
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigating the Impact of Cultural Awareness on Language Learners' Motivation and Proficiency

Dr. Hilda Jeyakumari Braine

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Language Studies, Arab Open University Bahrain, Bahrain

Corresponding Author: Dr. Hilda Jeyakumari Braine, **E-mail:** hilda.jeyakumari@aou.org.bh

| ABSTRACT

Learning multiple languages is advantageous for individuals engaging with diverse communities across borders. However, language barriers and miscommunication have posed significant challenges, prompting learners to improve their foreign language skills, knowledge, and expertise. A lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity has hindered learners from successfully mastering foreign languages. The inability of the UK and European populations to promote diversity and inclusion, coupled with disrespectful attitudes towards other cultures, contributes to their struggles in language acquisition. To address these issues, active engagement in cultural activities can boost motivation and proficiency in language learning. Exploring Hofstede's six dimensions of cultural competency reveals that American learners exhibit lower anxiety levels than Korean learners in language training classrooms due to high individualism. Conversely, the high power distance in China, compared to Mongolia and Hungary, results in Chinese students being less interactive and assertive in classrooms. Limited interaction negatively impacts students' psychological and behavioral development, highlighting the importance of fostering intercultural communication skills. Thus, cultural factors have been elaborated with the implementations of Lewis's cultural competency model, which has elaborated that nations worldwide can be segregated into three categories based on their cultural beliefs such as linear-active, multi-active, and reactive. Among these three categories, reactive has been identified as the most flexible, people-oriented, and culturally aware nation, wherein most Asian countries like India, Malaysia, Korea, and Thailand belong. It has been identified that due to a lack of cultural awareness, the students have been confronting significant issues in confidently learning new languages with the inability to speak appropriate terms and pronounce them properly. Participation in cultural activities and training on intercultural communication might be helpful in mitigating cross-cultural issues in new language learning.

| KEYWORDS

Cultural Awareness, Learner Motivation, Learner Proficiency, Cross-cultural Communication, Language Barriers

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 12 March 2024

PUBLISHED: 03 April 2024

DOI: 10.32996/jgcs.2024.4.1.4

1. Introduction

Understanding different cultural values and beliefs, as well as respecting others' cultures' norms, is known as cultural awareness. It involves the awareness of individuals' own cultural biases and a flexible mindset to accept the differences between their own and others' cultural values, beliefs, and customs (Thapa, 2020). A sensible attitude development and recognition of the impact of cultural awareness on communication, behaviour, and decision-making can enhance people's ability to perform in a significant manner in a cross-cultural environment. Thus, cultural awareness has been defined as the sense of being aware, conscious, and observant regarding the similarities and differences between different cultural groups. On the other hand, the arts, literature, and lifestyles of different communities and cultural groups are divergent from each other.

Therefore, understanding the cultural backgrounds along with the associated elements of cultural groups can help learners live the language while learning and assist them in increasing their learning proficiency. However, multiple challenges are associated

with learning new languages, such as a lack of cultural awareness and interactions with particular communities or cultural groups due to language barriers (Tenzer *et al.*, 2021). This study is going to discuss the challenges that learners confront in learning new languages with a lack of cultural awareness and the way cultural awareness impacts the learners' motivation and proficiency.

1.1 Background

In the era of globalisation, individuals are required to develop skills and expertise in multiple languages to increase their employability and meet social expectations. Individuals can get cognitive benefits such as improving skills of memorisation, problem-solving, and speech perception by learning different languages. In this context, the improvement of communication skills with different languages can help individuals resolve the issues of cultural conflicts and miscommunication.

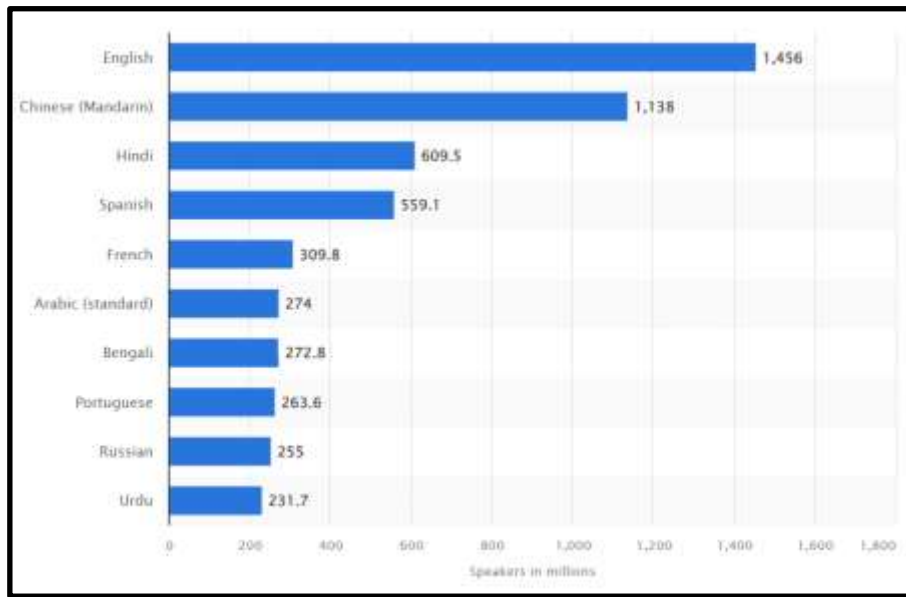


Figure 1: Most Spoken Languages Worldwide
(Source: statista.com, 2023)

In 2023, English has been recognised as the most spoken language worldwide as approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide speak English either natively or as a second language (statista.com, 2023). Apart from the English language, people are also interested in Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, French, and Arabic. The trend of learning foreign languages is influenced by two factors: a passion for learning new languages and securing a desired employee position for future career development.

English has been considered the most popular and essential language to learn among individuals, which can be demonstrated through the internet search language of different nations. Approximately 63.7% of websites have been using the English language, although 25.9% of internet users speak the English language (statista.com, 2022). This scenario is different for the Chinese population, as 19.4% of internet users speak Chinese, although only 1.3% of websites have been using the Chinese language. Hence, in order to use the websites, Chinese populations, along with people from other cultural backgrounds, are required to learn English as a foreign language. On the other hand, American universities have been evidencing a higher number of enrolments in language courses in comparison to the year 2000. The learners from US universities have been showing their interest in learning a diverse set of languages. In 2016, approximately 69,000 students learned Japanese and showed significant interest in Japanese culture (statista.com, 2019).

Movies and documentaries of different nations help learners study different cultures and develop interest in their beliefs, values, and perceptions. In 2016, approximately 14,000 learners of US universities increased their interest in learning the Korean language to understand their language and pattern of communication. However, a lack of cross-cultural awareness among the UK population has impacted the release of foreign-language movies in the country. In comparison to 2016, in the year 2021, the release of foreign language movies in the UK and Ireland has fallen drastically, from 368 movies in 2016 to 142 movies in 2021 (statista.com, 2024). The issue of the inability to speak foreign languages in European nations is notable due to their lack of interest in different cultures and unawareness of diverse cultural perspectives. Approximately 93% of the Turkish population have confessed their inability to speak foreign languages (statista.com, 2023). Conversely, flexibility and adaptability among the population of Slovenia have helped the population develop proficiency in more than three languages. Approximately 56.3% of the population of Slovenia is fluent in more than three languages (statista.com, 2024).

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to critically investigate the impacts of cultural awareness on enhancing language learners' motivation and proficiency.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the notion of cultural awareness among language learners
- To examine the challenges that language learners confront due to a lack of cultural awareness
- To identify the impact of cultural awareness on language learners' motivation and proficiency
- To address the effectiveness of potential solutions to mitigate the challenges that are confronted by language learners concerning cultural awareness

1.3 Research Significance

This study has included an in-depth analysis of cultural awareness that promotes motivation and proficiency among learners. In the competitive era, a better opportunity is the foremost desire of people in the field of education and employability. In order to work in a cross-cultural environment, individuals are required to have excellent communication skills and the ability to speak in multiple languages, along with official and local languages (Tietze and Piekkari, 2020). Cultural tourism can be discussed as another aspect of cultural awareness that motivates people to learn new languages and thus adopt new cultural practices. However, language barriers, lack of flexibility and adaptability to accept different cultural practices, and harassment from different cultural communities often hinder the language learning process.

The challenges that foreign language learners confront due to a lack of cultural awareness have been critically reviewed with the support of relevant literature. This has assisted in identifying potential strategies to develop cultural awareness among language learners. With the appropriate implementation of potential strategies to develop cultural awareness, learners will be able to gather the necessary knowledge regarding skills development and different cultural perspectives. Therefore, this study will be helpful and generous for language learners to understand the necessity of developing cultural awareness and the strategies to develop cultural awareness to develop proficiency and motivation for learning foreign languages.

2. Literature review

2.1 The Notion of Cultural Awareness among Language Learners

Cultural awareness has been considered the foremost element for the personal and professional growth of individuals, which can be defined as the sense and attitude of individuals towards other cultures and communities. Therefore, individuals with cultural awareness understand and respect different cultures' beliefs, values, and decision-making processes. As stated by Kim (2020), as per the knowledge of language teachers, learning different languages requires the interest of individuals in learning about different cultures. An adequate account of culture helps create a learning pedagogy that improves effective intercultural communication. In order to develop expertise in languages, learners must communicate with local populations and identify their diction, accent, dialect, and pattern of speaking the language. In addition, strengthening grammatical knowledge and developing local word usage and vocabulary help learners identify both the culture and language. Thus, conversations include dialogues and an interactive manner of learning foreign languages with different responses in accordance with different scenarios. Thus, dialogues and cultural meanings of different words from the participation of heterogeneous voices help learners identify the appropriate wordings in different languages.

According to Parks (2020), a significant relationship can be identified between cultural awareness and foreign language learning. Foreign language learning has been identified as a critical process that not only includes the acquisition of linguistics and communicative competence but also focuses on adopting social and cultural values. Being aware of individuals' cultural biases can significantly influence the learning proficiency of foreign languages. Cross-cultural communication, decision-making, personal level of interest, and behaviour of learners increase their motivation to learn new languages. Moreover, the employability opportunities in different countries also influence learners' motivation to develop expertise in foreign languages.

As stated by Abdullaev (2021), addressing the individual differences among learners is a significant responsibility of teachers in developing a cross-cultural environment wherein learning a new or second language can be effective. Thus, in the development of cultural awareness, teachers play a significant role by addressing individual differences concerning demographic variables such as culture, learning aptitude, age and gender. Hence, in learning a second language, previous educational backgrounds play the foremost role in the progress of learning, both positively and negatively. Thus, a lack of cultural awareness indicates a lack of interaction with cross-cultural communities and groups, which slows down the progress of learning new languages. Moreover, societal beliefs and cultural values create a stereotypical notion of learning new languages that significantly influences their learning behaviour and attitude towards new languages and dialects.

As stated by González-Lloret (2020), technology-mediated tasks in online foreign language learning programs aim to develop cultural awareness to improve the proficiency and motivation of learning for learning a second language. With the implementation of Virtual Reality technology in language learning systems, trainers have been getting the opportunity to learn about new cultures and heritage. Museums and patterns of local people in terms of interaction are often showcased through Virtual Reality, which has been assisting in demonstrating the practical experience of communicating with foreign communities. Cognitive complexities, technological complexity, and linguistic complexity of language learners can be addressed with the development of cultural awareness through cultural tasks between different cultural learners. In fact, through telecollaboration, learners get the opportunity to interact with students from different institutions, which expands their experience of communicating with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Challenges Associated with Foreign Language Learning

Learners confront multiple challenges during the learning process of new languages due to a lack of awareness about foreign cultures and knowledge gaps in their conventional and social aspects. Cultural insensitivity has been identified as the foremost challenge that learners confront in the environment due to a lack of cultural awareness and a negative learning environment. Learners with a lack of cultural awareness spread insensitivity and a negative environment on the premises, which demotivates other learners. In this context, bullying and harassment of cross-cultural students in learning institutions can hinder the learning process of foreign languages. Thus, a lack of cultural awareness among language learners creates issues of disinterest (Etri, 2021). This further stagnates the process of learning and developing expertise in foreign languages and affects the intention and aim to learn the language. Learners confront the issues of miscommunication with different cultural people due to mispronunciation of words and inappropriate usage of terms that can affect cultural people.

Learners confront multiple cultural barriers in terms of learning about foreign languages and their cultures, which include body language, social habits, religious beliefs, and etiquette. Therefore, new language learners confront the issues of misunderstandings and miscommunications in new places. Learners from different cultural backgrounds are habituated to different beliefs, customs, and communication styles. Therefore, ignoring cultural aspects can be problematic for learners in communicating excellently with cross-cultural populations (Aririguzoh, 2022). Being unaware of cultural norms and beliefs creates issues of conflicts with cross-cultural populations due to performing gestures or using phrases which are non-offensive or harmless to students and offensive to cross-cultural people. Moreover, language barriers and cultural differences can pessimistically affect the learning process of a new language.

As stated by Nosirova (2023), due to cultural differences, people who learn English as a second language confront significant challenges in terms of pronunciation and accents, grammar and syntax, and reading and writing skills. Apart from that, the learners confront challenges regarding learning vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, cultural and contextual understanding, listening comprehension, and language anxiety and motivation. Conversely, similar challenges have been confronted by those people who speak English as their first language and thus intend to learn new languages based on their workplace requirements. Contextual Understanding and Cultural Awareness are the most crucial elements for effective communication in any language. Thus, in order to understand the idioms, humour, social norms, and cultural references, learners must develop cultural awareness.

As opined by Wang *et al.* (2022), in terms of teaching English as a first language to non-English speaking learners such as students from Malaysia, China, and Iran, the major challenge is developing the resilience of teachers. Teachers from cross-cultural backgrounds are involved in the language learning process and have expertise in different languages to foster diversity and inclusivity in the language learning process. However, a lack of cultural awareness and knowledge gaps on learning patterns and styles of culturally diversified learners create resilience issues for language trainers. The quintessential role of cultural diversity involves cultural outlook, values, beliefs, and orientations that impact the language learning process through the reconstruction of psycho-emotional variables regarding language learning. Person-focused factors such as lack of motivation among the students, lack of professionalism, lack of social awareness, and lack of emotional presence for other cultures have been identified as the most challenging factors in foreign language learning classes.

However, the development of cultural awareness requires the students to conduct cross-cultural research on different nations, communities, and cultural practices. In this context, Broesch *et al.* (2020) have stated that cross-cultural research includes multiple scientific and ethical challenges. The lack of accessibility to relevant and authentic data on different cultures and nations often hinders the process of cross-cultural research. Due to biased perspectives and stereotypical beliefs of different authors on different cultures, relying on only secondary resources can decrease the feasibility of the research. On the other hand, to gather primary responses, researchers need to interact with the local population, which might be difficult due to language barriers and lack of cultural awareness.

2.3 Impact of Cultural Awareness on Language Learners' Motivation and Proficiency

Language learners' motivation, attitudes, and learning strategies can be significantly influenced by cultural awareness. Thus, cultural factors influence the ways by which learners perceive, interpret and produce languages, which directly impact their fluency, expertise, and proficiency in that language. Cultural awareness is necessary to develop relevant body language and gestures to prevent offending people from different cultural backgrounds. According to Herzog-Punzenberger *et al.* (2020), cultural inclusivity and respect are significant aspects that help both teachers and learners in developing an optimistic language-learning environment. Henceforth, the identification of historical facts about different cultures increases learners' interest in knowing more about the places, cultures, languages, and their expressions and gestures for non-verbal communication. Hence, cross-cultural understanding among learners helps to increase their language learning proficiency for both writing and speaking.

Cultural awareness among learners helps in developing effective communication skills through the development of accents, understanding dialects, and increasing grammatical knowledge. As stated by Zhang *et al.* (2020), people around the world have been learning different languages, such as English, for their future career development. Communication skills are the foremost requirement for establishing a career in the future. Therefore, practicing speaking the language in daily life and in the workplace helps individuals enhance their proficiency in the language. In Asian countries like China, people tend to select a career that requires higher levels of proficiency in the English language, and therefore, their major focus relies on English writing and speaking skills for their future career development. Hence, better career opportunities and employability have been motivating learners to learn new languages, especially English as a second language.

Cross-cultural understanding can be highlighted as a positive impact of cultural awareness on language learners' motivation and proficiency. Cultural awareness among the learners and teachers helps in creating a positive learning environment wherein cultural diversity, inclusivity, and equality are fostered. Respecting others' cultures and valuing other cultures' perspectives are performed through the demonstration of cultural awareness in the learning premises, which motivates the learners to enjoy the process of developing expertise in new languages. Discrimination in the language learning environment can be mostly evidenced in English as a lingua franca (ELF) class, wherein people from different cultural communities participate. Illés (2020) has stated that people who use ELF as their medium of communication use both native and non-native languages as they come from a wider variety of lingua cultural backgrounds. Thus, communicating with different people using different linguistics requires a comprehensive knowledge of terminologies, idioms, and vocabulary. In this manner, cultural awareness helps individuals secure an excellent placement in international organisations and assists them in showcasing their expertise in performing well in cross-cultural environments.

In an argumentative manner, Wen and Piao (2020) have mentioned that learning difficult languages and cultures influences people to learn new languages. In order to understand different cultural perspectives and societal norms, people intend to learn new languages to explore the culture and heritage in an explicit manner. The example can be drawn from Chinese and Indian culture and their rich heritage, historical facts, and religious myths, which inspire the Western cultural population to learn Indian and Chinese languages. Indian culinary and cultural tourism has been identified as a vast area to explore. Thus, religious diversities and the growing acceptance of Indian movies and music worldwide have been influencing the worldwide population to learn Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, and Tamil. Similarly, understanding the core vision of Chinese visual arts, current media, and martial arts requires a comprehensive knowledge of Chinese culture, which can be gathered by achieving expertise in the Chinese language.

Improved decision-making is required in both the fields of tourism and employment, and the process of decision-making significantly depends on the understanding of the practical situation, contemporary operating environment, influencing factors, and people's perceptions of the matter or element. Cultural awareness helps learners to identify the contemporary trends and the terms that people from different cultural backgrounds use to communicate, as well as humorous phrases, slang, and idiomatic expressions (Alisoy, 2023). This assists individuals to make appropriate decisions in a foreign environment with proficiency in foreign languages. Improved learning and deep understanding of languages help in mitigating the issues of cross-cultural barriers, fraudulence, and cross-cultural conflicts.

2.4 Theoretical Approaches Concerning Cultural Awareness

2.4.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

In order to differentiate between cultural perspectives of language learning, Hofstede's six dimensions of culture can be elaborated. The theory involves six dimensions of cultural elements such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, short-term versus long-term orientation, and restraint versus indulgence. The theory assumes that thought processes, learning styles, and individual points of view of people are influenced by their social and cultural norms. Based on countries' cultural values and stereotypical beliefs, the theory categorises each nation according to these six dimensions. Habók *et al.* (2021) have demonstrated the influence of cultural differences on foreign language learning in the Hungarian, Chinese, and Mongolian cultures. Power distance signifies the hierarchical relationship between the learners and the teachers. For instance, in

China, the power distance is extremely high, whereas in Mongolia, the power distance is low. Due to the high power distance, language learners often hesitate to question any doubts during foreign language learning, which negatively impacts the development of proficiency. In terms of individualism, Hungarian and Mongolian societies are highly individualistic, whereas the Chinese population believe in collectivism. Through the development of individualist behaviour, learners often fail to develop cultural awareness due to a lack of interest in forming a social framework.

In an argumentative manner, Toyama and Yamazaki (2022) have stated that the notion of individualism and collectivism affects learners' anxiety in foreign language classes for speaking up about their doubts. The examples of American and Korean societies have been drawn in the study to demonstrate learners' behaviour in learning foreign languages influenced by society. It has been observed that due to the individualistic culture of American students, they feel less anxious about learning foreign languages than collectivist Korean students. Apart from these dimensions, male-dominated societies also influence the learning patterns and motivation among language learners. Learners who have evidenced a significant gender gap in their culture often face challenges in accepting equality in other cultures, which limits their knowledge growth. Uncertainty is a significant, influential factor in terms of language learning motivation and proficiency among culturally diversified students.

2.4.2 Lewis' model of cultural competence

Cultural diversification in language learning performs a crucial role in enhancing learners' ability to gather knowledge about different cultural stereotypes while identifying their own cultural beliefs. Lewis Model of Cultural Competence focuses on three categories to illustrate the cultural influence on people's attitudes and behavioural development. These three categories are Linear-Active, Multi-Active, and Reactive, which reflect the societal and cultural characteristics of different nations. In terms of language learning, interactive countries like Australia, France, and North America are considered task-oriented, straightforward, and logical. As stated by Jaakkola (2023), linear active culture influences learners to focus on developing technical competence with the changing environment of employability worldwide. Thus, the foremost focus on technological integration might be beneficial in developing a clear concept about foreign cultures and thus assist them in learning new languages efficiently.

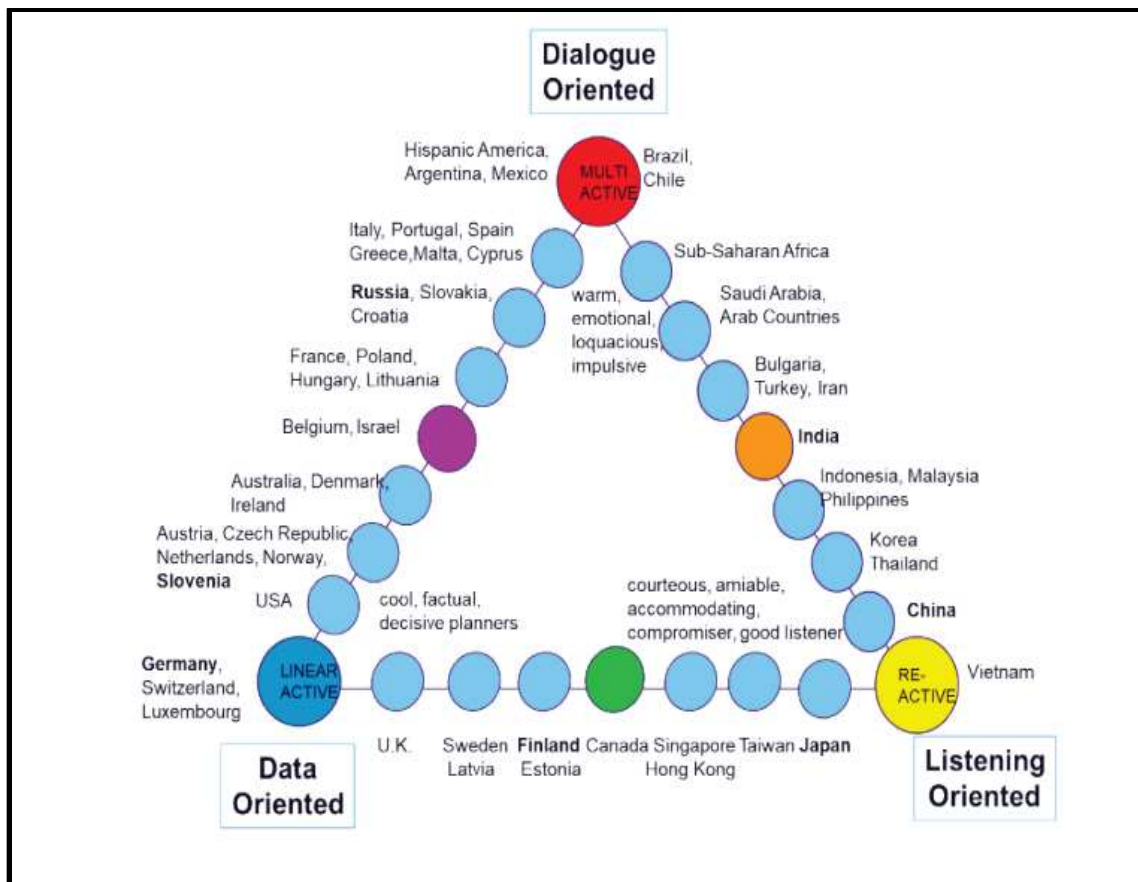


Figure 2: Lewis Model of Cultural Competence
(Source: Jaakkola, 2023)

Conversely, multi-active countries like Italy, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Bolivia majorly rely on a people-oriented process. Their culture caters to extroverted attributes, emotions, and unplanned behaviour that influence learning patterns about learning new languages along with their culture. Reactive countries like India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea, and Thailand have the attribute of active listening and respecting other cultures with people-oriented processes (Jaakkola, 2023). This motivates learners to learn new languages with the development of cultural awareness. It is necessary to develop the ability to compare native and foreign cultural beliefs, which can be beneficial for individuals in avoiding cross-cultural conflicts and miscommunication in the workplace and tourism.

In this context, Sokolova (2021) has stated that South Eastern Europe has been confronting significant challenges in managing cross-cultural teams of learners due to a lack of intercultural sensitivity. Despite being open to foreign employee engagement, the nation has been struggling to widen opportunities due to intercultural insensitivity. Lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and lack of respect towards others' points of view enhance rigidity in accepting foreign cultures. These attributes and thought processes often perform as pessimistic factors against the learning and development of language learners. In order to mitigate these issues, intercultural training seminars need to be conducted before engaging them in the language learning process. The creation of team-like experiences among the learners motivates them to develop the skills of predicting different cultures' social norms and behaviours. The involvement of multicultural teams in the training process helps in creating cultural diversity and intercultural communication among the learners, which influences their language proficiency in an optimistic manner.

On the other hand, Voevoda (2020) states that intercultural communication in multicultural learning environments helps pupils develop cultural sensitivity along with a sense of inclusivity and diversity in society, workplace, and institutions. In this context, Russian universities' examples have been drawn in training, language, and culture. Russian universities have been focusing on developing a positive relationship between the countries as well as mitigating language barriers for the students, which have been attracting the students to develop their expertise in foreign languages. Moscow-based universities have been enrolling students from diverse cultural backgrounds, starting from post-soviet countries to its neighbouring countries, to develop a culturally inclusive learning environment,

The inclusion of cross-cultural populations helps develop a knowledge-sharing environment for pupils from different cultural backgrounds. Thus, language learners get the opportunity to know practically about different cultural stereotypes, myths, perceptions, and beliefs, which motivate them to learn the language (Voevoda, 2020). Apart from direct interactions with other pupils from three categorical backgrounds, as proposed by Lewis, cultural drives can influence learners to grow their interest in pieces of literature. The urge to know about culture, literature, and art motivates the learners towards new language learning while directing them towards achieving proficiency in that particular language.

3. Problem

In the present scenario of globalisation, the language barrier is a significant issue, which has been hindering the employment process and cultural bullying. Thus, discrimination between native and foreign language speakers in organisations and societies has been influencing individuals to learn foreign languages in order to survive in a positive environment. However, due to a lack of cultural awareness, learners develop the attitude of lack of motivation to learn a new language. Difficult pronunciation and social bullying due to inappropriate dialects and accents have negatively influenced the psychological and motivational factors of learners (Dovchin, 2020). The inability to speak and communicate local languages hinders the employability and future careers of individuals as the companies focus on engaging individuals with expertise in local languages. In France, 98% of vacancies are published in French language, and 1.66% of job postings are in English (statista.com, 2023). The scenario is identical for Germany, as 96% of job postings are in the local language in comparison to 3.38% in English.

However, mastering local languages is challenging for migrants due to their different learning styles and pre-conceptualised notions of the culture and the foreign language. Learning a new language increases emotional and behavioural problems due to a lack of understanding of terms, style of communication, and appropriate phrases for appropriate scenarios. This can affect the low academic achievements of students with high dropout rates due to the inability to perform well in the language learning development sessions.

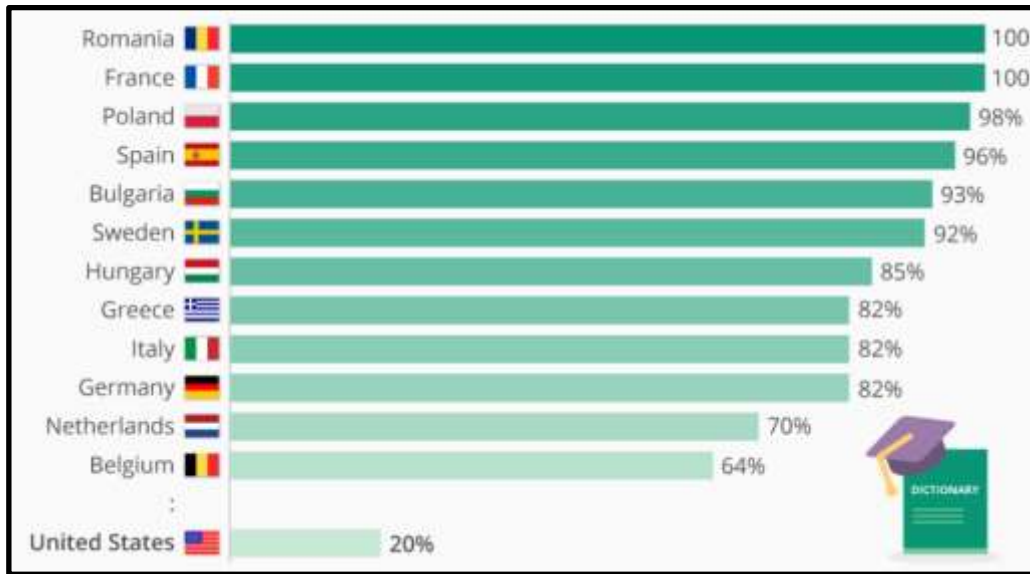


Figure 3: Share of secondary and primary foreign language learners
(Source: statista.com, 2018)

The lack of involvement of nations and schools in learning new languages creates significant problems for new learners. Differences between European nations and US nations can be exemplified by the fact that learning foreign languages in European schools is ubiquitous. Most of the European nations have a “national-level” mandate to learn new languages in schools, which would provide the benefits of increasing employability and leadership skills for strengthening future careers. The scenario is highly different in the American nations, and the standards for learning new languages are non-existent. In the US, language learning courses are mandatory up to district and state levels, which creates a lack of knowledge development concerning different cultures and languages (statista.com, 2018). Nations like Romania, France, Poland, Spain, Bulgaria, Sweden, Hungary, Greece, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium significantly focus on learning foreign languages such as English and different dialects of English. However, their cultural influences often impact their pronunciation of terms and the words to describe different objects and emotions.

In the era of evolution and transformation, the uses of words and idioms have been changing at a rapid pace, especially in the English language, which has become a challenging factor for both learners and teachers. On the other hand, classic idiomatic expressions, phrases by poets and novelists, and grammatical knowledge have been challenging for learners to memorise along with new phrases and terms. Due to generation gaps, the patterns of speaking and writing the English language have evolved significantly, which imposes problems for new learners to consider English as a second language (Pikhart and Botezat, 2021). However, in order to secure a leadership position in companies or prepare documentaries on cultural and culinary tourism, it is necessary to speak the English language fluently, using local accents and dialects. In a similar way, the styles of speaking local languages in different nations are significantly divergent from each other, which creates challenges for English-speaking pupils to learn new languages. The difficulties in learning new languages due to lack of cultural awareness often play as demotivating factors for language learners.

4. Solution

Participation in cultural activities is an essential solution to increasing cultural awareness among language learners. Cultural activities involve necessary strategies that help showcase cultural heritage to the world while promoting creativity and cultural diversity. Visiting museums and galleries of different nations, participating in different community programs, and attending performances are integral parts of cultural activities, which may motivate learners to develop knowledge of different languages (Corbisiero-Drakos *et al.*, 2021). Students explore their interests in different cultures through participation in cultural activities, which can enhance cultural awareness among learners aesthetically, historically, artistically, intellectually, and socially.

Training on intercultural communication and cultural sensibility can influence the psychological and behavioural factors of learners, which will be beneficial in growing their interest in different cultures and heritages. These training procedures involve interaction between cross-cultural learners and activities to involve them in an intrinsic process of learning new languages. Effective communication among the learners helps them to be motivated and develop proficiency in the language (Seven, 2020). The identification of local language alphabets and writing are equally necessary as speaking to avoid being harassed in foreign countries. Thus, through training sessions, language learners can get the opportunity to use specific words and terms that are

prohibited in public, which helps them avoid cultural conflicts in the local places. In addition, body language and self-confidence development through gathering appropriate and sufficient information on different cultures helps language learners develop proficiency in foreign languages.

5. Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded that in today's world, learning multiple languages has become essential due to global job opportunities. Companies are increasingly focusing on incorporating local languages in foreign markets. While English is widely used globally, many people in European countries, aside from the UK and the US, face challenges in learning the language. Despite English being the most prevalent language, learners from English-speaking nations are diversifying their language learning efforts. To overcome language barriers stemming from cultural unawareness, students can engage in various cultural activities to foster a deeper connection to foreign languages' culture and heritage. Hofstede's six cultural dimensions highlight how learners' perspectives, thinking styles, and learning approaches are shaped by social norms, cultural values, and beliefs. These dimensions, including power distance, uncertainty, gender index, short versus long-term orientation, collectivism versus individualism, and restraints versus indulgence, influence learners' motivation to study a new language. Lewis's model of cultural competence illustrates that countries with a reactive mindset are adaptable to new cultural beliefs, aiding in language proficiency. To enhance cultural awareness in language learning, it is recommended for learners to participate in cultural activities while receiving training in cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Abdullaev, Z.K (2021). Second Language Learning. *Mental Enlightenment Scientific-Methodological Journal*, 2021(06), pp.1-11.
- [2] Alisoy, H., (2023). Evolving Vocabulary: Bridging Colloquial and Standard English in Communication. *Norwegian Journal of development of the International Science* 120.
- [3] Aririguzoh, S., (2022). Communication competencies, culture and SDGs: effective processes to cross-cultural communication. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 9(1), pp.1-11.
- [4] Broesch, T., Crittenden, A.N., Beheim, B.A., Blackwell, A.D., Bunce, J.A., Colleran, H., Hagel, K., Kline, M., McElreath, R., Nelson, R.G. and Pisor, A.C., (2020). Navigating cross-cultural research: methodological and ethical considerations. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 287(1935), 20201245.
- [5] Corbisiero-Drakos, L., Reeder, L.K., Ricciardi, L., Zacharia, J. and Harnett, S. (2021). Arts integration and 21st century skills: A study of learners and teachers. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 22(2).
- [6] Dovchin, S., (2020). The psychological damages of linguistic racism and international students in Australia. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 23(7), 804-818.
- [7] Etri, W., (2021). Strategies for withstanding the inevitable at ground zero—An analysis of intercultural sensitivity in the ELT classroom. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 11(01).34.
- [8] González-Lloret, M., (2020). Collaborative tasks for online language teaching. *Foreign Language Annals*, 53(2), 260-269.
- [9] Habók, A., Kong, Y., Raghaa, J. and Magyar, A. (2021). Cross-cultural differences in foreign language learning strategy preferences among Hungarian, Chinese and Mongolian University students. *Heliyon*, 7(3).
- [10] Herzog-Punzenberger, B., Altrichter, H., Brown, M., Burns, D., Nortvedt, G.A., Skedsmo, G., Wiese, E., Nayir, F., Fellner, M., McNamara, G. and O'Hara, J. (2020). Teachers responding to cultural diversity: case studies on assessment practices, challenges and experiences in secondary schools in Austria, Ireland, Norway and Turkey. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 32 .395-424.
- [11] Illés, É. (2020). Helping to Maximize Learners' Motivation for Second Language Learning. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, 19.19-31.
- [12] Jaakkola, H. (2023). How to manage cultural differences?
- [13] Kim, D. (2020). Learning language, learning culture: Teaching language to the whole student. *ECNU Review of Education*, 3(3).519-541.
- [14] Nosirova, D. (2023). Learning English as a second language: Challenges and strategies. *Modern Science and Research*, 2(9).165-170.
- [15] Parks, E. (2020). *Developing critical cultural awareness in modern languages: A comparative study of higher education in North America and the United Kingdom*. Routledge.
- [16] Pihart, M. and Botezat, O. (2021). The impact of the use of social media on second language acquisition. *Procedia Computer Science*, 192.1621-1628.
- [17] Seven, M.A. (2020). Motivation in Language Learning and Teaching. *African Educational Research Journal*, 8, .62-71.
- [18] Sokolova, H., (2021). HOW TO DEVELOP INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN MULTICULTURAL TEAMS FROM SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE. In *ICERI2021 Proceedings* (4311-4316). IATED.
- [19] Statista.com. (2018). The Transatlantic Divide In Language Learning. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/chart/15078/the-share-of-primary-and-secondary-students-learning-a-foreign-language/> [Accessed on: 13th February 2024]
- [20] Statista.com. (2019). American Language Learners Are Diversifying. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/chart/19979/languages-studied-at-us-universities/> [Accessed on: 13th February 2024]
- [21] Statista.com. (2022). English Is the Internet's Universal Language. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/chart/26884/languages-on-the-internet/> [Accessed on: 13th February 2024]

- [22] Statista.com. (2023). Europeans who can not speak a foreign language by educational level 2022. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1426394/european-educational-level-no-foreign-language-skills/> [Accessed on: 13th February 2024]
- [23] Statista.com. (2023). Local Languages Are Crucial for Migrants to Master. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/chart/31222/share-of-online-job-postings-in-local-language-and-english/> [Accessed on: 13th February 2024]
- [24] Statista.com. (2023). The most spoken languages worldwide 2023. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/> [Accessed On: 13th February 2024]
- [25] Statista.com. (2024). Number of foreign language movies released in Ireland and the UK 2001-2021. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/297483/number-of-foreign-language-films-released-in-the-uk-and-ireland/> [Accessed on: 13th February 2024]
- [26] Statista.com. (2024). Share of citizens in European countries self-reporting that they speak a foreign language in 2022, by country. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1426025/share-citizens-europe-speaking-foreign-language/> [Accessed on: 13th February 2024]
- [27] Tenzer, H., Pudelko, M. and Zellmer-Bruhn, M., (2021). The impact of language barriers on knowledge processing in multinational teams. *Journal of World Business*, 56(2).101184.
- [28] Thapa, S., (2020). Assessing intercultural competence in teacher education: a missing link. *Visions for Intercultural Music Teacher Education*.163-176.
- [29] Tietze, S. and Piekkari, R. (2020). Languages and cross-cultural management. *The SAGE handbook of contemporary cross-cultural management*, pp.181-195.
- [30] Toyama, M. and Yamazaki, Y., (2022). Foreign language anxiety and individualism-collectivism culture: A top-down approach for a country/regional-level analysis. *Sage Open*, 12(1), 21582440211069143.
- [31] Voevoda, E.V., (2020). Intercultural communication in multicultural education space. *Training, Language and Culture*, 4(2), pp.11-20.
- [32] Wang, Y., Derakhshan, A. and Rahimpour, H. (2022). Developing resilience among Chinese and Iranian EFL teachers: A multi-dimensional cross-cultural study. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 1-18.
- [33] Wen, X. and Piao, M., (2020). Motivational profiles and learning experience across Chinese language proficiency levels. *System*, 90, 102216.
- [34] Zhang, H., Dai, Y. and Wang, Y. (2020). Motivation and second foreign language proficiency: The mediating role of foreign language enjoyment. *Sustainability*, 12(4).1302.