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ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS USING VIDEOS IN
RAISING THEIR CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS: THE CASE OF THIRD YEAR STUDENTS OF
ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SÉTIF2

Abstract

The understanding and appreciation of different cultures mirrored via different languages by means of objective, non-judgmental and biased comparisons is of overriding importance in foreign language classes. For this purpose, this study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between videos as an audio-visual material and the EFL Algerian third year English students 'cross-cultural awareness at the University of Setif2. This research revolves around the basic hypothesis that foreign language students hold positive attitudes towards the use of videos in language teaching in Oral Expression sessions due to its effectiveness in promoting their cross-cultural awareness. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to a randomly chosen sample of (250) third year students. The analysis of the data has demonstrated that the targeted learners possess indeed positive vis-à-vis videos as a means to develop their cross-cultural awareness. That is, the research hypothesis was confirmed. This led to gain more insights into the core of the matter and by far open the door to further research attempts and suggestions in the realm of audio-visual materials and cultural awareness, two seemingly multifaceted areas.

Keywords: Audio-visual Material, Cross-cultural Awareness, EFL Students, Oral Expression, Videos.

1. Introduction

Foreign language learning is not as simple as it may seem at first glance. For many English foreign learners, it might be bewildering, particularly when its nexus with culture is brought to the fore. Recently, eminent figures (Hymes 1972; Canale & Swain 1980; Wen Qiufang 2000) have recognized that learning English is supposedly not restricted only to grammar; it is also not just lexicon and grammatical rules that make a learner alien to a language. It should rather include several aspects as comprising grammatical competence, communicative competence, as well as cultural competence or the cross cultural competence.

Actually, License Master Doctorate (LMD) foreign language learners face some difficulties in the Oral classes when learning about the target culture. This is likely to be due to the traditional methods that are implemented in such classes. Accordingly, relying on new technologies and audio visual materials is regarded as the best alternative in order to teach cultural aspects to EFL students.

In fact, there has been a growing interest in how audio-visual materials, videos in particular, can be suitable techniques to develop foreign students' cross-cultural awareness. The use of such aids in Oral Expression classes has grown speedily over the last few decades

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as a result of the prominence of communicative strategies and techniques. In addition, students enjoy learning with videos for they consider them motivating tools that fuel their interests, expectations and needs. In view of that, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using videos in raising learners' cross-cultural awareness in Oral Expression sessions. For this, the study aims at identifying the learners' perceptions of the importance of the target culture and cross-cultural awareness through the use of videos.

2. Literature Review

Language and culture are part and parcel of each other. In fact, language is the vehicle of cultural manifestation. Culture is by and large a vague and ambiguous concept. Due to its complexity, it has been a subject of heating continuous debates among practitioners and learners in the field of English as a foreign language.

Apte (1994) points out that "there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature" (p.21). Much earlier, the English anthropologist Burnett Tylor (1871) formulates one of the most popular and quoted definitions, he states that "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." In similar line, Newark (1988), relates the definition of culture to the living style. He argues that culture is "a way of life and its manifestations (...) are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" (p. 94). Therefore, as cultures are diverse, so are languages. It is only natural then that with difference in cultures and difference in languages, difficulties often arise in communicating between cultures and across cultures.

2.1. Students' Cross Cultural Awareness

Achieving an understanding of the target culture can be a frustrating task for many students as learning a language is inseparable from learning its culture. Many effective ways and strategies can be used to develop students' learning English through building up cross-culture awareness, which is according to Hanvey (1981) a perception, a power of the immediate consciousness to the cultural components of the communication as well as texts, and a direct sense to the cultural differences between the two languages. It is a sense as it cannot be touched but can be felt or acquired through reasoning. Furthermore, it is an ability to communicate with English speaking people appropriately in different situations. Hence, it is an ability to be sensitive to the cultural differences. In other words, the students' capacity of understanding and adapting to divergent cultures, the one they live in, and the culture they are attempting to work with. It means that more awareness of students of their own culture makes comparative understanding of the differences and similarities of the sociolinguistic aspects of their target culture more comprehensible and relevant.

Hall (1981) says that "the great gift that members of the human race have for each other is not exotic experiences but an opportunity to achieve awareness of the structure of their system, which can be accomplished only by interacting with others who do not share that system" (p.44). To attain this kind of awareness, many scholars emphasized the role of different authentic materials and media in English as Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) classrooms in helping students learn the target culture promoting the process of cross-cultural awareness.

2.2. Videos as an Audio-visual Material in Foreign Language Classrooms

In recent years, the use of technology and its integration into the teaching process has gained considerable importance. Specifically, the use of video as an audio-visual material in foreign language classrooms has increased significantly as a result of its significant role in

facilitating learning of the target language. Using visual media material is advantageous in that it enables foreign language learners to experience the cultures of their target languages indirectly as they facilitate the learning and teaching process and make it more effective. Corder (1966) asserts that anything that is visible can be used by the teacher of language to teach meaning. These materials are expected to grasp the learners' attention and motivate them to learn. It also provides the learners with real situations so that they can understand the target culture better. River (1981) argued that audio-visual materials clearly help language learners to understand another culture by providing them with "vicarious contact" (p.399) with native speakers in the sense that there is no barrier between the learner and the native speaker as the videos provide a vivid and an explicit link to the targeted culture.

Furthermore, the video is regarded as a valuable educational device. Harmer (2001) posits that the video is a tool that allows language learners both listen to the foreign language, and to facilitate reading of the words as well, especially when sub-titles are provided. Additionally, videos personify visual signs like gestures and expressions –the body language– which supports language learners to figure out the content of the video. Thus, they facilitate and help learners to understand the language better. In other words, the visual images along with the auditory elements found in videos, film, television, etc., promote students' construction of information in a more efficient way (DiCarlo 1994). In the same way, Rogers and Medley (1988) view videos as one of the most important "authentic" materials in foreign language classes because "videos offer more clues for comprehension to the students than other materials" (p.468) as they provide language and non-verbal language.

3. Methodology

It is worth reminding that the current research was based upon the basic hypothesis that foreign language students hold positive attitudes towards the use of videos in language teaching due to its effectiveness in promoting their cross-cultural awareness. Hence, this study was guided by the overriding research questions.

1. What are the Algerian EFL students' attitudes towards implementing videos in their Oral English classes for raising their cross-cultural awareness?
2. How is the importance of culture and cross-cultural awareness perceived by the EFL students?
3. Are video materials useful tools for teaching foreign culture and for building cross-cultural awareness?

3.1. Context

The study was conducted in the Department of English and Literature at the University of Sétif 2 during the academic year of 2018-2019. It aimed chiefly at getting insights into third year students' attitudes and opinions towards integrating videos in their oral classes to promote their cross cultural awareness.

3.2. Participants

It is opted for the random sampling technique whereby the required subjects for the study were selected from the existing population (514). The participants were third year students. The most important aim underlying the choice of such sample was their proficiency in expressing their attitudes and thoughts in a rather accurate way better than first and second year students. Moreover, their skills and familiarity to deal with English videos as they tended to watch them all along their English learning experience at university as it was revealed by many oral teachers that were asked about this matter previously.

3.3. Procedures

In fact, the questionnaire is widely used as a research tool that provides a relatively quick and efficient way of obtaining a large amount of information from a large sample of students contrasting other research tools. Also, it has its main function as a measurement tool (Oppenheim, 1992). Thus, a questionnaire was used as a research instrument for collecting data from students to test the validity of the beforehand stated hypothesis.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) includes closed yes/no questions and open-ended questions. This latter enable the respondents to offer some justifications for the reason behind choosing a specific choice; whereas others are meant to get their answers in order to know their points of view and to express their opinions spontaneously.

In fact, it is of twenty questions. The first two intend to get general information about the students' opinions of their experience of learning English and about the use of technology in English classes and whether they consider it as a good strategy to improve their level or not (Q1, Q2). These are followed by questions (Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6) seeking to get clear insight into the students' perceptions regarding culture and cross-cultural awareness. The respondents are asked to identify what culture is and whether they think that studying culture is important for them. They are also queried about their attitudes towards the English culture as well as the way they are studying it.

The following questions (Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13) aim to find the students' opinions and attitudes about videos, whether they like studying with videos in their oral classes and the kind of videos they prefer. The questions also try to know about the time devoted to understand videos, how many times videos are used in oral classes and whether they represent a waste of time and whether they find difficulties watching them.

The remaining questions (Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20) are intended to find out the students' attitudes towards the effectiveness of using videos to develop and raise their cross cultural awareness.

The questionnaire was administered during classroom time (7 classes were randomly chosen) where the researchers were present to provide any clarifications. The researcher collected the questionnaires on the same day.

4. Results

The following results are the most important findings obtained from probing into the obtained data which are transmitted into percentages.

Q1: Do you think that using technology in English classes is a good strategy to improve EFL learning?

Table 1.

On the Use of Technology in English Classes

Yes	No	Total
240	10	250
96%	4%	100%

Most third year students considered the use of technology in classes is a useful tool that helps them improve their level of English representing a percentage of 98%. Only one informant thought of this tool as not sufficient.

Q2: What does "culture" mean to you?

Table 2.

What Does "Culture" Mean to You?

Customs	Beliefs	Knowledge	Literature	Traditions	All of them	Total
10	45	30	0	0	165	250
4%	18%	12%	0	0	66%	100%

Students were asked to define the concept of culture in order to know what culture means to them. This question tries to find out whether English learners view culture as composed of big "C" or small "c" or both of them. Great number of third year students representing a percentage of 66% thought that culture means customs, beliefs, knowledge, literature, and traditions. 18% of students stated that culture means beliefs, while 12% informants exactly stated that culture means knowledge. But only 4% students mentioned that culture means customs. As observed, no one chose literature and traditions.

Q3. Do you think that being exposed to the English culture grossly threatens your own culture? If yes, how?

Table 3.

On Whether Culture Threatens One's Own Culture

Yes	No	Total
245	5	250
98%	2%	100%

As it is observed in (Table 3), most third year students 98% declared that their own culture is not threatened when they are exposed to the English culture. While the other informants 2% declared the opposite.

Q4. Audio visual materials are beneficial in oral classes?

Table 4.

On Whether Audio-visuals Materials Are Beneficial in Oral Classes

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
205	25	20	00	250
82%	10%	8%	00%	100%

This question tries to find out whether the students under consideration think that the audio visual materials are beneficial in oral classes or not. 82% of students strongly agree with the view that says that audio visual materials used in oral classes are beneficial. 10% agree. However, 8% students disagreed.

Q5. Do you like to study oral expression with videos? Please, justify your answer.

Table 5.

On Whether Students Like to Study with Videos

Yes	No	Total
250	00	250
100%	00%	100%

Unsurprisingly, of the total respondents (N=250), 100% answered by ‘yes’.

Q6.How often does your oral expression teacher use videos?

Table 6.

On how often oral expression teacher use videos

Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Total
125	120	5	250
50%	48%	2%	100%

The participants described the frequency of watching videos used in their oral classes as follows: 50 % stated that it is always. Others 48% considered it as sometimes. A few of them claimed it to be rare 2%.

Q12: Do you think the use of videos in oral classes is a waste of time?

Table 7.

On videos in oral classes are a waste of time

Yes	No	Total
00	250	250
00%	100%	100%

All learners opted for the “No” option with a frequency of 100%. They do not seem to be willing to consider videos as a waste of time. That is, none of the participants agreed with this statement.

Q15: Did your attitudes toward the target culture change after watching the videos?
How? a. Yes b. No

Three quarters of the informants 80% stated that their attitudes towards the foreign culture changed after watching videos with 20% who disagree with that statement. Regardless of the students’ choice in the foregoing question, justifying them under the banner of this question is of crucial importance. It has already been stated that 120 students ticked ‘Yes’ and “no”, but, in fact, only 40 of them justified their choice. For so doing, these students wrote the following justifications which are going to be statistically represented:

- ❖ “As I know more things about the target culture or maybe I was in the dark about it. So, I end up changing my views about it”. 50%
- ❖ “It did change but not too much. I used to hate some areas of the target culture and language but later it seemed that I got them wrong” 50%

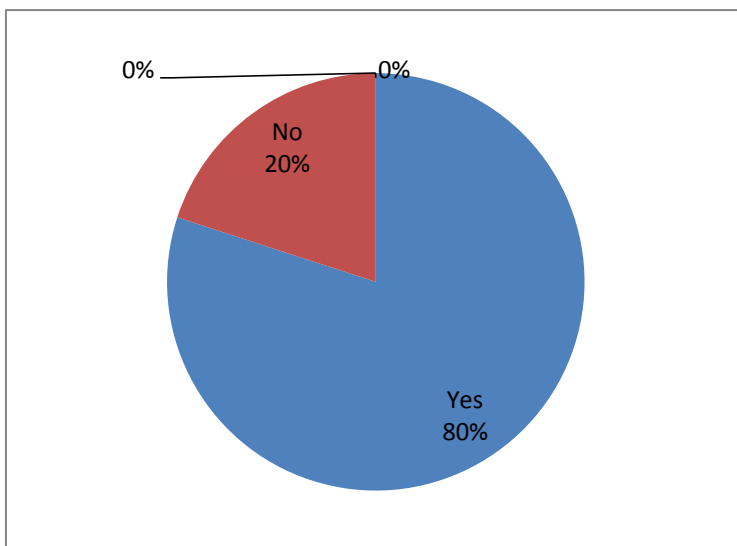


Figure 1.

Changing Learners' Attitudes towards the Target Culture after Watching Videos

Q17: Do you think that using videos help you to overcome cultural misunderstandings? a. Yes b. No

95% of the third year students agreed with only 5% disagreed upon the statement.

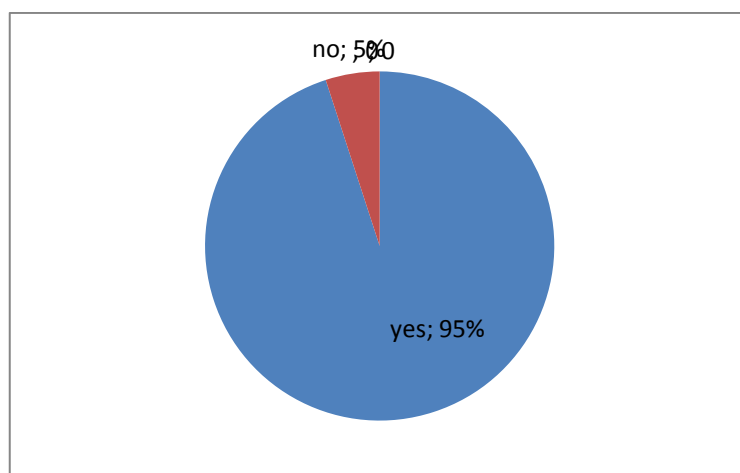


Figure 2.

Videos to Overcome Cultural Misunderstandings

Q: The videos provide you with enough exposure of TL use and usage to adapt you to the foreign culture.

A. Agree b. strongly agree c. Disagree d. strongly disagree e. Doubt

The overwhelming majority of students 87% agreed that videos endow students with TL's exposure which guarantee their adaptations. As far as those who doubt this statement, they represent only 13% of the sample. With no one to disagree upon it (See Figure 3).

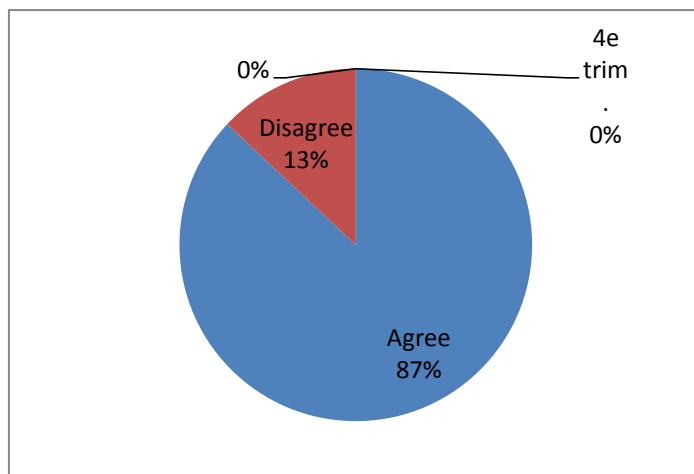


Figure 3.

Videos and Exposure to Target Language Use and Usage

Q: Does the use of videos motivate you to know more about the English culture?

- a. Greatly motivating b. Not much motivating c. Not motivating at all

The majority of the third year students 87% consider videos as motivating tools to grasp more knowledge about the alien culture. 10% consider them as not much motivating. Whereas, not motivating at all was thought only by 3 % of the whole sample (See Figure 4).

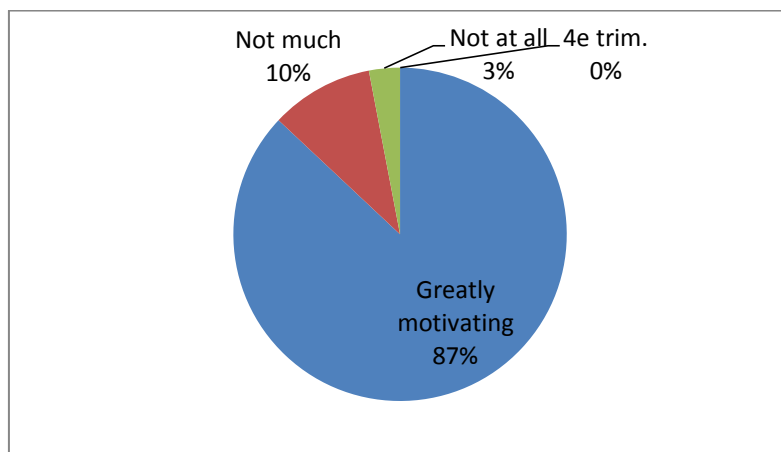


Figure 4.

Using Videos to Motivate Students to Know about the English Culture

Q: Do you think that watching videos develop your cross cultural awareness? a. Yes
b. No.

The present question is an open ended one which has as its principal aim the identification of the number of students who think that their own cross cultural awareness has been developed through being exposed to videos. Such a thing is fundamental because direct contact with the alien culture been displayed in videos, greatly shapes the learner’s attitudes towards it and promotes cultural understanding. Thus, with placing too much reliance on the above statistics, it becomes safe to say that.

The majority of third year students 93% agreed on the question at hand. But, 7% of them offered a No. From 93% who opted for a “yes” and queried to justify how. Only 16% did. In accordance with this, 3 students wrote that “by being simply exposed to different backgrounds of cultures, I learn and improve my knowledge. Also, 1 student said “more times I watch videos my cultural awareness raised”. Others put it as “I can perceive some cultural aspects of the target culture which different from ours” (See Figure 5).

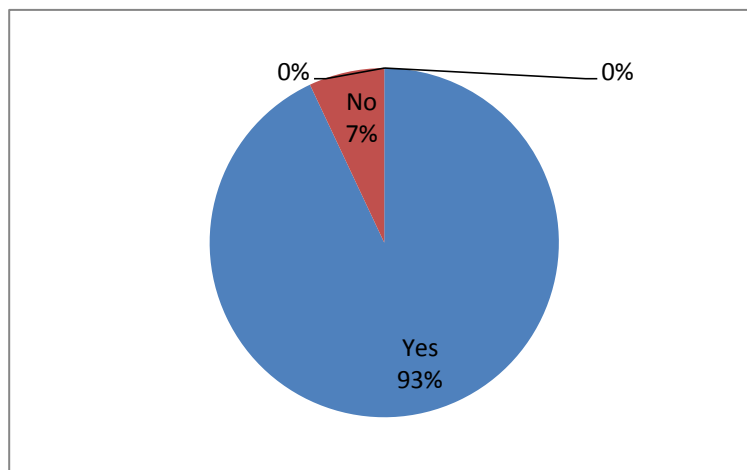


Figure 5.

Learner's Perception whether Cross Cultural Awareness Developed Through Videos.

5. Discussion

Taking into consideration the above facts, one is inclined to think that the analysis of the questionnaire generates a number of integral interpretations and conclusions. The latter are firmly grounded on the correlations made from the participants' answers in the four sections constituting the questionnaire. To this end, the discussion provided is hopefully a clear presentation of the conclusions drawn from the abovementioned analysis. Basically, the principal aim underlying such investigation is to elicit the students' attitudes towards using videos in promoting their cross cultural awareness in Oral classes.

The overriding conclusion drawn from the present study is that the Algerian students of English as a foreign language do seem to bear positive attitudes towards studying Oral module using videos and considered them as effective tools, as it has already been stated in (Q9) and (Q12), with frequency of 100%. As they do not help students to learn the language only, but the cultural aspects of the target language as well. Another supporting argument of this line of thought is that a considerable percentage of students 80% seem to change their attitudes towards the target culture after watching some English videos (Q15). They 75 % further assert that using such materials help them to overcome cultural misunderstanding (Q16).

Similarly important, The overwhelming majority of students 87% agreed that videos endow students with TL's exposure which guarantee their adaptations (Q17). Accordingly, 87% of them (Q18) consider videos as motivating tools to grasp more knowledge about the alien culture.

A final key integral conclusion drawn from the analysis of the questionnaire is that the 93 % Algerian learners of English as a foreign language believe that watching videos develop their cross cultural awareness (Q19). This is mainly because such materials facilitate the

learning of cultural aspects and help EFL students set up the similarities and differences between their own culture and the target one.

All things considered, it is adequate to say that the analysis of the present questionnaire helps in asserting that the present research assumption which states that “the Algerian university students of English bear positive attitudes towards the use of videos in promoting their cross cultural awareness” is confidently approved.

6. Pedagogical Recommendations and Suggestions

This study is merely a stepping stone towards acceptably understanding, and having more insight into the impact of videos’ use in fostering learners’ cross cultural awareness in oral expression classes. Further follow up studies and recommendations for future research should be a welcome addition so as to furnish the field of foreign language teaching and learning with fascinating and novel insights and suggestions for the sake of giving rise to learners who are capable of resisting cultural shock and accepting the existing cross-cultural divergences between their native culture and the alien one. To this end, and under the light of the foregoing reported results, some suggestions are to be put forward:

- In order to test the impact of using videos to improve students’ cross-cultural awareness, it is strongly recommended that this present study can be tackled with the help of an experimental design. In which the controlled and experimental groups are to be used. At first, a written discourse completion task whose purpose is to test the learners’ cultural awareness for both groups. Then, only the experimental group will watch different videos for a period of time. At the end both groups will take the test again. Depending on the results, the researcher is apt to state confidently that the use of videos has an impact on learners’ cross cultural awareness or not.
- Oral expression teachers should utilize more authentic materials especially videos along with newspapers, music, television, internet in lesson plans. This enables students to relate the information to their daily lives and to the foreign culture. To this end, they should provide resources for technology to allow more access to authentic materials. It is indispensable to promote the use of technology to gain full understanding of the target culture in relation to their native one.
- Cultural awareness proves its unveiled necessity. Thus, oral teachers should work wholeheartedly in order to help their students in raising it in accordance with videos; many activities are highly suggested such as Negative Etiquette, Cultural Quiz and Cross-cultural Assimilators.

7. Conclusion

That foreign language students hold positive attitudes towards the use of videos in language teaching due to its effectiveness in promoting their cross cultural awareness. This paper mainly examined the Algerian students’ attitudes towards the use of videos in oral classes as a learning strategy to enhance and develop their cross cultural awareness. In order to examine the hypothesis, a perception questionnaire was used as a data gathering tool in the Department of English in Setif2 University.

Based on the data obtained, it can be concluded that students actually have highly positive attitudes about the usefulness and the effectiveness of videos in raising their cross-cultural awareness. Furthermore, the results have led to approve that students are aware of the benefits of learning culture and that they believe that it should be integrated in their classes. In addition, the data show that students enjoy learning with videos which motivates them to

learn more about the target culture. The investigation carried out throughout this study confirms the hypothesis (H₁).

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Appendices

Appendix1. Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

Your willingness to complete this questionnaire will furnish us with the required data to bring our research into end. This questionnaire is mainly designed to gather information about your opinions about incorporating videos in EFL oral classes, and its effectiveness to raise students' cross cultural awareness.

May us thank you in advance for your cooperation and the time devoted to answer the questionnaire.

Guidelines: For each item, please tick the right box or write in the space provided.

Rubric One: General Information

1. What is your opinion about your experience of learning English?
a. Positive. b. Negative c. Hard
2. Do you think that using technology in English classes is a good strategy to improve EFL learning?
a. Yes b. No

Rubric Two: Culture and Cultural Awareness

3. What does "culture" mean to you?
a. Customs b. Beliefs c. Knowledge d. Literature
e. Traditions f. All of them g. others

4. Do you think that learning English as a foreign language entails learning its culture? A. Yes b. No

Justify your answer:.....

5. Do you think that being exposed to the English culture grossly threatens your own culture? If yes, how?

- a. Yes b. No

6. How do teachers of pragmatics, literature, civilization and oral expression provide you with information about the target culture?

- a. Explicitly b. Implicitly

Rubric Three: Audio Visual Materials and Videos

7. Audio visual materials are beneficial in oral classes?

- a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly Disagree

8. How often does your oral expression teacher use videos?

- a. Always. b. Sometimes c. Rarely

9. Do you like to study oral expression with videos? a. Yes b. No

Please, justify your answer.....

10. How many times it takes you to understand the content of the videos?

- a. One time. b. Twice. c. Three times. d. More than three

11. Which kind of the following types of videos do you prefer?

- a. Music videos. b. Film videos.
- c. Documentary videos d. Cartoon videos.

Others:.....

12. Do you think the use of videos in oral classes is a waste of time?

- a. Yes b. No

13. Do you find any difficulties when watching videos in your oral class?

- a. Yes b. No

How?.....

Rubric Four: Raising Cross-Cultural Awareness through Videos

14. When using videos, which of the following topics do you think would be more beneficial for you to know more about the English culture?

- a. Culture. b. Arts c. Literature. d. Religion.
- e. Others.....

15. Did your attitudes toward the target culture change after watching the videos? How?

- a. Yes b. No

16. Do you think that using videos help you to overcome cultural misunderstandings?

- a. Yes b. No

17. The videos provide you with enough exposure of TL use and usage to adapt you to the foreign culture.

- a. Agree b. strongly agree c. Disagree d. strongly disagree

18. Does the use of videos motivate you to know more about the English culture?

- a. Greatly motivating b. Not much motivating c. Not motivating at all

19. Do you think that watching videos develop your cross cultural awareness?

- a. Yes b. No.

20. Further comments and suggestions.....

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