

**Mass Media Integration in Education: Learners'
Perceptions of the Role of Mass Media in Developing
Linguistic Competence and Cultural Awareness: Case of
third year LMD Students' at Ahmed Salhi University
Center Naama**

إدماج الإعلام في التعليم : تصورات المتعلم لدور الإعلام في تطوير الكفاءة اللسانية
والإدراك الثقافي: طلبة السنة الثالثة ل م د بالمركز الجامعي أحمد صالح بالنعامة أنموذجا

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Rec. Day : 06/12/2019	Acc. day: 26/04/2020	Pub. day: 15/09/2020
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Abstract :

In the era of globalization, the spread of the distinct mass media tools has helped English language to become an essential means of communication especially in English as a foreign language (EFL), in countries such as Algeria. Those tools can be considered as the only authentic means for the learners of English in those countries. Nevertheless, communication in a foreign language does not revolve only around linguistic properties such as grammar and vocabulary but much attention has to be given to the cultural practices of its use. Therefore, this present research attempts at investigating the EFL learners' perception towards the importance of cultural awareness in their learning process in addition to their attitudes towards the integration of media tools in the classroom. The research has opted for a questionnaire which is submitted to third year EFL students at Naama university center. The data gathered are analyzed and interpreted quantitatively and qualitatively. The results gained have revealed that English language learners need to be culturally aware of the use of the linguistic rules and the integration of the mass media equipments in the classroom tasks creates an authentic learning experience and facilitate this incorporation.

Key- words: Mass Media Tools – Linguistic Competence – Cultural Awareness – Attitudes.

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ملخص البحث

في عصر العولمة ، ساعد انتشار وسائل الإعلام الجماهيرية المتميزة اللغة الإنجليزية على أن تصبح وسيلة اتصال أساسية، وبخاصة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) . في دول مثل الجزائر. يمكن اعتبار هذه الوسائل على أنها الموثوقة الوحيدة لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في تلك البلدان. ومع ذلك ، فإن التواصل بلغة أجنبية لا يدور فقط حول الخصائص اللغوية مثل القواعد والمفردات ولكن يجب إيلاء الكثير من الاهتمام للممارسات الثقافية واستخدامها. لذلك ، يحاول هذا البحث التحقيق في تصور متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه أهمية الوعي الثقافي في عملية التعلم الخاصة بهم، بالإضافة إلى مواقفهم تجاه دمج أدوات الوسائط في الفصل الدراسي.

اختر البحث استبانة تقدم لطلبة السنة الثالثة من كلية اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مركز جامعة النعامة. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها وتفسيرها كمياً ونوعاً، وأظهرت النتائج أن متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بحاجة إلى أن يكونوا على دراية ثقافية باستخدام القواعد اللغوية، وأن دمج معدات وسائل الإعلام في مهام الفصل الدراسي يخلق تجربة تعليمية حقيقية ويسهل هذا الدمج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وسائل الإعلام الجماهيري - الكفاءة اللغوية - الوعي الثقافي - المواقف.



I- Introduction

The common objective of foreign languages learners as English learners is to communicate fluently and effectively, however, reaching this goal involves several prerequisites in addition to linguistic basics mainly cultural knowledge. In another word, the aptitude to interact with speakers of another language depends not only on linguistic skills such as pronunciation and syntax but also on the right understanding of habits, beliefs and thoughts (Chastin, 1976). Hence, in EFL classes, teachers on one hand strive to find an effective strategy to simplify teaching /learning process, create successful learning product and reach the different learner's styles and needs; learners on another hand, expect to gain a developed level of language practicability, usability and intelligibility. Nowadays, the drastic change that technology has brought to the various fields of life has provided education with a great range of solutions and materials that can overcome language learners' problem and fulfill their needs. Among those materials, audio or audio-visual

tools can play a valuable role in educational settings to enrich instructions; those tools can be ranged under the term of mass media. Obviously, mass media are inevitable tools in human life as a source of information, education and entertainment. Therefore, this research paper endeavors at exploring the following research question:

To what extent does the use of Mass media tools enhance the EFL students' cultural awareness and linguistic competence? and what are their attitudes towards the integration of those tools inside the classroom?

For the sake of investigating the question stated above, a range of concepts should be considered; they are summarized in the following lines.

1. Communication

In human social life, communication is the most essential phenomenon that people share to exchange ideas, spread thoughts and build relationships through oral and/or written medium. Thus, the ultimate goal of language is communication. In foreign language teaching/learning setting, Brown (2001, p. 267) points out that **“from a communicative, pragmatic view of language classroom, listening and speaking skills are closely intertwined”**, in this quote, the emphasis on the oral skills in communication is evident. Language teachers' task is not easy, since they have to manage each class according to the curricula and the learners' needs and preferences by negotiating lesson designs to vary between strategies, methods and activities. Additionally, language learner tries out different techniques to pronounce correctly, to apply grammatical rules easily and to memorize vocabulary; yet, he/she faces a numerous problems that can inhibit his process and production.

Accordingly, researchers claim that language study cannot be separated from culture study, as Kramsch, (1983) asserts **“When (language) is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways”** (quoted in Chang, 2003, p.25). In this sense, one cannot think of learning a foreign language with no attention or interest to its own culture.

a) Linguistic/communicative competence

In teaching /learning setting, linguistic competence refers to **“learner's knowledge of the structures and vocabulary of the language and his**

ability to produce and comprehend well-formed sentences in the language” (Ficher 1984 p. 35). In this vein, the learner draws his/her attention towards the correct application of the grammatical use when involved in target language tasks in the classroom. However, Learners should consider that having the ability to speak correctly does not denote their competence unless they can communicate appropriately. This ability refers to *communicative competence*[†] which is coined by Hymes (1972) who describes it as a wide term incorporating linguistic knowledge of *what* is the form with sociolinguistic norms of *how* to use it.

Furthermore, Ficher (1984, p. 36) continues to say **“the language to send and receive messages in concrete situation and for specific purposes”** i.e., learners communication in the target language needs the ability to manipulate linguistic aspects properly within its appropriate contextual performance. Inevitably, language and culture are inextricably intertwined, each one spread across the other (Risager, 2007 p.153). Therefore, knowing a foreign language does not entail only being aware of its phonological, morphological and syntactic elements but also being aware of the cultural aspects that each element can carry.

b) Cultural awareness

Researchers in several fields have considered culture as an intricate entity to study and to define as well, Crozet and Liddicoat (2000) state that the concept of **culture** refers to: “[...] **ways of acting, believing, valuing and thinking which are shared by members of a community (social group)**” (cited in Risager, 2007 p.156); yet, the common point displayed in those definitions is that culture entails all the human features of life. In pedagogy, the presence of the cultural dimension is definitely indispensable either explicitly or implicitly (Risager, 2007). In this line of thought, Hymes (1972) has insisted on the tight relationship between communicative competence and cultural awareness. The latter can be simply defined as **“a conscious understanding of the role culture plays in language learning and communication (in both first and foreign languages)”** (Baker, 2011), it includes all sorts of skills, perceptions and knowledge needed to master a language and be communicatively competent.

[†] Hymes’ term: as a reaction to Chomsky’s term of linguistic competence. (*for more reading see Hymes, D. 1972*)

Educators negotiate the account of teaching/learning environment to create more authentic materials to meet that goal of making the learners culturally prepared, as Rogers (1988, p. 467) has identified that authentic resources are: “ **‘appropriate’ and ‘quality’ in terms of goals, objectives, learner needs and interest and ‘natural’ in terms of real life and meaningful communication**”. In another word, in order to improve learners’ interest, skills and attitudes[‡] towards communication in the target language, they should be involved in real and life-like situations which they can exist throughout *mass media*.

2- Mass Media Definition

The term is originated to refer first to the newspapers and magazines as print text distribution, then it has expanded to reach a large range of tools which are electronic such as television, computers and mobiles. It is defined according to Crosbie (2002) as the distinct channels of communication that entails entertaining, informing and educating people all over the world. Whereas, in Myers’ definition (2005, p.6) media “... [**present] both words (such as spoken text or printed text) and pictures (such as illustrations, photos, animations, or videos)**”. This definition differentiates between two types of media, verbal tools either heard or read and visual tools to be seen and interpreted.

a) Types of Mass media:

Mass media are considered to be unavoidable aspects of human life. They are a means of communicating ideas, information and views; a vehicle of thoughts and civilizations; a medium of advertisement and entertainment. There are different types of mass media which can be classified as follows:

- Print media: as traditional meaning, the term has covered all the printed works such as books, newspapers, magazines, booklets and others.
- Electronic media: the term covers all the tools that need electric connection to access. it is also known as Broadcast media including: television, radio, telephones (mobiles), computers... etc

[‡] Crano and Prislin (2006) definition: “ **Attitudes are the evaluative judgments that integrate and summarize . . . cognitive/affective reactions** ” (p. 347; quoted in Crano and Prislin (2006)

b) Media use in education:

Teaching methodologies vary from one teacher to another according to the class needs and materials availability. Thus, recently, EFL teachers are aware of the importance of including media equipments into educational settings. Ivers and Barron (2002, p.3) have described the role of media in classroom as a means to encourage learners working in groups, to develop their own learning expectations to assimilate the real-world experiences. In addition, they assist learners to construct their knowledge, help them to learn how to provide and accept 'constructive feedback' and create an authentic and rich atmosphere.

II- Methodology

In the current study, the population chosen is the third year LMD students at Ahmed SALHI university center from which a sample of thirty (30) students is studied. This sample contains 19 (63%) females and 11 (37%) males.

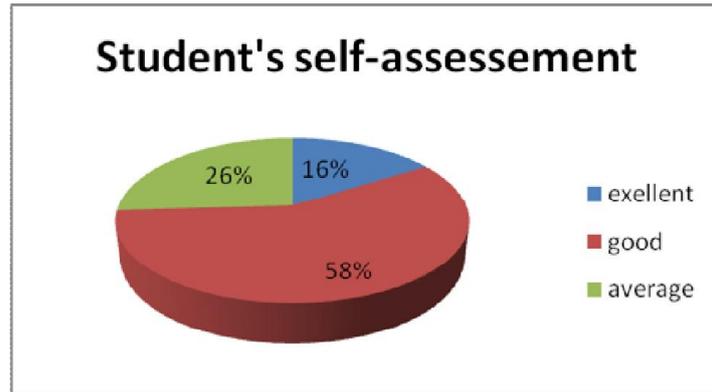
The researcher has opted for a questionnaire submitted to the sample, it consists of twelve (12) questions varied between open , open/ended and essay questions to collect valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire is divided into three sections.

- Demographic information: age and gender.
- The students' overview about English language and culture: their level of English, difficulties in communication and their perception of culture role in learning.
- The students' attitudes towards the use of mass media outside and inside the classroom: their views towards the impact of mass media tools such as TV, computers, mobiles on their language learning and capacities.

III- Results

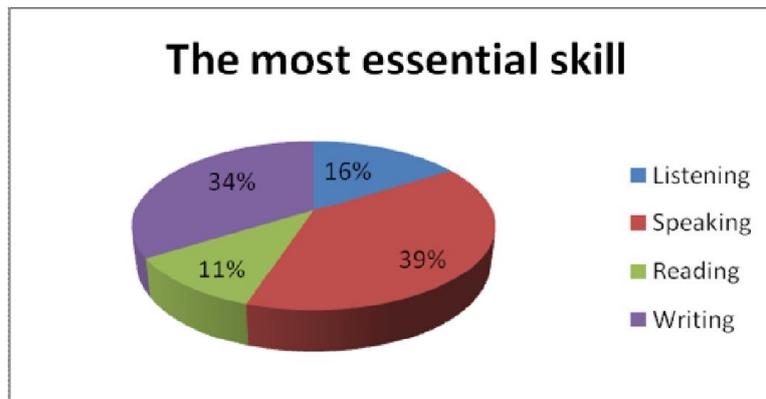
The following charts summarize the main results collected through the questionnaire:

Question 2: your level in English language is ...



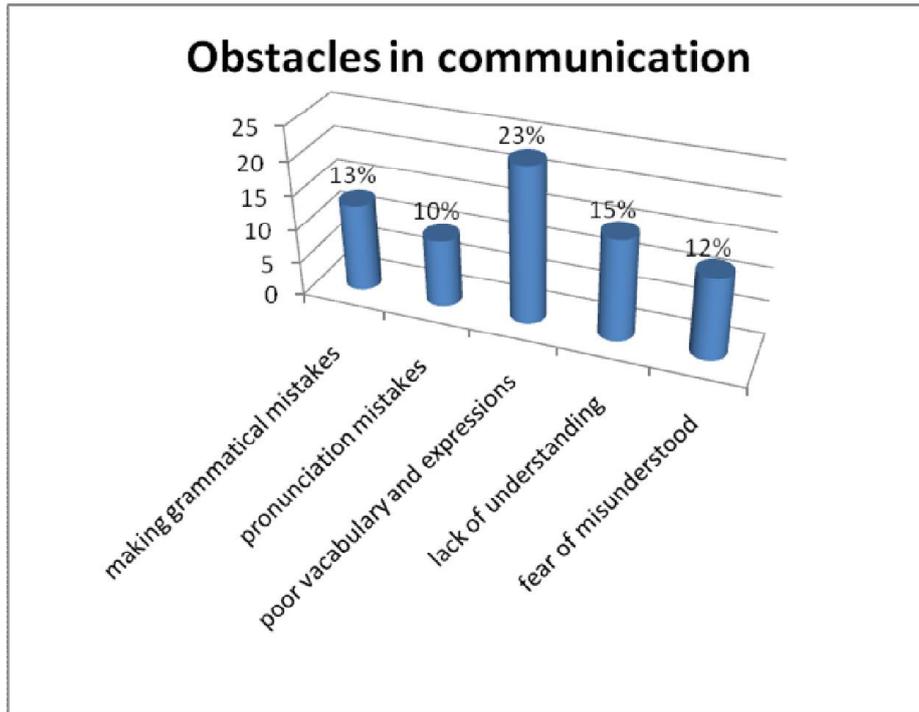
Pie-chart 1: student's Level of English Language

Question 3: which of the four skills you need the most when learning English?



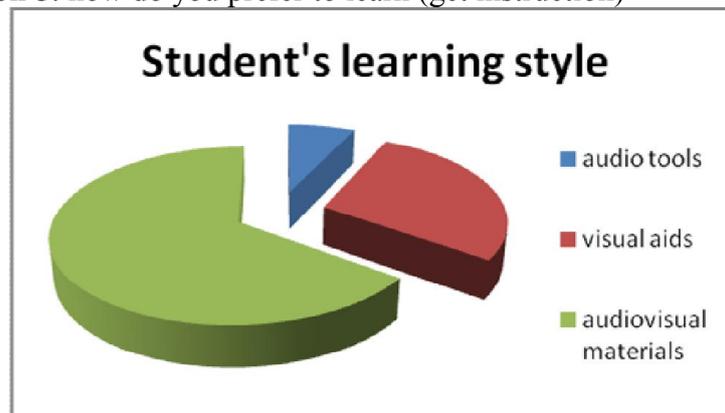
Pie-chart 2: Student's perception of Linguistic Skills

Question 4: in communication, you find difficulties because of :



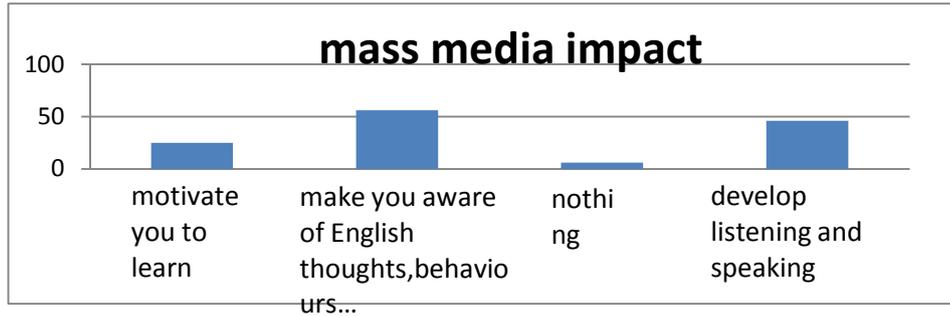
Bar-graph 1: Student's Difficulties in EFL Communication

Question 5: how do you prefer to learn (get instruction)



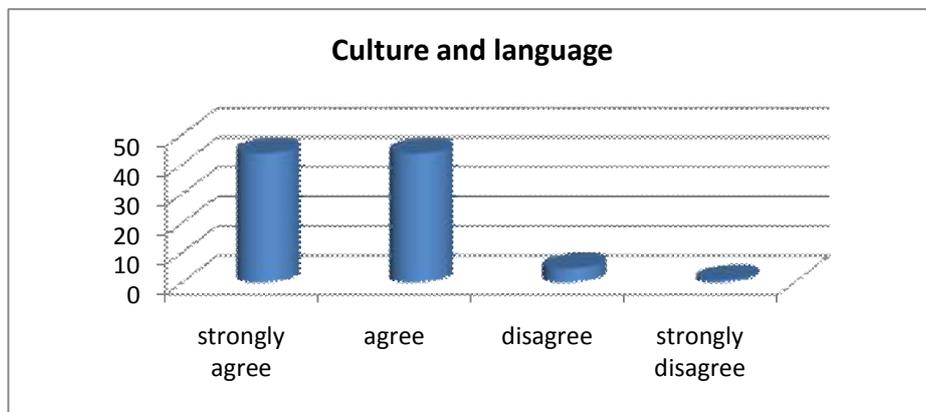
Pie-chart 3: Student's Preferable Way of Learning

Question 6 : according to you, mass media...



Bar-graph 2: Student's Evaluation of Mass Media Role in EFL Learning

Question 7: how much do you agree with the importance of cultural aspects in foreign language learning?



Bar-graph 3: Student's Opinion about the Importance of Learning Culture

Whereas, the qualitative data are collected through the following questions:

Question 8: how does mass media impact your English language performance?

Question 9: What do you think of culture integration in curriculum/classroom ?

Question 10: according to you, what are the outcomes of using Mass Media in learning process?

Question 11: what do you suggest for your teachers to help you developing your English language (speaking/listening, writing/reading)?

IV- Data Interpretation and Discussion

The data gathered through the questionnaire have displayed the following results:

- ✓ EFL students give a great interest to speaking skill which they consider as the first medium which goes hand in hand with listening through an efficient communication.
- ✓ The students' **styles** of learning are highly distinctive in each classroom. Hence, the majority of them have agreed on the necessity of mass media integration in the educational settings in different and studied contexts. (*visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners*)
- ✓ Learning a foreign language without its own **culture** is insufficient: to achieve the learners' long term goals which can be summarized according to the informants' answers as follows: to communicate in English **fluently** and use its linguistic aspects **appropriately, integrate** in the native society easily and acquire the ability to express themselves **accurately**. (*cultural knowledge*) in addition, these characteristics offer the learners a great opportunity to get jobs, gain scholarships and continue their post graduation studies.
- ✓ EFL Learning requires authentic materials (texts/TVshows/Films...) and this what the majority of students have considered to be found in the mass media tools which can also provide a good and comfortable atmosphere. In addition, those equipments can supply the students with the appropriate contextual use of idioms, proverbs, behaviors and expressions... (*communicative competence*)
- ✓ The use of media covers the learners' capacities to meet their needs through building their own opportunities (*learner's autonomy*)

V- Conclusion

Learning English as a foreign language within academic settings necessitates several strategies, criteria and materials. Learners claim for their needs to a practical learning atmosphere through which they can learn/acquire different language aspects that are inevitably available in media tools. Furthermore, EFL teachers can integrate the media tools to reach the numerous students' styles through providing authentic learning experience and making the students closer to real-world situations. The application of media tools inside the EFL classroom promotes learners' engagement in the educational process through having a clear image about the target language and **how** the native speakers employs their own language so that they can identify its cultural and social norms throughout oral expression courses. Furthermore, in written communication such as literature courses, teachers' task is much more complicated especially when the instruction requires *translation*.

The topic of translation is another interesting direction to explore, which can be reached through the following research question in a further research:

To which degree can the combination of linguistic competence and cultural knowledge improve the translation competence?

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