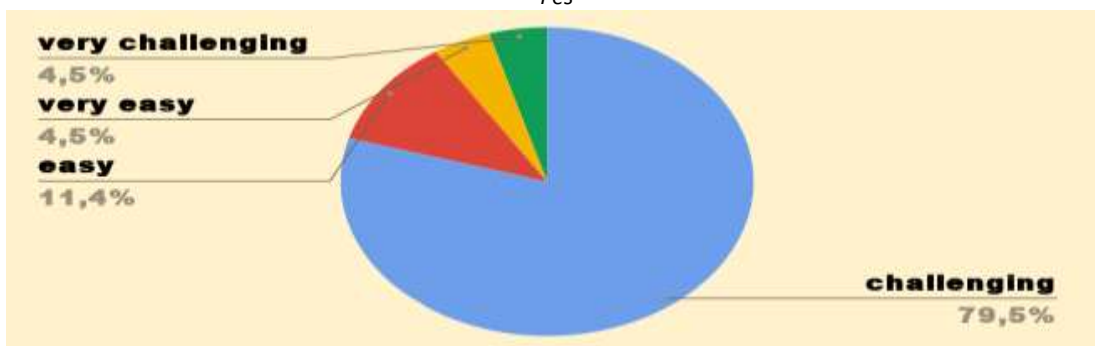
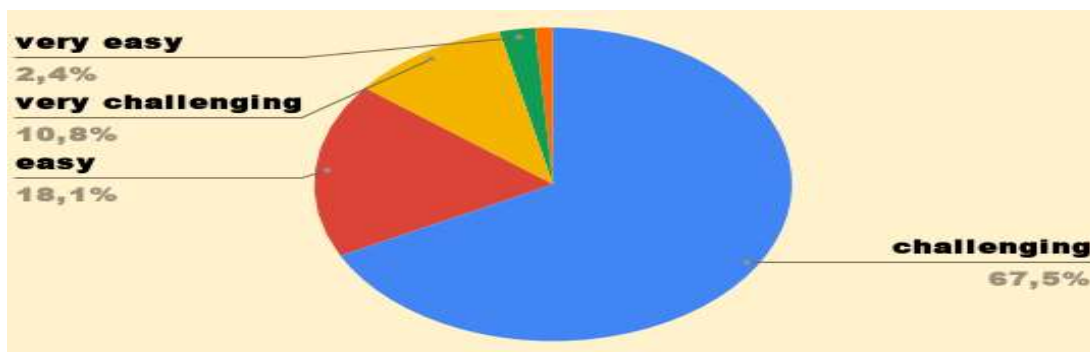


Figure 6: the extent to which target language culture learning is challenging, Mohammed First University students, Fes



The above figures demonstrate the percentage of students who perceive the target language course to be challenging. Eighty-five per cent (85%) of Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah perceive the course to be challenging or very challenging, while seventy-seven per cent (77%) of the respondents from Mohamed First University perceive the course to be challenging.

4.2.2 Teachers’ interviews

Unsurprisingly, the attitudes of students towards the target language course and its difficult nature have been shared also by the teachers. Five (5) out of six (6) teachers interviewed assume that teaching the target culture course is very challenging. One respondent stated, “When I started teaching the course in 1987, things were much better and easier for us; we used to have one full year for teaching American civilization and culture, and another whole year for teaching British civ...Now, we have to include both courses in one course and within one semester. To be honest with you, I’m not enjoying teaching it anymore because it’s really a hard task; I have talked to the head of the department about not assigning the course for me next year”. Equally significant, another interviewee stated that “in the past, we used to be sent for training to spend some time in the U.S or in Britain, now teachers are not trained for teaching...I think that a teacher who hasn’t lived for a period in those countries will never be able to teach the course”.

Differently, another teacher stated that “students come from high school with no idea about the British or American history, they used to study that before but they stopped...students come with knowledge about China and Russia and other countries that they study in history and Geography classes in high school, but they have no idea about American or British civilization...we need to start from scratch”. Another respondent mentions “I don’t think that systematic training is necessary for teaching culture, what is needed is full awareness of both the culture of the language learner and that of the target language community”. These findings were cited in the review of the literature by different researchers (Omaggio, 2001; Stern, 2001; Crawford and Lange, 1984).

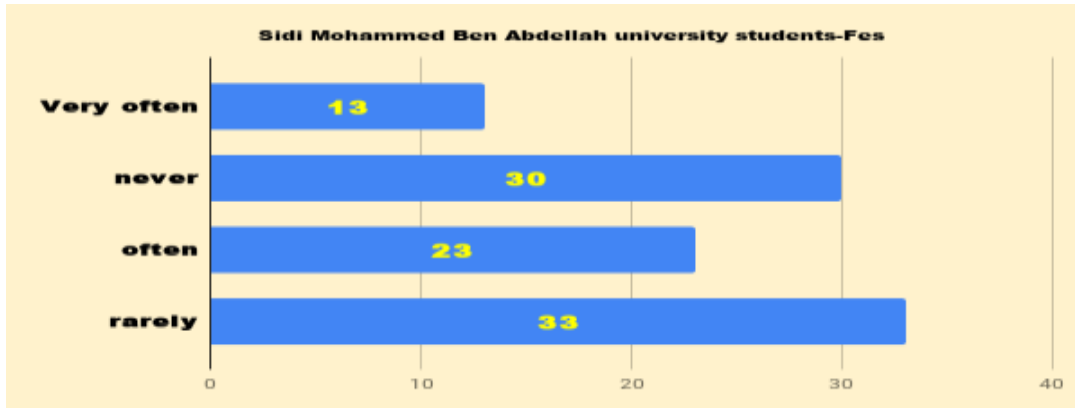
Table 2: Challenges of target language culture learning and teaching

The factors that may hinder effective learning and teaching of target language culture		
Student-related factors	Teacher –related factors	Course-related factors
Students’linguistic competence -students lack of previous knowledge about the course - -Students’social status.	-lack of previous training or in-service training - one-way interaction nature of the course	- vastness of the concept of culture - overloaded content -Time constraint. -Number of students.

The table below gives a summary of students’ and teachers’ views about the possible challenges that hinder the effective learning and teaching of the target language culture.

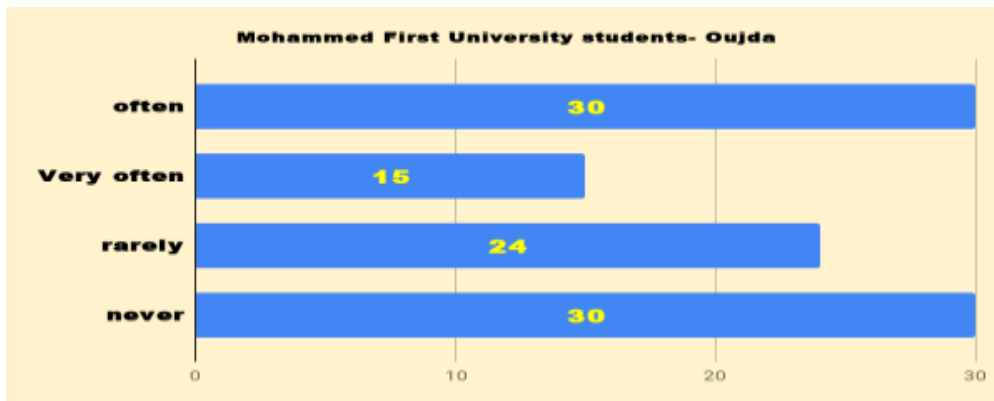
4.3 Using ICT in the teaching and learning of target language culture course

Figure 9: the frequency of ICT use in the teaching and learning of target language culture Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University students, Fes



Based on the questionnaires’ assessment of Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University students, thirteen (13 out of 100) respondents stated that ICT was “very often” used in the classroom. Twenty-three (23) respondents see that it was “often” used. Sixty-three (63) of the respondents see that ICT was “rarely” or “never” used by their teachers in the classroom.

Figure 10: the frequency of ICT use in the teaching and learning of target language culture Mohammed First University, Oujda



Equally, based on the questionnaires’ assessment of Mohammed First University students, fifteen (15 out of 100) of the respondents stated that ICT was “very often” used in the classroom by teachers. Thirty (30) respondents informed that ICT was “often” used in the classroom, while fifty-four (54) of the respondents stated that ICT was either “never” or “rarely” used by the teachers in the classroom.

In spite of its essential role in facilitating and enriching teaching and learning practices, the results clearly show that ICT is not often used in the classroom by target language culture teachers. When asked about the reasons behind the lack of using ICT in the classroom, one of the interviewees stated that “ICT is very helpful for teaching the course, especially in covering some historical events and some geographical information like maps of those countries...but the problem is that we are not trained to use it effectively”. Another reason was provided by another interviewee is the classrooms are not well-equipped with ICT instructional materials, stating that “I have always issues in using ICT in those buildings, there are rooms that have a fixed date projector for instance, but there are rooms that don’t have even the basics”.

4.4 The effectiveness of the teaching methodology used for teaching the course of U.S and British Culture and Civilization

When asked about their satisfaction with the methodology adopted by their teachers for teaching target language culture course, students’ views were different:

Figure 13: students' views of the effectiveness of the methodology adopted by their teachers for teaching the course, Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University students, Fes

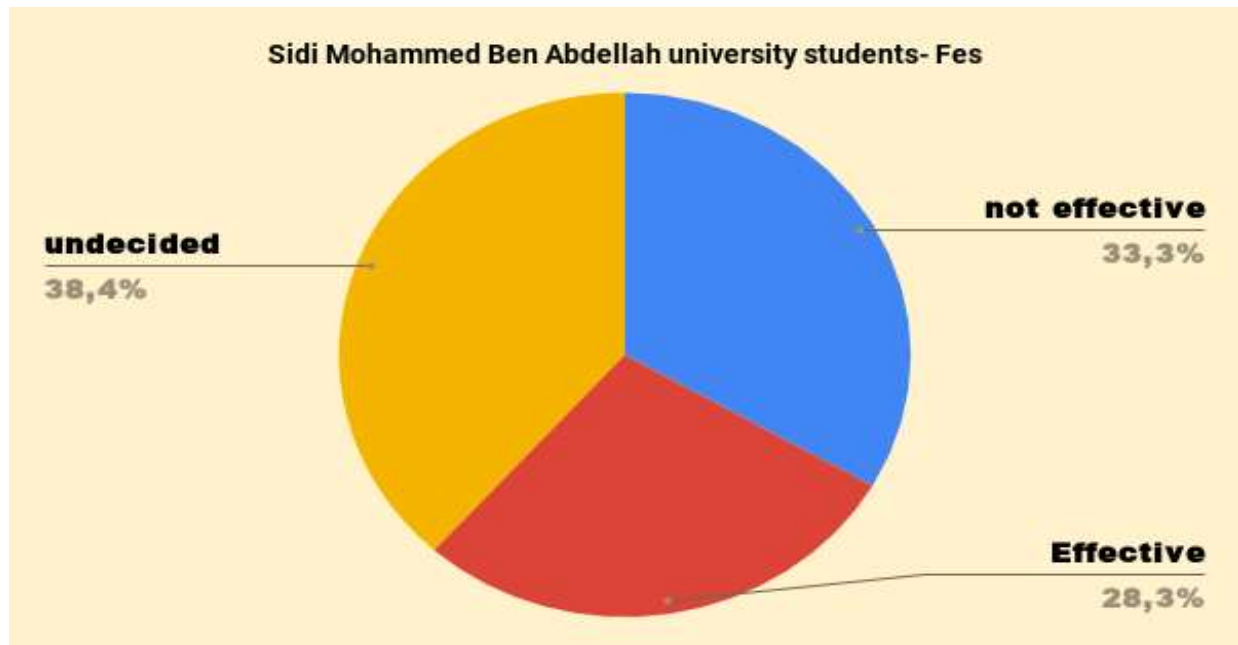
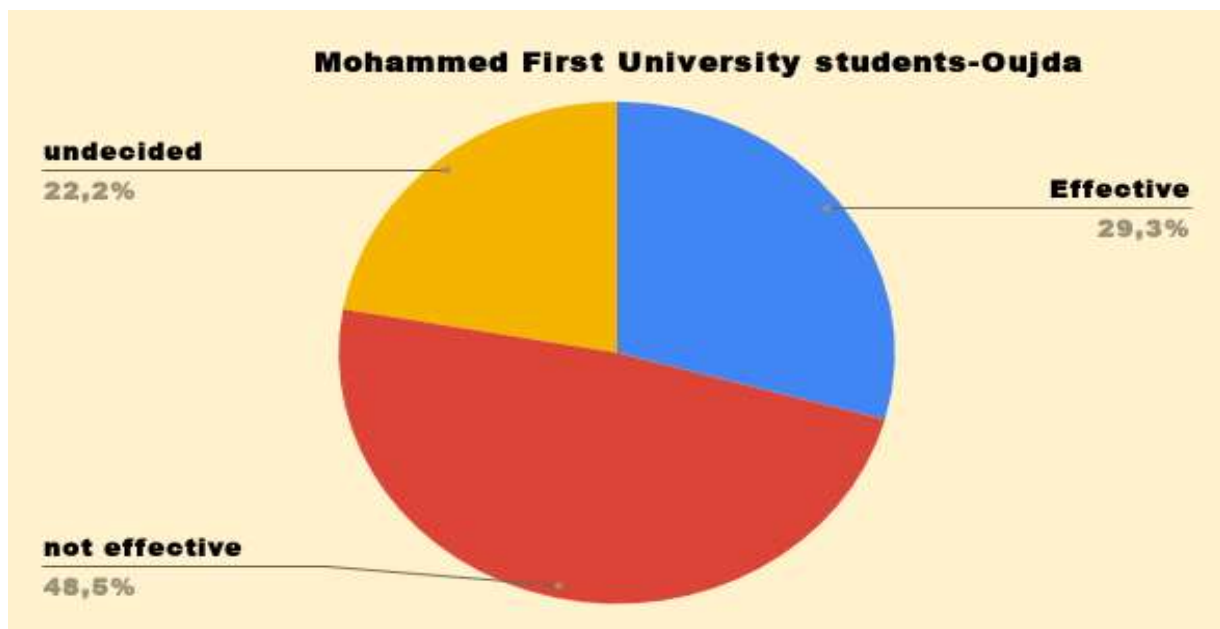


Figure 14: students' views of the effectiveness of the methodology adopted by their teachers for teaching the course, Mohammed First University students, Oujda



Only 28% of the respondents from Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University and 29% from Mohammed First University think that the methodology used by their teacher while teaching the course is effective. The rest of the respondents were either undecided or they think that the methodology wasn't effective. These findings may justify the view held by the majority of students that the course can be more effective if taught by a native (English) teacher.

5. Conclusions

- It is clear that university students from both Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah and Mohammed First universities hold positive attitudes towards target language culture learning. The course is perceived to be not only very important but also they have declared that the target language culture course can be motivating for learning the target language (English).
- This view is also shared by the six teachers from both universities who participated in the study.
- Both students and teachers perceive the learning and teaching of the course to be challenging.
- There are a number of reasons behind the difficulty of teaching and learning the target language culture and a number of obstacles that hinder effective learning and teaching. The low linguistic competence of students, the nature of cultural contents, and the overloaded course are, among other reasons, the most serious obstacles behind that.
- The majority of students are not satisfied with U.S & British culture courses both in terms of the methodology and the content. This is due to the following two reasons:

-The absence use of ICT for teaching cultural content

-Not incorporating the cultural aspects that students perceive the most important to know about the target language culture.

5.1 Implications and recommendations for teachers:

- ICT is an effective teaching and learning tool. Teachers can use it for a number of purposes. For example, fragments of videos capturing different aspects of the target culture have been proven to give students opportunities to develop their language skills as well as their intercultural competence. ICT can be used to motivate students to learn and make the learning experience enjoyable.
- Teachers need not only to be aware of the importance of intercultural competence, but they also should be satisfied and comfortable while taking the course.
- The teaching of U.S and British civilization and culture using ICT can be very challenging for teachers as they lack any training in this technique. Therefore, it is recommended that they attend workshops and training sessions. This will help them save time and cover the most important aspects effectively.
- As many classrooms are not equipped with ICT tools, and they don't have access to the Internet. It is advisable for teachers to provide alternatives. Teachers may provide their students with books and magazines, and they may suggest useful websites that contain authentic cultural content. Encouraging students to search and use their own data can also be a good alternative to the use of technology in the classroom.
- Since the course is taught by lecturing by most teachers, it's strongly recommended that teachers invite students to work on projects and group work so they can deliver presentations on different cultural aspects or even cultural clusters.

As far as students are concerned, students can benefit from target language culture courses in a number of ways. In addition to developing their intercultural competence, students can develop their critical thinking, open-mindedness, and the ability to reflect on the culture of others and their own culture.

5.2 Limitations of the study

This study is not without its limitations. The small size of participants and the very limited number of teachers investigated could affect the degree to which generalizations can be made. It seemed challenging for me to opt for a larger number of participants. The lack of class observation as a data collection instrument to investigate closely the teaching and learning practices underlying target language culture incorporation in the classroom is also another limitation of the study. This is because students don't have U.S and British Culture courses during the second semester where I was supposed to start collecting the data.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

Experimental research can be used to investigate the effects of target language culture courses on students' attitudes towards learning the English language as well as towards students' attitudes toward different people belonging to different cultures. Follow-up studies can be carried out using observational research techniques. Observing what goes on in the classroom while teaching and learning about the target culture will give a detailed account of how students perceive, interact and develop as learners. There is a need for more detailed examinations of Moroccan teachers' and students' attitudes towards the learning outcomes of U.S and British Culture and Civilization courses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Students' questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to elicit information from students of the English department about their perceptions of the target culture and their opinions about the content, methodology and outcomes of culture teaching and learning. You are kindly requested to answer the items included. Your responses are of much significance to the fulfillment of this study. They will be treated in strict confidence and will be used only for the purpose of research.

SECTION I: Demographic information

Gender: Male: Female:

Age:

Level of education:

1st year 2nd year 3rd year

SECTION II:

Please tick as appropriate

1. Have you ever had a culture course (British & U.S culture) at the university?

Yes No

2. Do you think the teaching of culture is important?

- Very important
- Important
- Not important
- Useless

3. Identify how you feel about culture class?

- Interesting
- Irrelevant
- Boring
- Of no concern

4. Do you think learning the target culture is:

- Very easy
- easy
- challenging
- very challenging

5. Does learning about target culture (English & U.S culture) make you more motivated to learn English?

- yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- Motivated
- Very motivated
- Undecided

Section III

6. Do you think target culture can be more effective if taught by?

- Native teacher
- foreign teacher (Moroccan teacher...)
- Undecided

7. Do you think your teacher is knowledgeable enough to teach the target culture?

- Yes
- No

SECTION IV

7. Which of the following aspects you consider to know about the target culture (you can tick more than one option?)

- History
- Geography
- Political system & parties
- food & life style
- holidays & festivals
- Art & literature
- Interpersonal communication & taboo topics
- religion
- others

If you ticked others, Could you specify

8. In your opinion, the best way to develop cultural awareness is through focusing on :

- Similarities between the target culture and Moroccan culture
- Differences between the target culture and Moroccan culture
- Others

9. Do you think the method used by your teacher to teach target culture class is :

- Effective
- not effective
- undecided

10. How often your teacher use ICT (Power point presentations, Videos, films, TV shows...) in target culture class?

- Very often
- often
- rarely
- never

11. If you have anything to add concerning this issue, please write below:

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation