

## Exploring Teachers' Awareness of Integrating Culture to Promote EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension

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### Abstract:

The current study aims at exploring teachers' awareness of the significance of incorporating culture to promote learners' listening comprehension. Moreover, it endeavours to unearth the strategies they usually adopt and their efficiency in structuring listening activities with the cultural embodiment. To this end, the study is conducted through a mixed-method approach. A Questionnaire and a semi-structured interview are administered to seven first-year oral expression teachers. The results show that the participants admit the crucial role of culture to buttress students' listening comprehension skills. Nonetheless, the strategies they usually cull are irrelevant. Thereupon, the paper reveals and discusses the main reasons behind this strategic misuse along with pedagogical implications for teachers and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Culture; Culture in EFL classroom; Listening comprehension; Teaching listening in EFL contexts.

**Jel Classification Codes:** XN1, XN2.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of research, listening had been recognized as the least investigated skill. However, regarding its role in language learning, the skill has been gaining more attention. Nunan (1998) believes that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students spend over 50% of the time functioning in listening. Despite that, they find difficulties in comprehending audio inputs; the fact which led to giving precedence to investigate the nature of the skill before the techniques for teaching it. Accordingly, Buck (2001) declared that comprehension is an active construction of meaning that presupposes a great deal of general non-linguistic knowledge about the world we live in. This leads to position culture at a prior place that assists in arriving at the appropriate interpretation. Especially that, as Kramsch (2014) affirmed, every language level and structure is culturally canned. Kramsch's claim entails the possible relationship between the quality of comprehension and cultural schemata that L2 listeners hold. As noted by Anderson and Lynch (2000), success in listening hinges on the schematic knowledge, knowledge of the context, and systematic knowledge that listeners have.

A Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with some first-year oral expression teachers showed that first-year EFL learners at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 University have listening comprehension difficulties. The case which led to think of the strategies the instructors use for structuring their listening classes, and the extent to which they involve cultural data.

Commensurable with what is mentioned, the boost to conduct the current study is to explore the degree to which oral expression teachers are aware of the significance of presenting audio cultural contents. Besides, it also endeavours to investigate the relevance of the listening strategies that they usually adopt. To this end, a self-designed questionnaire has been conjured up, in addition to a semi-structured interview that has been conducted with the sample. Accordingly, this query colligates two main research questions:

- To what extent are first-year EFL teachers of oral expression at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine University aware of the importance of incorporating culture to promote L2 learners' listening comprehension?
- How do first-year EFL teachers of oral expression at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine University teach listening?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Definition of Culture

Culture is an endless world that encompasses every single detail about an ethnic system of life. It has been defined in myriad ways. According to Webster dictionary (1993), it has been expounded as the cultivation of soil, the training of mind, social behaviour patterns, daily living and attitudes, values thoughts in addition to all the human constructions and achievements that are transmitted through generations. Within this frame of reference, there is no social aspect that it is not culturally canned. For Hall (1959) culture is a man's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched by it. It determines the way people express themselves, their emotions, their thinking,

their problems solving manners, in addition to their architecture, politics, and economics. Hence, culture is a community's spirit that establishes its own identity.

For the sake of facilitating research, according to Hammerly (2001), the concept has been broken down into three categories including information or factual culture, behavioural culture, lastly, achievement culture. In the same vein, Jing (2010) declared that it can be divided into major and minor themes which are ranked according to their importance; they are recognized as big "C" and little "c". Thereupon, the big "C" is the shallow level of a culture; it embraces all the products and contributions of society including politics, economy, history, literature, fine arts, sciences, and geography (Ait Aissa, 2016). However, the little "c" touches the deep sense of a target culture. Lafayette (1997) maintained that this cultural area encompasses recognizing and explaining everyday active cultural patterns such as eating, shopping, and greeting people, in addition to, every passive pattern, for instance, social stratification, marriage, and work, finally, acting appropriately in common everyday situations.

## **2.2. Listening Comprehension in the EFL Context**

Comprehending aural scripts is not an automatic eventuality of the direct exposure to auditory data, nonetheless, it is the outcome of a listener's cognitive attempts to template a mental model that corresponds to the conveyed message. Anderson and Lynch (1988) averred that effective listening incorporates an active engagement in the process of comprehension. On this account, in an attempt to comprehend different audible resources, EFL learners experience intellectual hybridity to come up with a coherent comprehension. Worthington and Fitch-Hauser (2018) proclaimed that to achieve an appropriate interpretation, L2 students need to be proficient at least in two areas "literal comprehension and critical comprehension" (p.23). Ergo, successful listening implicates different interpretative levels that lead the learner to reach an appropriate comprehension.

## **2.3. Teaching Listening in EFL Classroom**

As it has been mentioned in the foregoing section, listening comprehension is a mental activity that encompasses interwoven processes. Accordingly, two visions of listening processing have dominated the field of education. These are the bottom-up processing and the top-down interpretation (Nunan,1996). Bottom-up processing is the hierarchical construction of meanings starting from the smallest units of the language to the entire text. Nunan (1996) suggested that bottom-up processing is a cognitive fashion that is based on decoding the sounds that one hears linearly, on the one hand. On the other hand, the top-down interpretation view assumes that the listener starts from the contextual cues and his/ her prior knowledge in order to reconstruct meanings that parallel the auditory data. The scholar (1996) alleged that this mental processing requires the context of the situation which includes "knowledge of the topic at hand, the speaker or speakers and their relationship to the situation as well as to each other and prior events" (p. 53). Therefore, within this view, the listener tends to have a more active role in establishing meaning.

Schema theory is a theoretical underpinning to the top-down approach. The psychologist Bartlett (1932) who

laid the foundation for this approach argued that the knowledge that we carry in our heads is threaded into patterns that are embedded in a form of scripts of several situations and events. These scripts are built up from our past experiences. The current idea became crucial to listening comprehension during the 80s and the 90s. The projection of this theory has been noticed in EFL teaching. Teachers were encouraged to adopt this approach in order to help students building prior knowledge, access the background knowledge, and use it as a bridge to achieve new learning (Rea & Mercuri, 2006). Hence, within this theory, some activities and procedures have been suggested for preparing the three phases of listening, namely, pre-listening, during listening, and post-listening activities.

### 2.3.1. Pre-Listening Activities

These activities aim at activating the prior knowledge among the students to successfully assign meanings to the auditory input. Besides, they aim at identifying the purpose of listening beforehand (Schwartz, 1998). Some classroom activities have been suggested as follows:

- **Brainstorming:** this activity is effective for schema- activation that can trigger listeners' prior knowledge and facilitate the learning of new information (Zaid, 1995).

- **Advanced organizers:** this procedure helps learners to draw their attention to the key elements in the text and it provides them with background clues to help them arrive at appropriate interpretations (Mayer, 2003).

- **Graphic organizers:** these are the graphic representations that model the main concepts of the input; they help learners to activate their pre-existing knowledge and predict the content of the script (Dye, 2000).

### 2.3.2. During- Listening Activities

Nunan (1999) maintains that the during-listening activities aim at helping learners to actively make meaning to the spoken language by connecting the new information with the pre-existing knowledge based on linguistic and non-linguistic clues Best and Kahn (1989) advocate the role of note- taking activity as it encourages listeners to reconstruct meanings in their manner using their own words.

### 2.3.3. Post-Listening Activities

The current activities usually aim at measuring students' comprehension of the input, reinforcing the newly acquired knowledge, and assimilating it into the pre-existing schematic storage, in addition; this stage helps at enabling teachers to reflect on their students' difficulties for processing the aural materials (Schwartz, 1998). This can be realized through expanding graphic organizers including semantic/ story maps, comparison charts, and T- charts. Besides, doing role plays, identifying relationships between the speakers, and writing summaries of the spoken texts, are also effective activities in this stage (Almutairi, 2012). This theory is regarded to be effective in teaching listening because it considers the world with its cultural dimensions as the key variable on which listeners rely in order to arrive at the conveyed meaning.

## 2.4. Culture and Listening Comprehension in the EFL Classroom

The 21st-century teaching-learning realm is built on accompanying culture within all the language skills, and listening is not an exception. Hence, many studies have been launched to investigate the extent to which cultural knowledge affects the quality of listening comprehension among EFL learners. For instance, Sadighi and Zare (2002), Bakhtiarvand and Adinevand (2011), and Basavand and Sadeghi (2014) attained evidence which supports the positive effect that cultural background knowledge has in amending learners' listening comprehension. They conducted experiments in which students were provided with culturally loaded scripts during the whole listening courses. The lessons were presented according to the tenets of the schema- theory to activate the participants' pre-existing knowledge, enable them to relate the newly learned information with the previous one and to assess their comprehension. In a nutshell, the cultural schema has been deemed as a linchpin factor that assists to effectuate the flow of interpretation.

The present study is an attempt to explore teachers' awareness about integrating culture along with the strategies they adopt in order to promote L2 learners' listening comprehension. The following sections reveal the methodological procedures that have been adopted including the participants, the instruments, and data analysis.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

The study was conducted with seven first-year teachers who have had experience in teaching oral expression at Setif 2 University. Five of them answered the questionnaire, and two accepted to make the interview. The respondents were chosen according to the multi-sampling technique (Teddlie & Yu ,2007). This technique denotes convenient and purposeful selection. The latter stands for the systematic selection of certain groups, individuals, or sites to be investigated which essentially matches the research problem (Reviere,1996). In addition, the former is "a non-probability process wherein the observation units are selected based on the availability of participants" (Aparasu, 2011, p. 113). Thus, the choice of the sample is based on certain considerations which are believed to be helpful for conducting the present inquiry. In addition, Creswell (2009) suggested that the purposeful selection does not necessarily require a large number of participants. Hence, the scholar asserted that the studies which are more qualitatively directed tend to aim at understanding facts rather than overgeneralizing findings.

### 3.2. Instruments

In order to evoke information from the participants to inquire into the extent to which they are aware of the importance of incorporating culture in listening comprehension activities, a self-designed questionnaire has been conjured up. The questionnaire was first piloted for measuring its validity and the clarity of the questions. Questions number one and three have been rewritten into closed-ended forms. After making the necessary adjustments, this research tool was administered to five first-year teachers of oral expression. It contains five main questions. Each

question presents choices with chances to sustain the selected answers with justifications. Question number one (Q1) aims at revealing teachers' conceptualisations about the nature of listening comprehension. (Q2) seeks to explore the weight that teachers give to the cultural awareness deficiencies among the students. Therefore, a bunch of listening comprehension problems has been suggested, and the respondents were asked to order them from the most to the least serious problems. (Q3) addresses the teachers' selection of the topics. (Q4) includes a blend of schema-theory approach procedures and bottom-up tenets. The participants were asked to give the architecture of their listening classes through revealing the procedures that they use. (Q5) represents the used procedures for evaluating the listeners' comprehension quality with justifications.

The second research instrument is a semi-structured interview. This tool was designed to gain more in-depth insights into the problem and to compromise the drawbacks of the questionnaire by digging for supplementary information. Two teachers accepted to carry out the interview. They received three open-ended questions. The crux of these questions is to answer the second research question. Question one aimed at understanding the way the interviewees structure their listening lesson. Question two was about the 'ideal' listening class that participants endeavour to create. The third question addressed the problems that they usually encounter for developing a successful listening comprehension class.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

After gathering the needed information, the obtained answers from the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively by using the Excel software. As far as qualitative data are concerned, the analysis process was based on Dörnyei (as cited in O'Brien & Saldanha, 2014) analytical suggestion. The author claims that the qualitative content analysis associates four stages which are respectively, "identifying themes, looking for patterns, making interpretations, and building a theory" (Dörnyei as cited in O'Brien & Saldanha, 2014 p. 190). This suggestion is detailed and organized.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire has been designed in order to collect data about the respondents' awareness of the importance of incorporating culture within their listening activities. The analysis procedures were fulfilled by means of coding procedures for closed-ended questions. In addition, content analysis was applied in order to deal with the open-ended questions.

#### Item one:

**Table 1.** Teachers' views about the nature of listening comprehension

A	B	C	D	Total
40%	0%	60%	0%	100%

This question attempts to reveal the way teachers approach the construct of listening comprehension. The suggestions represent three historical doctrines that listening witnessed which are respectively:

- Listening is a passive skill and comprehension is the result of repetition.
- Listening is based on storing of information and comprehension is the regurgitating of the stored fragments.
- Listening embeds cognitive attempts and comprehension is the result of hybrid complex cognitive procedures.

According to the results, 2 teachers out of 5 seem to believe that listening comprehension does not require mental procedures; it is a passive skill that is realized due to rehearsals. Besides, none of the participants think that it is heavily based on memorization. However, the majority of teachers (60%) tend to argue that listening implies interwoven mental procedures. This finding confirms the claims of sundry scholars (Rost ,1990; Anderson & Lynch 1988; & Buck 2000). In general, teachers believe that comprehension is an intricate process that entails a bivalent interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic resources.

#### Item Two:

The aim behind this question is to know what cultural themes teachers usually present. The options were categorized according to big “C” and small “c” themes.

**Option 1:** Historical and literal topics

**Option 2:** Life styles and customs

**Option 3:** Values and beliefs

**Option 4:** Political topics

**Option 5:** Fashion and arts

**Table 2.** Teachers’ selections of topics

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
0%	100%	100%	20%	20%

Based on the data displayed above, the majority of teachers rely on small “c” themes for structuring the auditory contents. However, (20%) integrate political topics and (20%) also of the participants select fashion and arts. Historical and literal topics are totally neglected. Ait Aissa (2016) and Laohiwiryanon (2011) both agree on the significance of small “c” themes in boosting intercultural communicative competence.

The second part of this question is dedicated to know the rationale behind the teachers’ choices. Qualitative analyses have been applied to decode the obtained answers.

**Table 3.** Teachers' justifications behind their choices

Category	Answers	Answers' frequency
Students' needs	"I think students need to know exclusive topics especially the daily life and customs of the foreign language people and the	2 (40%)
Students' wants	corresponding culture"	1 (20%)
A personal choice	"The choices usually depend on learners' interests" "It basically stems from a personal choice which is certainly devoid of professionalism; although, it represents an alternative to the absent syllabus and training in the subject matter."	2 (40%)

Forty percent of teachers choose the audible content based on students' needs, and (20%) claim to be dependent on the learners' personal wants. Nonetheless, forty percent declared that the selection of topics is purely their own responsibility. Meanwhile, researchers like Rafieyen, et al. (2013) suggest that considering students' interests has a crucial role in elevating their motivation to acquire the target culture.

#### Item three:

The aim behind the current question is to figure out the extent to which teachers give importance to the strategies that help fostering cultural schemata. They were provided with some bottom-up tenets, in addition to activities that stem from the schema-theory principles which are believed to be effective for teaching culture.

Based on the results, the majority rely on using question-preview activities for brainstorming. Forty percent claimed integrating keywords pre-teaching activities, yet (40%) do not use them. This may be due to the instructors' unawareness of their effectiveness for boosting the students' comprehension. Apparently, regarding the Advanced organizers, the respondents often trigger the students' predictions for the script beforehand (80%). Compared to the other procedures, the activity mentioned above is the most used; (40%) mentioned that they sometimes work on "enabling students to verbalize relationships among the concepts to be presented," but (40%) never do. Concerning the use of the graphic organizer activities, there is an amalgamation of procedures that proves that teachers often



endeavour to activate their students' pre-existing knowledge.

As for the during-listening activities, teachers sometimes adopt these activities, which help students relate new information to the previous one. The use of these activities is modelled at different rates. Most of them (60%) encourage note-taking, (80%) pursue their learners' comprehension by asking them to complete charts and graphs. Nevertheless, only one teacher always draws listeners' attention towards the speakers' attitudes and relationships. This strategy is believed to help listeners make appropriate inferences and critically decode the embedded messages.

The analytical reading of the use of the bottom-up processes shows that most participants always focus on grammar structures with (80%), and (30%) of them always integrate activities to identify sequence makers. To some extent, there is much heed to grammar. This fact contradicts the previous answers concerning the selection of the scripts' themes. Scholars claimed that filling students' cultural awareness requires upgraded teaching procedures, which draw the students' attention to cultural notions and raise their awareness to the differences and similarities between the mother culture and the target one to reinforce their open-mindedness and tolerance. Three suggestions may justify the obtained results of the second part of this section:

- The way teachers approach listening comprehension seems to have a bearing on the quality of the activities they use; especially that there were answers that show that some teachers still deem listening as a passive skill. For this reason, they always apply some bottom-up grammatical teaching processes, which are believed to be ineffective.

- The strategies they adopt may reflect the little attention devoted to culture compared to grammar.

- Some respondents appear to be unaware of the effective ways to incorporate culture in their listening classes based on the irrational thread between their answers.

In a nutshell, this analytic view is not meant to diminish the role of bottom-up instructions; however, the implicative notion intended to be highlighted is the rational use of these strategies. Researchers like Goh (2000) argue that bottom-up tenets in L2 listening instructions are pivotal in fostering rapid word recognition. However, grammar is not approved in this context.

#### **Item four:**

This question is divided into two parts. The first part is an attempt to reveal the post-listening activities. The options are techniques inspired from the literature review that are believed to effectively activate learners' cultural awareness and measure it.

As mentioned above, the current question does not aim to measure the teachers' evaluation techniques quality; rather, it reflects the processes they adopt. It seems that teachers use various ways to measure the learners' listening comprehension, except for the last suggestion of assimilation that is neglected.

The second part of this question is dedicated to know the reasons behind the participants' answers and to know

whether they have focal points to be assessed or it is just a general quantitative measurement of knowledge. The responses were qualitatively analysed as follows:

**Table 4.** Teachers' justification behind their assessment procedures choice(s)

Category	Answers
No justification	The teacher provided no justification
Accuracy and fluency	<p>"On the one hand, with regard to the evaluation of the listening comprehension, my students always listen and then fill in the gaps with the exact and accurate words and expressions"</p> <p>"On the other hand, the evaluation of the speaking skill is more continuous and qualitative"</p>
Contextual appropriateness	"They will be able to learn not only the structures learnt but also their use in a context."
Intake measurement	"we need to ask for the students' output back after they have had the listening input."

The answers show that most teachers use quantitative assessment methods like filling in the gaps, and recalling activities. Meanwhile, cultural notions in their evaluation are not clearly marked although they all claimed the use of culturally loaded scripts, based on their previous answers. This reflects their global and non-limited vision towards the notion of comprehension which it rather demands the sociocultural knowledge. However, there is only one teacher who implicitly mentioned the cultural dimension by referring to the contextual appropriateness.

**Item five:**

The items (check the appendices) represent listening comprehension barriers faced by EFL learners. According to your own experience and analysis, reorder them from the most to the least important problem.

This question has been analysed quantitatively. The options have been divided into two intervals: "cultural awareness problems and sound-related problems". The obtained upshots are presented in the table beneath as follows.

**Table 5.** Teachers' ranking of listening comprehension problems

Cultural awareness problems	Sound-related issues
1 (20%)	4 (80%)

Based on the obtained responses, only one teacher who perceives cultural deficiencies, (unfamiliarity with most of the topics, Difficulties in maintaining appropriate interpretations and making convenient inferences, Lack of contextual knowledge), as serious problems for comprehending aural contents. Nevertheless, eighty percent believe that those problems have little bearing on the quality of comprehension. They give priority to sound, accent, and speed problems.

#### 4.2 Semi- Structured Interview Results

The qualitative data obtained from this tool are believed to compromise the misunderstandings that may occur in the questionnaires, and to unveil the strategies that teachers usually wield for introducing culture within their listening comprehension classes. The answers were analysed qualitatively.

**Question One: How do you usually structure your listening comprehension lesson in terms of (content, activities, techniques, and assessment)?**

The purpose behind this question is to figure out the general flow of the listening comprehension class in oral expression sessions.

**Table 6.** Teachers' listening comprehension class structuring

Question One	Category	Answers
Content	Lifestyles of native speakers	"...the content is basically underpinned in the life styles of different native speakers of English, namely Americans."
	Social background and level status	"I usually choose the content that is more authentic and suitable to learners as regards their level and social background."
Technique	According to Bloom's taxonomy	"At first, recalling, then filing the gap and at last a

		synthesis of what they heard” “The activities and techniques are mostly filling in the gaps followed by a bunch of grammatical and phonetic clarifications”
Assessment	Summative based on recalling	“It is more summative”
	Summative based on synthesis	“... at last, a synthesis of what they heard.”

**Table 6.** Teachers’ listening comprehension class structuring (continued)

The results show the way the respondents structure and build up their listening comprehension sessions. Three dimensions have been highlighted “the content, the techniques, and the assessment procedures”. Accordingly, the participants gave varied answers. One claimed the use of contents which underpin to the native speakers’ lifestyles and more precisely “the Americans”. The second teacher declared reliance on placement test for choosing level- adequate themes. In this vein, it is necessary to undertake preliminary procedures to portray the needs, the wants, and the lacks of the students in order to present a variety of topics which address most of the students rather than relying on a limited type.

**Question Two: It is widely argued that culture is highly important for enhancing EFL learners’ language proficiency in general and listening comprehension quality in particular. Based on this preamble, what is the ideal listening class for you?**

The aim behind this question is to obtain deep insights about the teachers’ views towards integrating culture.

**Table 7.** Teachers’ views towards culture in listening classes

Category	Answers
A culturally canned listening class	“The ideal listening class for me is the class that comes with previous background knowledge of the target culture.”
A culturally canned listening class	“The omnipresence of the cultural dimension in the foreign language classroom can by no means be overlooked...”

The table above indicates a total agreement among teachers about the necessity of integrating culture as a facilitating factor for enhancing the quality of listening comprehension. Besides, one of the teachers shed light on a point that is the need for systematic instructions which guide teachers to establish effective pedagogical procedures for presenting culture. s/ he added that incorporating culture is not “an easy matter”; it is more about how to integrate it rather than focusing on what to integrate. This comment paves the way to discuss the upcoming point which covers the problems teachers face for presenting culture within listening activities in the EFL context.

**Question Three: What are the barriers that hinder you to create this ideal class?**

This question is a completion to the first one as it deals with dilemmas teachers encounter to present an ideal listening class in relation to culture integration.

**Table 8.** teachers’ problems for embedding culture within listening comprehension

Category	Answers
Lack of training	“The barriers that impede the systematicity of raising awareness and sensitivity of the target and native cultures basically stem from the dearth of training...”
Lack of syllabi	“Teachers face the problem of the culture ignorance due to the lack of permanent training.” “... and the ambiguity of the syllabus”.

As it is displayed above, dearth of training and syllabus ambiguity are the main issues that oral expression teachers face. These two factors are deemed as vital for conducting successful listening comprehension class which is based on the cultural template.

**4.3. Discussion of Findings**

Commensurable with the data exposed above, forty percent of teachers (Q1) believe that listening is a passive skill, and comprehension is basically hinging on extensive exposure to the audio resources. In this regard, scholars bemoan the fact that there is no cut agreement upon the components of the listening skill; however, what seems to be commonly shared is their emphasis on listening as an active act. For instance, Rost (1990) clearly stated that listening is an active construction of meaning and the linguistic forms only trigger interpretation. This leads to thinking of another level that parallels the outward semiotic signs, that is, the non-linguistic dimension. Buck (2001) maintained that “any process of text comprehension pre-supposes a great deal of general non-linguistic knowledge about the world we live in and how things work within it” (p.19). The aim behind these testimonies is to highlight the significance of culture as a

crucial part that is embedded within the non-linguistic schemata. Nonetheless, giving passing attention to this fact can negatively affect the way teachers perceive culture. In this line of description, (Q5) sustains this claim. Only twenty percent of teachers think that cultural deficiencies are important problems that lead to inappropriate comprehension. Yet Buck (2001) averred that because each community has its appropriacy and rules, it will be very difficult for listeners to come up with a suitable interpretation of the events being presented within the audio materials. He further believed that, in this case, listeners would rely heavily on linguistic information.

Despite the fact that teachers rely on small "c" themes (Q3), the strategies they opt for to present them seem to be irrational and inconvenient. (Q 4) and (Q2 in the interview) revealed a strategic miscellany between top-down and bottom-up teaching processes. Whereas, eighty percent alleged that they always introduce grammatical structures, and (60%) use activities to identify sequence markers. Accordingly, Buck (2001) avouched that people communicate idea units that are more strung by coherence than grammatical forms. Thus, the over-reliance on grammar structures appears to be unfavourable since it does not serve the comprehension requirements.

Both questionnaire (Q5) and interview (Q1) indicate the non-delimited assessment process. None of the teachers mentioned the necessity of measuring the cultural intake for judging their learners' listening comprehension, nor did they elucidate the cognitive components that should be focused on in the post-listening phase. On the grounds of this, it is possible to say that the assessment process looks to be random and without determined pillars. Likewise, the irrational thread between the teachers' responses unearths a contradiction in conducting listening classes. In the way that, all of them proclaimed a total utilization of small c themes, but assessing cultural awareness appears to be ignored or superficial. In this vein, it has been maintained that in order to validly attain assessment, teachers must first scrutinizingly examine the nature of listening comprehension and identify the critical components that need to be addressed (Buck,2001; Henning, Dunkel & Chaudron, 2013). Hence, there should be a harmonized flow between the theoretical bases and their application in the listening class.

Moreover, the gathered data also reflected some problems that impede the successful flow of culture teaching within listening classes (Q3 in the interview). Two main dilemmas have been demonstrated, lack of official syllabi and lack of thorough training. Tran-Hoang-Thu (2010) commented that "foreign language teachers lack cultural competence in the language they teach" (p.32). He added that that is why it is imperative to sustain the instructors with training to assist them in presenting the social notions of the target group effectively. Similarly, the same author commented that "language curriculum can serve as a guide to lead teachers and learners to the desired cultural objectives of a certain language course" (p.33). Consequently, these factors should be considered by policymakers in a bid to enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The current study is an attempt that colligates two main objectives. Foremost, it aims at exploring teachers' awareness of the significance of culture for buttressing the quality of listening comprehension. Second, it also seeks to unearth the strategies they use for integrating culture. Before stating the findings, it is worth noting that this investigation is more qualitative than quantitative thereby, it is meant to understand facts rather than overgeneralizing results. The collected data suggest two entangled problems. Although all the respondents agree upon the omnipresence of culture in the listening activities, their answers reflect the opposite that may be attributable to two reasons. First, teachers hold non-operationalized conceptions about the nature of listening and its requirements for attaining with a successful interpretation. Second, they lack extensive training, in addition, to structured curricula and textbooks in order to guide them with methodological glances about cultural notions and the effective strategies for presenting them.

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## **7.Appendices:**

### **Questionnaire**

Dear teachers, this questionnaire is devised in order to explore the way you present listening in the oral expression classes. Your responses are believed to be a valuable contribution to understand the way you perceive listening and how you teach this skill. Thank you in advance for your highly appreciated collaboration.

1. Among the following suggestions, what is listening comprehension for you? (Tick the appropriate answer)

- The ability to reproduce chunks of information due to the extensive exposure to oral input.
- The ability to store pieces of information and recall them.
- The ability to use linguistic and non-linguistic cues in order to maintain appropriate interpretations.
- Others:.....

2. The following items represent listening comprehension barriers faced by EFL learners. According to your own experience and analysis, reorder them from the most to the least serious problem.

The problem	The order
The bad quality of sound system	
Unfamiliarity with most of the topics	
Unfamiliarity with some English accents	
Difficulties in decoding the semantic meanings of words	
Difficulties in listening to long scripts and keep all information in their minds	
Difficulties in approaching the appropriate meanings because of the speaking speed especially that is uncontrolled	
Difficulties in maintaining appropriate interpretations and making convenient inferences	
Lack of contextual knowledge	
Losing concentration especially because of the types of the topics	

3. What are the topics that you usually opt for?

- Historical and literal topics
- Life styles and customs
- Values and beliefs
- Political topics
- Fashion and arts
- Others.....
- Justify your choice (s):

4. As an oral expression teacher, which ones from the following procedures do you usually use for structuring your listening comprehension class, which ones do you occasionally use, and which ones do you never use?

Items	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Never
Using question- preview activities				
Integrating key words pre-teaching activities				
Using visual representations of concepts to be mentioned in the scripts				

Enabling students to verbalize relationships among the concepts to be presented				
Helping them to predict the content of a spoken text from its title or from accompanying pictures or photographs				
Previewing some features of spoken language that would facilitate the comprehension of certain spoken texts				
Encouraging learners to take notes of the important information using their own words				
Asking them to complete charts, grids, and fills while listening				
Asking them to make predictions about the next incidents				
Asking them to analyse, and interpret speakers' attitudes				
Asking them to identify the referents of pronouns in an utterance				
Asking them to identify the time reference of an utterance				
Asking them to recognize the order in which words occurred in utterances				
Integrating activities to identify sequence markers				
Focusing on grammatical structures				

5. You usually evaluate your students' comprehension quality through:

- Asking them to perform role- plays based on the listening materials
- Organizing discussions in order to analysing, and evaluating speakers' attitudes, behaviours, and points of view
- Asking them to prepare oral presentations

- Asking them to develop summaries
- Predicting some real life problems and eliciting the possible solutions
- Others.....
- Justify your answers: