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**Investigating the Cultural
Factors Influencing
Sudanese EFL Students'
Performance in English as an
International Language (EIL)**

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Investigating the Cultural Factors Influencing Sudanese EFL Students' Performance in English as an International Language (EIL) (A Case Study of the Faculty of Education at the International University of Africa)

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ABSTRACT:

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the EFL student teachers' cultural awareness of English as an International Language (EIL) and identify the cultural factors that influence language learning/teaching in Sudanese faculties of education (A Case Study of the Faculty of Education at the International University of Africa.) It also aims to see whether these factors affect and hinder students' performance and achievement in EIL and make communication breakdown and barriers to EFL student teachers. The descriptive analytical method was used for the study. The data were collected by means of a culturally based test of 12 items for a number of 24 EFL pre-service teachers, both males and females 6 of them are foreign students. An SPSS program was used for data analysis which revealed that scores of more than (90%) of the student teachers in the culturally based test were very low; the overall mean was 22 out of 100 which supported all the hypotheses of the study. No significant difference was found between the scores of Sudanese students and foreign students; the scores of all students were nearly the same. It is recommended to draw attention to the new trends and orientations in language learning/ teaching and shift to the socio-cultural theory in learning and the intercultural approach in teaching. In addition, some new strategies.

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and techniques that could be followed in teaching methods are also suggested. Moreover, cultural capsules are strongly suggested to be incorporated and infused in the curriculum in order to expose EFL student teachers to the cultural diversity to use English as an international language (EIL) in the era of globalization.

- **Keywords:**

Cultural awareness, English as an International Language, intercultural approach, socio cultural theory, globalization, glocalization, cultural hybridity

تقصي العوامل الثقافية المؤثرة في أداء الطلاب السودانيين في اللغة الانجليزية كلفة عالمية

(دراسة حالة طلاب كلية التربية بجامعة افريقيا العالمية)

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المستخلص:

الهدف الرئيس لهذه الدراسة هو رفع الوعي الثقافي في ثقافة اللغة) لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة اجنبية في كليات التربية السودانية (دراسة حالة كلية التربية في جامعة أفريقيا العالمية) وتقصي وتحديد العوامل الثقافية المؤثرة في تعلم وتدرّيس اللغة الإنجليزية في كليات التربية كلفة عالمية. كما هدفت الدراسة إلى استكشاف العلاقة بين اللغة والثقافة ومدى تأثير كل منهما في الآخر. وتمتد الدراسة لتسليط الضوء على أثر هذه العوامل على أداء وتحصيل الطلاب في اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة عالمية وما إذا كانت العوامل الثقافية تمثل عوائق تحول دون التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية كلفة عالمية. استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي حيث جمعت بيانات هذه الدراسة من خلال اختبار كفاءة تحصيلي من 12 فقرة مبني على ثقافة اللغة لعدد 24 طالبا وطالبة، في السنة النهائية. 6 منهم طلاب أجانب. استخدم برنامج الحزم الإحصائية (spss) لتحليل البيانات والذي أوضح أن أكثر من 90% من الطلاب حصلوا على درجات متدنية في الاختبار التحصيلي المبني على ثقافة اللغة حيث كان متوسط الدرجات 22 درجة من 100 وهذا يدعم ويؤيد جميع فرضيات البحث. لم توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين درجات الطلاب السودانيين والأجانب. أوصت الدراسة لجذب الانتباه للنزعات والاتجاهات الجديدة في تعلم وتدرّيس اللغة الإنجليزية نحو التواصل الاجتماعي الثقافي والتفاعل الثقافي. واقترحت الدراسة بعض الطرائق الجديدة لتعلم وتدرّيس اللغة الإنجليزية. كما أوصت الدراسة بإدماج بعض المفاهيم الثقافية في مناهج اللغة بالسودان ليتعرف الطلاب على التنوع والتعدد الثقافي في عصر العولمة.

• جامعة افريقيا العالمية- كلية الالسن.

Investigating the Cultural Factors Influencing Sudanese EFL Students' Performance in English as an International Language (EIL). (A Case Study of the Faculty of Education at the International University of Africa)

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background

Language is defined as an arbitrary system of symbols. It is a part of culture, an aspect of human behavior and an acquired habit of systematic vocal activity correlated with meaning derived from human experiences. Some linguists view language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which members of social groups cooperate and interact with each other.

This definition has three major implications:

- 1- That language operates in a regular and systematic fashion.
- 2- That language is primary oral and that these oral symbols represent meaning as they correlate with actual life situations and experiences.
- 3- That language has social functions and that without it society would probably not exist.

One of the major functions of language is the interactional function which deals with how humans use language to interact socially or emotionally. Another major function is transactional function by which humans use their linguistics abilities to share knowledge, skills and information.

Hence, language is immense and bumpy and it is a part of human society and culture. This study will investigate the cultural factors that influence language learning and teaching in general and how to raise Pre-service teachers' cultural awareness in particular. Success in learning and teaching English as a foreign language, among a

host of other factors, depends on cultural factors and willingness to understand and follow the ways of target community because language is a reflection of culture. The researcher sees this situation as a real threat to the objectives of teaching English not only as a foreign language EFL but as an International language, henceforth, (EIL) in Sudan. That is because language is a means of communication.

In the light of this, the present study is intended to identify and highlight the cultural factors which affect language learning and teaching and raise students' cultural awareness in the faculties of education before they go into field to practice their jobs as teachers of (EIL) in Sudanese secondary schools.

The findings of this study will make it possible to make useful suggestions and recommendations to help EFL students in raising their cultural awareness of EIL. It is observed that students may feel at a loss not because of linguistics problems but because of cultural problems and barriers which when arise may lead to misunderstanding of the message (sent or received) and can mess things up and sometimes cause an unintended insult to the hearer, listener, (interlocutor) and may lead to an entire collapse of communication.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

According to Sadigi and Ennaji (1994:65), language can be examined from different angles, philosophical, descriptive, anthropological, psychological, historical, social and cultural angles. Non-native language teachers are probably aware of the way norms governing speaking in the native language can conflict with those for speaking in another language.

As we all know, perfect grammar and pronunciation are rarely enough for effective mutual understanding.

1-6 Methodology

It is observed that the cultural area has received very little attention. In other words, this road is less traveled. It is also observed that there are a number of cultural factors that can slow down, block and cause collapse of communication that need to be investigated. So an action must be taken to see into the major cultural factors that affect the learning and teaching of EIL to reach suitable solutions for this phenomenon.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to identify and highlight the cultural factors that influence learning and teaching of EIL. Therefore, this study is designed to reach the following objectives:

- a) Raise student teachers cultural awareness about EIL.
- b) Expose student teachers to the culture of EIL.
- c) Improve student teachers fluency, performance and competence in EIL.
- d) Raise student teachers' awareness of their own culture through comparing it with other cultures.
- e) Help EFL students comprehend listening and reading texts (discourse).
- f) Recommend curricula designers and material writers to insert cultural capsules of EIL in their curricula.

1.3. Questions of the Study

- a) Does teaching of the cultural nuances of the target language enable EFL students assimilate its cultural aspects?
- b) Does exposure to FL culture enable learners to understand and tolerate other cultures?
- c) Is fluency in L2 affected by cultural narrow mindedness of the learner?
- d) Does cultural awareness of L2 help comprehend listening and reading texts ?

e) To what degree does teaching EFL students cultural pluralism prepare them for international communication?

1.4. Hypotheses of the Study

a) Teaching EFL students cultural nuances of the target language enables them to assimilate its cultural aspects and be aware of their own culture.

b) Exposure to FL culture enables learners to understand and tolerate other cultures.

c) Fluency in language 2 (L2) is affected by the degree of cultural narrow mindedness of the learner.

d) Cultural awareness of language 2 (L2) eases comprehension of listening and reading texts (discourse).

e) Teaching EFL students cultural pluralism prepares them for international communication.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Since this study is based on finding the main cultural factors affecting students' achievement and performance in (EIL) in Sudanese faculties of education, it will give valuable data for curriculum designers, material writers and others concerned with teaching of English as an International Language (TEIL).

The techniques and new strategies created by the researcher will be of crucial importance to promote and raise students' awareness of the cultural factors affecting foreign language learning and teaching.

It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will provide information about the inseparability of language and culture. It is also hoped that this study will be fruitful for those who are concerned to make modifications in the curriculum and develop the policies and programs to prepare students in Sudan to meet globalization needs as well as the society needs.

2.1. Sample of the Study

The subjects who participated in this study consisted of (24) student teachers chosen from the faculty of education at the International University of Africa; to represent the population of the study which is limited to the student teachers in the faculties of education in Sudan. (18) of the students are Sudanese and (6) of them are foreign students of different cultural backgrounds and belong to (4) different countries; namely African and Asian. They are as follows:

(2 students from Yemen, 2 from Kenya, 1 from Nigeria and 1 from Turkey.)

2.2. The Instrument of the Study

This study was carried out through a proficiency culturally based test of 12 items for the students. The objective of the test was to generate information that could be used in testing the 5 hypotheses of the study. The students' performance in test will give the researcher an insight about the real situation of the students.

In the light of the findings and the results, of the study through the proficiency culturally based test, the researcher could be able to suggest some possible procedures, techniques, and strategies that could be used in raising students' cultural awareness of EIL in the hope of promoting their achievement and performance in EIL and the whole process of the learning and teaching of English in Sudan.

2.3. The Culturally Based Test:

The student teachers were given a test of 12 items containing cultural capsules of connotations, idiomatic expressions, through: words, and phrases of proverbs, beliefs, customs, symbols, values and social structures.etc including verbal and nonverbal cues to check their understanding of these cultural capsules.

The items of the test covered most of the cultural aspects of language which could make barriers or hindrances and may lead to

communication breakdown when encountered by interlocutors in real situations. These include:

food; items (1,2)**connotations**; items(3,4,5,) **colors**; items(6,7) **pronunciation**; items(8,9)**body language**; item(10) **discourse style**, item(11) and **grammar**, item(12). Each item contained the correct answer and two other distracters.

3. Related Literature

Present day globalization, migration and the spread of English have resulted in a great diversity of social and educational contexts in which English is being used and learned. In this respect Ho (2009:1) argues that:

" intercultural language teaching/learning has become an important focus of modern language education, a shift that reflects greater awareness of the inseparability of language and culture and the need to prepare language learners and teachers for an intercultural communication in an increasingly multicultural world".

Thus, intercultural learning has become a stance in language teaching that emphasizes the interdependence of language and culture and the importance of intercultural understanding as a goal of language education.

3.1.The Concept of Learning

Many researchers have provided different definitions to learning.

According to Brown (1994:35),teaching and learning have a symbiotic relation and are integral. Indeed learning has to precede teaching.

Brown (1994:35) (ibid) continues to elaborate by listing the following components of the learning definition:

- a) Learning is acquisition or getting.
- b) Learning is the retention of information or skills.
- c) Retention implies storage systems, and memory cognitive organization.
- d) Learning involves active conscious focus on and acting upon events inside or outside the organism.
- e) Learning is relatively permanent but subject to forgetting.
- f) Learning involves some form of practice, perhaps reinforced practice.
- g) Learning is a change in behavior.

According to Firth (1994:36), effective learning should involve four factors:

- i) motivation.
- ii) explanation.
- iii) practice.
- iv) feedback.

3.2.The Rationale for Considering Learning Theories

In thinking about teaching, learning and assessing in language education, it is essential for us to consider the understanding that we make about learning. This is because these understandings, implicit or explicit, influence our professional stance as language educators and our teaching, learning practices.

Some educationists observe that, at present, there is a mismatch between current views of learning on the one hand, and teaching as a practice on the other. Contemporary understandings show that there is an important relationship between theory and practice because a good theory can be immensely practice; just as excellent practice informs theory-making. It is learning theory that provides

big picture of understanding when teachers wish to reconsider and potentially change their practices.

3. 3. Theories of Learning

A: The Behaviorism

Behaviorism which was based on the work of Pavlov and Skinner, was one of the most persuasive theories of learning in the 1940s and 1950s, and was based on stimulus-response association. Its focus is on observable behavior rather than thinking. Learning within this theory entails the accumulation of atomized bits of knowledge that are sequenced and ordered hierarchically. Each item of knowledge (called 'objectives' in curriculums and programs) is to be learned independently on the assumption that this makes learning more manageable.

All constituent parts of learning are to be mastered before proceeding to the next part. According to this view, learning is considered as habit formation. According to Brown (1994:35) habits can be formed when appropriate stimulus-response conditioning rewards are given.

The major concerns with this theory are that:

- a) learning is broken down into ever-smaller, analytic parts that are no longer integrated to form a whole.
- b) Learning entails much more than a response to a stimulus.
- c) Learning is task and context dependent.

B: The Cognitive Theory

The cognitive theory is an alternative theory to the Behaviorism. This theory introduced the concept of a thinking mind. Learning within this theory is understood as a process of active construction whereby each individual makes sense of new information in their

This mind by mapping it into their existing framework of knowledge and understanding.

The incorporation of new knowledge leads to restructuring of the individual's conceptual map. This theory also highlights the fact that learning is context-dependent-that is, 'situated' and that new knowledge can only be taken in, when connected to existing knowledge structures. In this sense, learning involves a process of making connections-reorganizing unrelated bits of knowledge and experience into new patterns, integrated wholes. Students learn by relating new experiences to what they already know .Learning involves making new meanings which are generally expressed through language.

In this way, learning, language, meaning and thinking are closely related. Within this perspective, beyond the developing knowledge involves developing processes of self-monitoring and awareness that we refer to as meta-cognition.

According to Ellis(1986:6)learning may take place through the process of simplification which occurs when a learner tries to easily understand the learning process itself, consciously or unconsciously when the learner operates their cognitive system to foster simplification which may be the heart of language acquisition.

C:The Innatist Theory

According to Chomsky (1966:6) a child has a tabula rasa or an imaginary black box called Language Acquisition Device (LAD), at birth and only imitates what they hear until habits are formed. The innatists believe that a child is endowed with an innate system, which enables them to acquire the first language from a set of appropriate samples and in an appropriate supportive environment.

The innatists' view of language acquisition assumes that second language acquisition (SLA) may also result from hypothesis

formation similar to first language acquisition (FLA). Errors should not be considered bad or wrong but they can reveal the development of internal system of learning the target language.

D: The Socio-cultural Theory

Whereas the cognitive theory highlights thinking as it occurs in the mind of the individual, socio-cultural theory considers the relationship between thinking and the social, cultural, historical and institutional context in which it occurs.

The rediscovery of Vygotsky (1978) has led to the understanding that learning and development are culturally embedded and culturally supported or mediated process.

Lantolf (2000:79) one of the major researchers who developed the socio-cultural theory in the field of applied linguistics explains:

"socio-cultural theory holds that specifically human forms of mental activity arise in the interactions we enter into with other members of our culture and with specific experiences we have with artifacts produced by our ancestors and by contemporaries rather than dichotomizing the mental and the social, the theory insists on a seamless and dialectic relationship between these two domains. In other words, not only does our mental activity determine the nature of our social world but this world of human relationships and artifacts also determines to a large extent how we regulate our mental process".

Learning according to this theory is developed through social interaction with more knowledgeable or more proficient others.

social process of interaction (through language, as well as other systems and tools such as gestures, narratives, technologies)mediates the construction of knowledge and leads to the individual's development of a framework for making sense of experience that is congruent with the cultural system in which the learner and learning are located.

It is through this social and cultural process that students are socialized act, communicate and 'be' in ways that are culturally appropriate to the groups in which they participate as members, and through which identities are formed. Within the socio-cultural theory, development occurs twice:

Firstly, in the process of social interaction(that is on an interpersonal plane)and then within the mind of the individual (that is on the intrapersonal plane). Language is integrated to learning. In that, it is the measure means by which we make and share meaning with ourselves and with others, and by which we negotiate social relationships and social values. It is language that makes it possible for people to objectify and conceptualize themselves in the world- to give names to experiences, and make sense of the environment, objects, experiences, events, and interactions. In short, language is concerned to the process of conceiving meaning which is integral to learning.

The cultural dimension of socio-cultural theory of learning is clearly highlighted by Gee (2008:100) when he states in an elaborated way:

"a socio-cultural approach places a premium on learners' experiences, social participation, using mediating devices(tools and technologies)and position with various activity systems and communities of practice. The word 'culture' has taken on a wider

variety of different meanings in different disciplines. Nonetheless, it is clear that as part and parcel of our early socialization of life, we each learn ways of being in the world, of acting, and interacting, thinking, and valuing language, objects and tools that critically shape our early sense of self."

Thus, the diverse cultural understanding and experiences that students bring are highly influential and needed to be taken into account.

The implication of this for us as profession, is that we need to enlarge our understanding of learners, recognize the extraordinary differences in their social and cultural life-world, experiences, motivations, aspirations, and incorporate this diversity into our teaching and learning.

3.4. Language Teaching:

In his concise definition of teaching Brown (1994:36) describes teaching as the facilitation of learning. To facilitate learning in order to improve teaching, Brown suggests four procedures for the educators to improve their teaching: First, they should understand and take into consideration entry behavior or what learners already know. This process will determine the class level and content.

Second, the explicit goals will need to be specified so that the learner can be guided towards them effectively. Next, the teacher will decide which methodology and approach to use. Finally, the educator will be expected to encourage learners to mention and reinforce what they are learning.

Concerning language teaching, some of the form oriented and communication oriented methods and approaches could be identified.

A : The Grammar Translation Method

This approach is sometimes called the old approach. Other times it is referred to as the classic or traditional approach. It gives priority to reading and writing skills. It also gives priority to grammar and translation. This approach was criticized for neglecting the speaking skill of the foreign language. The first reaction to this method was the direct method and the second reaction was the Aural/Oral approach.

B: The Direct Approach

It is the first reaction to the old method. Unlike the traditional method, the direct method gives priority to speech. This method considers translation and grammar as useless in teaching foreign language.

According to Alkholi (1979:8), this method does not use native language in the explanation of foreign language (FL) words and patterns. It uses the techniques of direct association. Some specialists criticized this method for not being direct as its name tells and for wasting time and effort.

C: The Aural/Oral Approach

It appears as another reaction to the old approach. It is sometimes called the audio-lingual approach. This approach was first used in teaching the US Army personnel foreign languages. Therefore, it is sometimes referred to as the army method. According to this approach, language is mainly speech, and not writing. This approach follows the sequence of listening, speaking, reading and writing respectively. This method considers learning a native language and a foreign language as similar. It assumes that both native and

foreign languages are based on habit formation. According to this method, each language is unique. This approach is criticized for concentrating only on speech and neglecting the other skills. Critics also believe that languages are different but they have some common features.

Thus, the fallacy here lies in the presupposition that one prescription is right for all learners and the other is false. In these regards Strevens (1983:6) states:

" One can argue then, that the idea of a single 'best' method is intuitively unsatisfactory, that methodologies derived from theoretical linguistics or psychology alone may lead to contradictory classroom instructions, that the learning and teaching of languages is an activity acquiring to be analyzed in its own terms rather than solely in terms of other disciplines."

Such arguments lead one to be skeptical of dogma in language teaching and to seek other orientations for the process of learning.

3.5. New Trends in Language Teaching Methodology

3.5.1. Total Physical Response (TPR)

This method was developed by James .J. Asher in the seventies of the last century. The TPR attaches great importance and emphasis on listening and comprehension skills. A language teacher utters an order in the foreign language and then models it in with physical action. Learners are encouraged to execute the order with an appropriate body movement. According to Umar (2009:140), this method owes much to some major principles of first language

acquisition in young children. The TPR method is now widely recognized as a highly effective method at beginning levels.

3.5.2. The Natural Approach

This approach was developed by Stephen Krashen in the early eighties of the last century. It views language as a means of interpersonal communication skill. It was based on two basic principles: (1) speech is not taught directly, but rather is acquired by means of 'comprehensible input' in low –anxiety environments and(2) speech emerges in natural stages. Competence in the target language involves the ability to exchange meaningful messages with native speakers to understand what is said and to make oneself understood. It was claimed that according this method an adult learner can repeat the route to proficiency of the child native speaker.

The idea was that learning would take place without explanation or grading and without correction of errors, but simply by exposure to "meaningful input". This approach was criticized for paying no attention to educational traditions, learning context, class size or/and teacher's role.

3.5.3. The Communicative View of Language

The communicative or functional view of language is the view that language is a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning. The semantic and communicative dimensions of language are more emphasized than the grammatical characteristics, although these are included. Some of these modern methods are discussed as follows:

his was partly in response to Chomsky's criticism of structural theories of language and partly based on the theories of British functional linguists, such as Hymes, Gamperz, and Labov and the writings of Austin and Searle on speech acts.

It has many origins, in so far as one teaching methodology tends to influence the next; the Communicative Approach could be said to be the product of educators

Cook (2003:36) argues that :

"The essence of (CLT) is a shift of attention from the language system as an end to the successful use of system in context; that is to say from an emphasis on form to an emphasis on communication."

Based on the previous arguments, this is a wider call for adopting a wider approach to accommodate and take into account the wider social and cultural aspects to serve learners not only to possess communicative competence but intercultural competence as well as to effectively use English as an (IL).

3.5.4. The Intercultural Approach

The concept of transculturation and hybridity gained ground in the field of foreign language education during the 1990s, lead by Michael Byram who developed the notion of intercultural competence. Mary Louise Pratt , a Stanford University professor, is prominent among those who have drawn language educators' attention to the pedagogic implications of transculturation. She has explored life in what she called 'contact zones' when she pointed out:

" where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (1991:34).

A concerted and commendable effort to apply the theoretical insights of cultural hybridity to foreign language education comes from Claire Kramsch in a series of publications (e.g.,1993,1998,2003) who stressed the need for language learners to cross borders by learning to establish a sphere of interculturality that would enable them to take both an insiders and outsiders view on both their first culture(C1)and their second culture(C2)to constitute a third place, or third culture, which is located at the intersection between C1 and C2. At this intersection, Kramsch (1993:257) explains:

"the major task of language learners is to define for themselves what this 'third place' that they have engaged in seeking will look like, whether they are conscious of it or not. No body, least of all the teacher, can tell them where that very personal place is; for each learner it will be differently located, and will make different sense at different times."

In order to prepare learners to how to negotiate comfortable third places between the Self and the Others, the Australian scholars followed what they called Intercultural Language Teaching ,henceforth, (ILT).

Thus, the ILT approach shifts the central aim of language teaching from communicative competence to intercultural competence and such, basically follows the same three-dimensional approach to culture teaching proposed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in 1995.

It consists of : (a)learning about cultures, (b) comparing them, and (c) exploring them interculturally. Therefore, EFL students will benefit by gaining solid knowledge of the different world cultures,

and they must also develop the ability to compare their native culture to other cultures to critically evaluate and interpret the results of such comparisons, and to apply this knowledge successfully in both verbal and non-verbal communication for both transactional and interactional purposes.

3.6. The Concept of Culture

Although culture is one of the most studied and most used concepts in human history, it has stubbornly defied a clear-cut definition. There is also no consensus about what it really is. "Culture," said Raymond Williams,(1976:87) the author of *Keywords*, is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. The reason is that he continued to explain,

"The word has come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and several distinct and incompatible systems of thought."

The German philosopher Johann Herder who wrote of the German word (Kultur)views culture as a deceptive word. He argues that "Nothing is more indeterminate than this word, and nothing more deceptive "cited in Williams(1976:89). In fact, the concept of culture is so elusive that the British cultural critic Stuart Hall (1997:9) came to the conclusion that there is not much point in trying to define culture.

However, the elusive nature of the concept of culture has not prevented social scientists from attempting to define it. In this respect it would be useful to pick out some definitions of some of the outstanding dominant figures in this area in order to highlight the concept of the word culture more clearly.

- Kramersch (1998:10) describes culture as "membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings".
 - Liddicoat et al (2003:45) define culture as
"a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviors, practices, rituals, and lifestyles of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artifacts they produce and the institution they create".
- 1 Tom Scovel (1991:1) describes culture as the social cement of all human relationships.
 - 2 More recently, the UNESCO (2002) described culture as follows:
"culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs."
- An American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1979:89) offered the widely used explanation that culture:
"denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life".

Although there is (still) no agreement on the core term of sociological analysis among sociologists, a distinction is made between Culture with a capital C and culture with a small c. Culture with capital C, in its widest sense, stands for creative endeavors, such as art, architecture, theatre, dance, music, and literature that, constitute the intellectual and aesthetic life of a community. While culture with a small c, stands for beliefs, morals, customs, norms, and values that govern the practice of everyday life.

The ambiguity of the word culture, according to many scholars is attributed to the fact that the word is used as a noun, giving the wrong impression that it is an object or a thing or a museum piece. In a paper entitled "Culture Is a Verb", Brain Street(1993) as cited in Kumaravadivelu, (2008:10) argues that culture is a dynamic process of meaning- making, and therefore, it carries the attributes of a verb rather than those of a noun.

Agreeing with him, Hall(1997:9) emphasized that what important is not what culture is but what culture does. "my own underlining "

According to Geertz(1973/2000) what culture does is to maintain as well as transform order in a society. In performing such a central function,

- a) culture provides individuals and groups of individuals with psychological structures that guide various aspects of their life.
- b) it steers them in their intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development.
- c) it offers them a rationale for their behavior, a prism through which to see it, and a measurement by which to evaluate it.

- d) it presents them with a basis for identity formation, thus helping them develop a sense of solidarity with other members of their community
- e) it shapes their aspiration and attitudes toward self and society.
- f) it equips them with a road map to explore the possibilities as well as limits of their individual rights and responsibilities.
- g) it nurtures in them prejudices and stereotypes that may prove to be detrimental to human understanding. Culture thus plays an overarching and overbearing role in the development of an individual.

3.6.1. Language and Culture

As mentioned earlier, among a host of other factors, success in L2 learning depends on a willingness to understand and follow the ways of the target communities.

The relationship between language and culture has been an area of study within anthropology, one of the parent disciplines of sociolinguistics which was widely discussed by Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956:221) who made an argument which is splendidly circular:

“ Apaches speak differently because they think differently; they think differently because they speak differently.”

He also (1956:213) claimed that different languages embody different models of the world. If this is true, so do cultures as culture is a reflection of language and language is a reflection of culture. Language and culture have an inextricable and interdependent relationship. In this respect Mitchell and Myles (2004:255) point out that "language and culture are not separate, but are acquired

together, with each providing support for the development of the other".

Quappe and Cantatore (2005:1) emphasized the importance of culture by equating it to water for a fish when they state:

“ A fish only discovers its needs for water when it is no longer in it. Our culture is like water for fish. It sustains us. We live and breathe in it.”

3.6.2. Language and Society

According to Loveday(1982:1) the discipline of socio-linguistics as the hyphenated name immediately points out to its central concerns: society and language. Simply put, it investigates and theorizes on the relationship between these two areas i.e. society and language. What then this relationship between language and society?(my own underlining).

Loveday (1982:1) continues to explain

"it is common knowledge that people speak differently according to their background and that it is frequently possible to relate aspects of a person's speech to their place of origin or education or social group or generation or even occupation among others."

Thus, language can be studied as a social phenomenon. In other words, it can be examined in relation to its social role, taking into account its various social facets.

Fishman (1965:67) emphasized the idea of language as a social phenomenon when he pointed out that socio-linguistics attempts to answer questions like:"who speaks what language to whom and when?"

3.6.3. How do language and culture work?

It is commonly accepted that language is a part of culture, and that it plays a very important role in it. Some social scientists consider that without language, culture would not be possible. Language simultaneously reflects culture, and is influenced and shaped by it. Brown (1994:165) describes the two as follows:

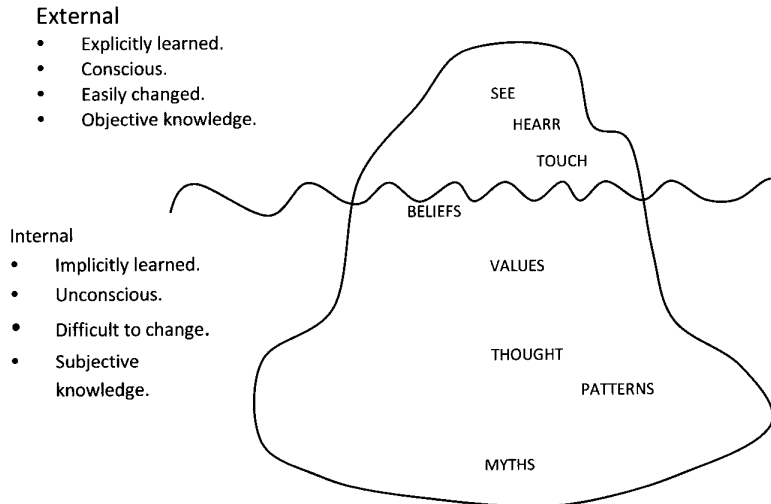
"A language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture."

In a word, culture and language are inseparable.

According to Jiang (2000:328-329) language is the mirror of culture, in the sense that people can see culture through its language.

Another metaphor used to symbolize language and culture is the iceberg.

Weaver's (1993) cultural iceberg (Below Figure) shows that a large proportion of our own culturally-shaped knowledge is invisible and mostly subconsciously applied in everyday interactions.



When we assume that people are similar to us, we might incur the risk that they are not. In other words, if we project similarities where

Hall & Hall (1995) as cited in Rebecca (1996:4) in, elaborating this famous metaphor of the iceberg, stated that :

"the famous metaphor of the iceberg indicates that many aspects of culture, such as certain beliefs, perceptions, and values, are below the surface of consciousness (in the submerged part of the iceberg). Other aspects of culture, like clothing and TV watching habits, are in the conscious are (above the waterline)."

The less conscious cultural aspects often influence how people learn languages.

The visible part is the language, with a small part of culture; the greater part, lying hidden beneath the surface, is the invisible aspect of culture. This author's understanding of language and culture is elaborated and conveyed by Jiang(2000:328-320) through the following three new metaphors.

1- From a philosophical view:

Language + culture = a living organism



flesh

blood

Language and culture makes a living organism; language is flesh, and culture is blood. Without culture, language would be dead; without language, culture would have no shape.

2- From a communicative view:

Language + culture = swimming (communication).



swimming skill water.

meanings, new rules to meet the needs of a particular situation.(Participatory Third culture stage).

Communication is swimming, language is swimming skill, and culture is water. Without language, communication would remain to a very limited degree(in very shallow water); without culture, there would be no communication at all.

3- From a pragmatic view:

Language + culture = transportation(communication).

↓ ↓
vehicle traffic light.

Communication is like transportation: language is the vehicle and culture is traffic light. Language makes communication easier and faster; culture regulates, sometimes promotes and sometimes hinders communication. In a word, language and culture, as different as they are, form a whole.

People of different cultures can refer to different things while using the same language forms. For example, when one says lunch, an Englishman may be referring to hamburger or pizza, but a Chinese man will most probably be referring to steamed bread or rice.

Thus the relationship between language and culture is made meaningful in language learning as "the person learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool"(Bennett, Bennett & Alen,2003:247).

3.6.4. How to build cultural awareness

According to Quappe & Cantatore (2005:1) 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. Why do we do things in that way? How do we see the world? why do we react in that particular way?

they are not, we might act inappropriately. So it is safer to assume differences until similarities are proven.

3.6.5. Levels of building cultural awareness:

There are several levels of cultural awareness that reflect how people grow to perceive cultural differences. Quappe & Cantatore (2005) list these levels as follows:

A: My way is the only way

At the first level people, are aware of their way of doing things, and their way is the only way.

At this stage, they ignore the impact of cultural differences. (Parochial stage).

B: I know their way, but my way is better

At the second level, people are aware of other ways of doing things, but still consider their way as the best one. In this stage, cultural differences are perceived as source of problems and people tend to ignore them or reduce their significance. (Ethnocentric stage).

C: My way and their way

At this level people are aware of their own way of doing things and others' ways of doing things, and they chose the best way according to the situation. At this stage people realize that cultural differences can lead both to problems and benefits and are willing to use cultural diversity to create new solutions and alternatives. (Synergistic stage).

D: Our way

This fourth and final stage brings people from different cultural background together for the creation of a culture of shared meanings. People dialogue repeatedly with others, create new

- a) we are not all the same.
- b) similarities and differences are both important.
- c) there are multiple ways to reach the same goal and to live life.
- d) the best way depends on the cultural contingency. Each situation is different and may require different solution.

3.6.6. How to manage cultural diversity?

It is generally agreed that the first step in managing diversity is to recognize it and learning not to fear it. Since everyone is the product of their own culture, we need to increase both self-awareness and cross-cultural awareness. In so doing there is no book of instructions to deal with cultural diversity, and no recipe to follow but certain attitudes help to bridge cultures. They are as follows:

a) admit that you don't know

Knowing that we don't know everything, that a situation does not make sense, that our assumptions may be wrong is part of the process of becoming culturally aware. Assume differences not similarities.

b) suspend judgments

collect as much information as possible so you can describe the situation accurately before evaluating it.

c) create empathy

in order to understand another person, we need to try standing in their shoes. Through empathy we learn how other people would like to be treated by us.

d) systematically check your assumptions

ask your colleagues for feedback and constantly check your assumptions to make sure that you clearly understand the situation.

e) become comfortable with ambiguity

the more complicated and uncertain life is, the more we tend to seek control. Assume that other people are as resourceful as we are and that their way will add to what we know. "if we always do, what we have always done, we will always get, what we always got."

f) celebrate diversity

As a company find ways of sharing the cultures of your diverse workforce. This will develop tolerance, diversity, identity, and recognition.

3.7. Cultural Globalization/ Glocalization

Cultural globalization is a huge elephant that has stealthily intruded into the arena of language education.

The impact of globalization on culture has become the topic of intense debate among scholars in different disciplines.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2008:38) a close and critical analysis of the relevant literature reveals the emergence of three schools of thought.

The first group represented by scientist Benjamin Barber et al, believes that some kind of cultural homogenization is taking place in the American culture constitutes the dominant center.

The second group represented by political scientist Samuel Huntington et al, believes that some kind of cultural heterogenization is taking place in which local cultural and religious identities are being strengthened mainly as a response to the threat posed by globalization.

The third group lead by cultural critic Arjan Appadurai et al, believes that both homogenization and heterogenization are taking place at the same time plunging the world in a creative as well as chaotic tension that results in "glocalization" where the global is localized and the local is globalized.

In becoming culturally aware people realize that:

The term is based on *dochakuka*, a Japanese word roughly meaning "global localization," which the Japanese business community often uses to refer to marketing issues, as in popular slogan "think globally, act locally." Cited in Kumaravadivelu (2008:45).

3.7.1. Teaching Culture

Although relevant to every era of applied linguistics, the study of cross-cultural communication has been often related to ELT. In spite of the fact that, the ground of discussion on language and culture has been cleared for ages, it is not until the 1980s that the need for teaching culture in language classrooms is indicated. This discussion reached its climax in the 1990s, making use of the efforts and writings of scholars such as Byram and Kramsch from the 1980s and onwards. In the same respect Tomalin (2008), argues that:

"The international role of the English language and globalization are the two main reasons to teach culture as a fifth skill, in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing. What the fifth language skill teaches you is the mindset and techniques to adapt your use of English to learn about, understand and appreciate the values, ways of doing things and unique qualities of other cultures. It involves understanding how to use language to accept differences, to be flexible and tolerant of ways of doing things which might be different to yours. It is an additional change that is expressed through the use of language."

3.7.2. Implications for Teaching Culture

Although controversial, the relation between language and culture, this does not stop scholars to give reasons of benefits of teaching culture.

For example, Kitao (2000:74) lists the benefits of teaching culture as follows:

- Studying culture gives students a reason to study the target language .
- From the perspective of learners, one of the major problems in language teaching is the conceive of the native speakers of target language as real person.
- The affect of motivation in the study of L2 has been proved by experts like Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1965, 1972).
- Besides these benefits, studying culture gives learners a liking for the native speakers of the target language.

McKay (2003:75) contends that culture influences language teaching in two ways: linguistic and pedagogical.

A: Linguistically, it affects the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language.

B: Pedagogically, it influences the choice of the language materials because cultural content of the language materials and the cultural basis of the teaching methodology are to be taken into consideration while deciding upon the language materials.

3.7.3. Which Culture to Teach?

Nowadays we are witnessing a change in language teaching. Many language educators support the inclusion of a cultural component in the teaching of English, arguing that having a cultural component in

The term "glocalization" was first coined by sociologist Roland Robertson(1992).

language teaching can promote international understanding, deepen an understanding of one's own culture, facilitate learners' visits to foreign countries, and motivate learners.(Adaskuo et al.,1990). Cited in Sandra and Wendy(2008:184). However, there is a typical question, for those who support explicit attention to culture in language materials, concerning what culture should be represented in textbooks and how should they be portrayed in the syllabus.

Kumaravadivelu (2008:174) has the answer ,when he argues that, the emphasis on global cultural consciousness does not mean that L2 learners should be introduced to the cultural beliefs and practices of all the people living on this planet. He refers to a cluster of cultural communities in the world, like the Europeans communities, South East Asian Nations, cultural communities in America(because of its global importance), China (because of its emerging prominence), or the Islamic world in general (because of its current relevance).

4. Discussion, Analysis and Interpretation:

The items of the culturally based test look as follows and the model answers are underlined:

1. When you hear the word 'porridge' you think of:

a) breakfast. b)lunch. **c) all correct.**

2. When you hear the word 'porridge' you think of :

a) eating it. b) drinking it. **c) both are possible.**

3. Who wears the trousers in your family? This means :

a) brother. b) father. **c) the head of your family.**

4. Bob is your uncle. It means he is:

a) your father's brother. b) your mother's brother. **c) the problem is solved.**

5. My family consists of three members. It means:

a) me, my wife and my son. b) me, my wife and my dog. **c) all correct.**

6. What color is the green card?

a) it is black. **b) it is pink.** c) it is green.

7. What is the opposite of black list?

a) white list. **b) green list.** c) both are correct.

8. Ve vill wait. Does this sentence make sense to you?

a) Yes, it means: **we will wait** b) I don't know. c) this is not English.

9. When you hear an Indian saying I am dirty. He means:

a) he is not clean. **b) he is thirty.** c) both are correct.

10. Nodding the head means:

a) yes. b) no. **c) all correct.**

11. The response to : He died yesterday; is:

a) wonderful! b) sorry. c) **all correct.**

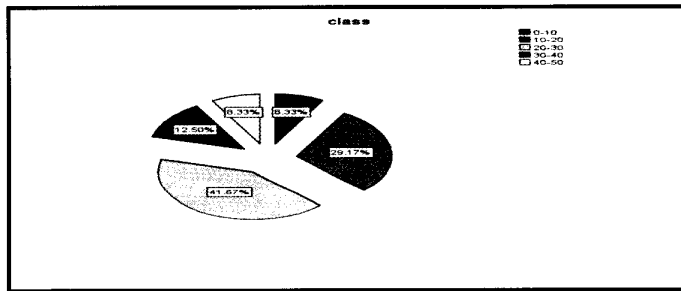
12. You said you will do the job,

a) didn't you? b) isn't it? **c) both are possible.**

The analysis of the obtained data revealed interesting and significant results. The performance of the student teachers in the culturally based test was very weak. The scores are very low and the overall mean was only 22 out of 100 marks for each student and more than (90%) of the students' scores are below the average. The following table clearly illustrates the students' results in the culturally based test.

Students Results in the Culturally Based Test:

Scores	Frequency	Percent
50-100	0	0%
40-50	2	8.3%
30-40	3	12.5%
20-30	10	41.7%
10-20	7	29.2%
0-10	2	8.3%
Total	24	100%



Mean 22.2 Minimum 0 Maximum 44.4

From the table above it can be clearly noticed that the performance of the students is very low. The overall mean of their achievement in the culturally based test is 22.2. Although the foreign students have different cultural backgrounds, from 4 different countries, their performance is nearly the same to the Sudanese students. This could be attributed to the fact that these students were only exposed to their native cultures C1. However, 2 students from Kenya gave correct answers for item(2) of the test which states **“When you hear the word 'porridge' you think of”** a) eating it. b) drinking it. c) both are possible

Of course both answers are possible, although porridge is eaten for lunch in Yemen, the 2 Yemeni students answered with both correct because when they came to Sudan they found that porridge is also eaten as breakfast. However, Sudanese students answered with breakfast according to their culture.

Taking another example from the proficiency test item(4) which is neutral to all students, Africans, including Sudanese students, and Asian students, no one of them gave the correct answer. The item states:

“ My family consists of three members”. It means:

- a) me, my wife and my son. b) me, my wife and my dog. c) all correct.

Of course all answers are correct because in Britain for instance, the dog is considered to be as one of the family members , which doesn't exist in African or Asian cultures. Thus the students' answers are quite justifiable because they are not exposed to such culture.

The above results and these striking examples, in the researchers' viewpoint, support the hypotheses of the study and clearly illustrate that success in language is governed, among a host of other factors,

by cultural factors and the cultural background of the learner. This is reason enough to teach culture and incorporate it in language curriculum. Foreign language teachers should be foreign culture teachers, having the ability to experience and analyze both the home and target cultures. (Byram, Morgan and colleagues, 1994). Therefore, taking an awareness-raising approach makes learners more sensitive to cultural differences and different variables involved in language use (Kando, 2004).

4.1. Findings

From the previous results one can deduce the following:

- Culturally based texts are important in raising student teachers cultural awareness.
- Absence of cultural capsules in the curricula negatively influences student achievement and performance in EIL.
- Knowing the nuances of the target language enables students to assimilate its cultural aspects.
- Exposure to FL culture enables learners to tolerate and understand other cultures.
- Fluency in L 2 can be affected by the degree of cultural narrow mindedness of the learner.
- Cultural awareness of L 2 eases comprehension of listening and reading texts (discourse).
- Teaching cultural pluralism encourages recognition and respect of C 2.
- Knowing C 2 raises student teachers awareness of their own culture.

Of course both answers are possible. This is because in their culture they drink porridge, however when they came to Sudan, they were exposed to a new culture in which porridge is eaten. However, most of the Sudanese students say that they think of eating it, according to their culture and because they are not exposed to an other culture in which porridge is drunk as in Kenya for example.

Another interesting example is from Yemen, in response to question (1) of the test which states "When you hear the word 'porridge' you think of" :

a) lunch. b) breakfast. c) all Correct.

- i) Cultural factors can cause hindrance and communication barriers.

4. 2. Recommendations

In the light of the aforementioned results the researcher recommends and suggests a number of steps, techniques, and procedures that could be followed to help in raising student teachers cultural awareness of EIL. These suggestions are concerned with, learning theories, methodology, curricula, pedagogy, and teaching of culture.

1. The researcher calls for the adoption of the socio-cultural theory of learning to serve and accommodate the needs and the diverse cultural world of learners in real situations and real worlds.
2. So this is a wider call for language educators to adopt the intercultural approach in order to accommodate and take into account the wider social and cultural aspects to serve learners not only to possess communicative competence but intercultural competence for intercultural communication as well as to effectively use English as an IL.
3. The researcher calls for adopting a socially sensitive EIL pedagogy through adopting a third place or what is known as contact zones through glocalization. Language educators are advised to develop global cultural consciousness in their learners.
4. In learning and teaching culture our programs should be sensitive to the challenges posed by cultural globalization.

5. Thus, if we are serious about preparing our language learners to face the challenges of the twenty-first century, we need to foster in them global cultural consciousness.
6. This could be achieved through making balance between the local and the global and the rootedness and the openness.

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