

Teachers' Perspectives towards the Impact of Globalization on Promoting their Role in Developing Learners' Cultural Awareness in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Learning or teaching a foreign language is not only restricted in mastering its linguistic system, it also necessitates becoming aware of the culture it carries. Culture is regarded as the fifth skill of the language, as its integration helps the learners to become better communicators. Cultural awareness can be defined as understanding culture and being aware of the different beliefs and ideas. Along with the Enter your abstract here (an abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the article). Enter your abstract here (an abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the article). Enter your abstract here (an abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the article). Changes in the educational approaches and the emphasis on global education, teachers' qualifications and roles have changed. Therefore, teachers' education and development in terms of cultural awareness are important steps in pre- and in-service teaching. This paper investigated teachers' perspectives towards the impact of globalization on promoting their role in developing learners' cultural awareness in the English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Data were collected through administering a questionnaire to 100 EFL teachers in the Algerian universities. The obtained results reflected the teachers' positive attitudes of EFL teachers towards globalization as it has positively affected their role in developing learners' cultural awareness. Globalization helped the teachers to develop their cultural awareness first. Then, it helped them to utilize authentic materials, and create real opportunities for the learners to use the target language. Moreover, it helped them to acquire new teaching methods and techniques in collaboration with other teachers all over the world. All in all, globalization enhanced teachers' role in developing learners' cultural awareness in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: globalization; EFL; cultural awareness; learners.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, globalization is an overwhelming world trend. The one world has been undergoing tremendous changes, due to the recent quick movement in globalization.

Held (1999, p.9) defines globalization as “ the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa”.

Carnoy (1999) argues that globalization means more competition, which means that a nation's investment, production, and innovation are not limited by national borders. Globalization has become possible only because of the technological infrastructure provided by telecommunications, information systems, microelectronic equipment, and computer- controlled transportation systems.

Education is a major concern for all societies. as the foundation and essential driving force of economic, social and human development, education is at the heart of the change that is dramatically affecting our world in the areas of science, technology, economics and culture.

The potential effects of globalization on education are many and far-reaching due to its scale and nature. Because the main bases of globalization are knowledge, intensive information and innovation, globalization should have a profound impact on education (Carnoy, 2002).

In the era of globalization, boundaries between schools and homes, schools and societies, between different disciplines and spheres of knowledge are bound to disappear and be replaced by integrated communities of learners.

The trends and characteristics of globalization call for a total change of the teaching profession. The teacher in the globalized world must be prepared to think globally and act locally in matters relating to

education. How cultural awareness affects language teaching or how much the learners are really aware of the culture is among the current issues of foreign or second language teaching.

English language learning as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) brings along the familiarization with the culture of another community or country. Byram (1986) mentions that culture teaching introduces students to the lifestyles of the places that target language is spoken. Getting to know the target language culture helps feeling comfortable in authentic situations when learners step out into the target language world.

Atay (2005) highlights the importance of educating teachers on cultural awareness and states that pre-service teachers are aware of the importance of culture in language teaching, yet most of them feel inadequate in the amount of information they have and they are unsure about how they are going to transfer cultural skills to the students.

Increased cultural awareness can be considered as the key for intercultural communication. Learners who develop such an awareness and approach people from other cultures with empathy and sensitivity can overcome cultural conflicts and communicate effectively in different cultural contexts. Dłaska (2000) stressed the importance of culture in language learning and emphasizes that the role of the language teacher in raising students' cultural awareness is central.

In the modern English classroom, the aim should be to help the learners be aware of the cultural content hidden in the language and also to gain intercultural competence, which can only be achieved through the development of cultural awareness (Dłaska, 2000).

Nowadays, with the use of technology and rapid globalization, culture has become an essential part of language classrooms, and learners are expected to converse through cultures and beyond borders (Byram, 1997a). In this context, this study aims to explore teachers'

perspectives towards the impact of globalization on promoting their role in developing learners' cultural awareness in the EFL classroom.

2. Literature Review

Almost everywhere in the world, educational systems are now under pressure to produce individuals for global competition, individuals who can themselves compete for their own positions in the global context, and who can legitimate the state and strengthen its global competitiveness (Daun, 2002).

Pieterse (1995, p.45) speaks of globalization in terms of “ the idea that the world is becoming more uniform and standardized, through technological, commercial and cultural synchronization emanating from the west, and that globalization is tied up with modernity”.

Paker (1997, p.484) views globalization as “ a growing sense that events occurring throughout the world are converging rapidly to shape a single, integrated world, where economic, social cultural, technological, business, and other influences cross traditional borders and boundaries such as nations, national cultures, time, space and industries with increasing ease”.

According to Cheng (2000), globalization may refer to the transfer, adaptation, and development of values, knowledge, technology and behavioral norms across countries and societies in different parts of the world.

Education is undergoing constant changes under the effects of globalization. The effects of this latter on education bring rapid developments in technology and communication are fostering changes within learning systems across the world as ideas, values and knowledge, changing the roles of students and teachers, and producing a shift in society from industrialization towards an information-based society.

According to Maghire (2010, p.58), “in a highly competitive international marketplace, education plays an important role in

maintaining and sustaining competitive advantage of each society. Based on this perspective, survival and effectiveness of societies under international competition could only be accomplished with effective education systems that allow the acquisition of qualifications and competencies required by globalization (Çalik and Seggin, 2005).

In a global world, a common language through which everyone can easily communicate is required. Throughout the world, English is being taught at younger ages, aiming to raise students who are competent in English and can communicate with people from different cultures.

Language learning involves four skills named as reading, listening, writing and speaking for learners to practice both in and outside the classroom. Interaction in the class may be limited to the background common values of its members, but once learners are outside the class, pragmatic skills are required to engage in social and cultural aspects.

Learning a language through intercultural understanding means “the awareness and acceptance of one’s own world and the perception and acceptance of the foreign world” (Neuner, 2003, p.49). thus, interaction in the language classroom becomes cross or intercultural as it inevitably includes an integration of the target culture and native cultures of any individual.

With the age of technology and globalization, the boundaries of different cultures have become even more blurred. Learners outreach various sorts of media to engage in cultural interaction. Kramsch (2014) emphasizes that the styles and conditions in which foreign languages are taught have shifted and the methods instructors used for teaching cultural norms are now about to be outdated. Local cultures of the learners are now undeniably influencing the the flow of interaction. It is important that while teaching culture, teachers should give the students a sense of trust by referring to students’ cultures occasionally

so that they can participate more. Hence, teacher education and development in terms of cultural awareness are important steps in pre- and in-service teaching.

Culture is seen as the fifth skill of the language class reminding itself through interactions that can be troubling even for a proficient speaker (Kramsch, 1993). Knowing culture undergoes a process of knowing differences, similarities, or uniqueness of any cultural element which discloses itself as cultural awareness.

Robinson (1985) states that providing a clear definition of culture is the key to success in language and culture teaching, and hence presents a definition of culture from four different perspectives. From behaviorist perspective, culture is sets of behaviors, traditions, habits and customs that are shared and can be observed, while from the functionalist perspective, culture is the reason behind the function behaviors. The cognitive definition of culture deals with culture as an organizer and interpreter of the world, while according to the symbolic anthropologists, culture is a system of symbols and meanings which create our experience and reality.

Along with the changes in the educational approaches and the emphasis on global education, the qualifications and roles that are required by of teachers should have also changed. Prodromou (1992) indicates that teachers need to adopt a learner-based approach to use dynamic activities to improve cultural understanding.

According to Alvarez (2007, p.126), “today, foreign language education finds itself at a crossroads with multiple models of language and culture competence”. In other words, the field of ELT is facing new challenges for teaching language and culture.

According to Tomlinson (2001), developing cultural awareness can be defined as “ gradually developing inner sense of the quality of cultures, and increased understanding of your own and other people’s culture and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ.

Such awareness can broaden the mind, increase tolerance and facilitate international communication”.

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, p.5) define cultural awareness as “sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behavior on language use and communication”. Teachers’ role in educating learners to gaining cultural awareness cannot be underestimated. Liddicoat (2008, p.284) points out to the role of the teacher in intercultural learning:

In particular, intercultural language teaching and learning presupposes a movement from an emphasis on explaining and interpreting another culture for students to one in which students themselves develop an understanding of culture through a process of noticing, reflecting on and interpreting aspects of culture presented through language. The role of the teacher is therefore no to tell students about culture but to provide culturally rich language experiences and to guide students’ learning through their questioning practices.

Kramsch (2009) points out to the vital role of language teachers by saying that culture teaching “is a process which makes language teachers into agents of social change” (p.91).

As put by Seidle (1998), “ a language teacher is not a coach or instructor whose sole endeavor is to improve his students’ linguistic performance. A transculturally competent teacher is a mediator, is a teacher of language as culture, exploring a vast area...”(p.111). such teachers do not only teach language, they also contribute to the intellectual development of their learners as well by helping them enlarge their horizons and be open to other cultures and hence new ideas.

Modern language courses should aim to help learners become intercultural speakers. To attain this goal, Seidl (1998) claims, in the foreign language classroom, making use of authentic texts such as press advertisements can be beneficial as such materials are representations of the target culture. Additionally, translation and reading activities

which help grasp learners' attention towards the cultural context of language are also beneficial.

Kambutu and Nganga (2008) argue that visiting foreign cultures and spending time in that environment definitely contribute to cultural awareness and remove any existing prejudices. Even when teachers do not have the chance to travel to other cultures, they should look for engagement in the target language culture through self-education.

In conclusion, by the help of teachers with cultural awareness, the internet, newspapers and journals, TVs and many other sources of media, major opportunities to learn about different cultures can be offered to the learners.

2.1. Statement of the Problem

Learning or teaching a foreign language is not only restricted in mastering its linguistic system, it also necessitates becoming aware of the culture it carries. Along with the changes in the educational approaches and the emphasis on global education, teachers' roles and qualifications have changed. Therefore, teachers' education and development in terms of cultural awareness are of paramount importance in order to develop learners' cultural awareness in the global world.

2.2. Aim of the Study

This paper aims at investigating teachers' perspectives towards the impact of globalization on promoting their role in developing learners' cultural awareness in the EFL classroom.

2.3. Research Questions

Two research questions were posed:

What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching culture?

What are EFL teachers' perspectives towards the role of globalization in promoting their role in developing learners' cultural awareness?

3. Method

In order to provide answers for the previously raised questions, a questionnaire was designed and administrated to 100 EFL university teachers in Algeria.

The questionnaire comprised 10 items with a three-point Likert scale (agree, neutral, disagree). The first five items explore the participants' attitudes towards teaching culture; whereas the five last items inquire about the teachers' perspectives towards the impact of globalization on teaching cultural awareness (See Appendix A).

The collected data were analyzed and illustrated in the form of tables and figures, then they were discussed and interpreted. Finally, the research questions were answered and conclusions were drawn.

4. Data Analysis

Table 01. EFL Teachers' Questionnaire Results

Item	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I would like to promote the cultural competence in my teaching.	85%	10%	05%
I see integrating culture in teaching EFL as important.	90%	06%	04%
Culture teaching is very important in the global world.	100%	00	00
I see that learners are interested in learning culture.	70%	20%	10%

Cultural awareness helps the learners to be better communicators.	95%	05%	00
Globalization helped me to develop my cultural awareness.	88%	08%	04%
Globalization helped me to design and adapt authentic materials to develop learners' cultural awareness.	97%	03%	00
Globalization helped me to acquire new teaching methods and approaches.	90%	05%	05%
Globalization helped me to assist my learners to develop their cultural awareness.	95%	05%	00
Globalization helped me to make EFL teaching more motivating and interesting.	98%	02%	00

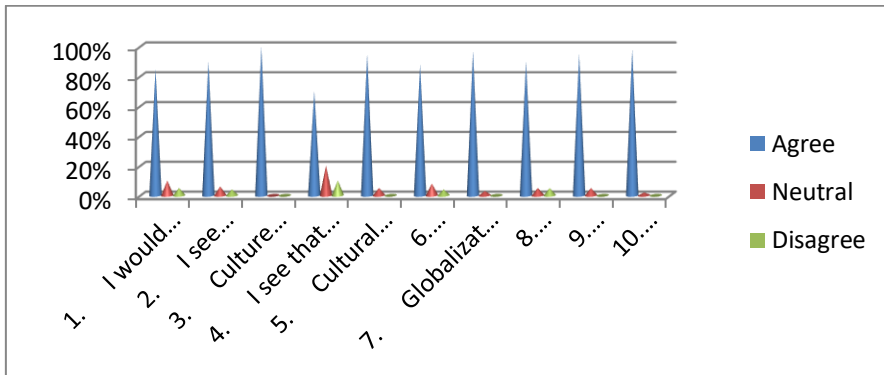


Figure 01: EFL Teachers' Questionnaire Results

To start with the first part, as illustrated in table 01, 85 % of the participants agreed that they would like to promote the intercultural competence in their teaching. Additionally, 90 % of them see that integrating culture in EFL teaching is important. For the third item concerning learners' interest in learning culture, 70% agreed that learners are interested in learning culture, while 20 % were neutral and 10 % disagreed. 100 % of the participants agreed on the importance of teaching culture in the global world.

Moving to the second part, 88 % of the participants agreed upon the help of globalization in developing their cultural awareness. Besides, 97 % of the EFL teachers agreed that globalization helped them to design and adapt authentic materials to develop learners' cultural awareness. Furthermore, 90 % of the participants agreed that globalization helped them to acquire new teaching methods and approaches. In addition, 95 % of the teachers agreed that globalization helped them to assist their learners to develop their cultural awareness. Finally, 98 % of the teachers agreed that globalization helped them to make EFL teaching more motivating and interesting.

5. Discussion and Interpretation

Nowadays, with the use of technology and rapid globalization, culture has become an essential part of language classrooms, and learners are expected to converse through cultures and beyond borders (Byram, 1997a). Hence, EFL teaching and learning experienced tremendous change and shift as it became required to focus on culture learning besides language learning. As a matter of fact, EFL teachers' roles changed too as they become asked to develop learners' cultural awareness. The first question posed in this study, was around the attitudes of EFL teachers towards culture teaching. The data obtained from the administrated questionnaire revealed that EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards culture teaching. In this vein, Kramersch (1993) claims that culture is perceived as the fifth skill of the language class reminding itself through interactions that can be troubling even for a proficient language speaker. The participant EFL teachers agreed upon the importance of teaching culture in the language classroom in this globalized world, and that they are keen to integrate the intercultural competence. Moreover, they confirmed their learners' interest in culture learning as it helps them to be better communicators. In this sense, learning a language through intercultural understanding means "the awareness and acceptance of one's own world and the perception and acceptance of the foreign world" (Neuner, 2003, p.49). consequently, interaction in language classrooms becomes cross or intercultural as it inevitably includes an integration of the target culture ad native cultures of any individual.

As far as the second research question is concerned, What are EFL teachers' perspectives towards the role of globalization in promoting their role in developing learners' cultural awareness?, the obtained results from the second part of the administrated questionnaire revealed the positive effect of globalization on EFL teachers' role in developing learners' cultural awareness. The EFL teachers assured that globalization helped them to develop their cultural awareness. In this

context, Prodromou (1992) indicates that teachers need to adopt a learner-based approach to use dynamic activities to improve cultural understanding. Next, the participants emphasized the help of globalization in utilizing authentic materials and new teaching methods and approaches to motivate learners and sustain them in developing their cultural awareness. In the modern language classroom, the aim should be to help the learners be aware of the cultural content hidden in the language and also to gain intercultural competence, which can only be achieved through the development of cultural awareness (Dlaska, 2000).

6. Conclusion

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Appendices

Appendix A : EFL Teachers’ Questionnaire

Dear participant,

You are kindly requested to answer this questionnaire for the purposes of conducting a study aiming at exploring the perspectives of EFL teachers towards the impact of globalization on promoting their role in developing learners’ cultural awareness.

Please, put a (√) in the suitable column.

Item	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. I would like to promote the cultural competence in my teaching.			
2. I see integrating culture in teaching EFL as important.			
3. Culture teaching is very important in the global world.			
4. I see that learners are interested in learning culture.			
5. Cultural awareness helps the learners to be better communicators.			

6. Globalization helped me to develop my cultural awareness.			
7. Globalization helped me to design and adapt authentic materials to develop learners' cultural awareness.			
8. Globalization helped me to acquire new teaching methods and approaches.			
9. Globalization helped me to assist my learners to develop their cultural awareness.			
10. Globalization helped me to make EFL teaching more motivating and interesting.			

Thank you for your cooperation!