

Investigating Techniques of Teaching Culture in EFL Classes in Sudan

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Abstract :

Teaching culture is an important issue in EFL classes. The study aims at exploring the most effective techniques for teaching culture in EFL classes in Sudan and utilizing literary texts in EFL classes for enhancing learner's cultural background. The study adopted the descriptive-analytical method. The data for the study was collected utilizing a questionnaire which was distributed among fifty (50) English language teachers of secondary schools in Elhasahisa locality, and then the data were analyzed with the SPSS program. The findings are: practicing debates and discussions on cultural issues develops EFL learner's awareness about target language culture. Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences. Task-based activities enhance student's cultural backgrounds. Group work activities promote students cultural information. Utilizing literary texts in EFL classes develops broaden students' horizons; make them familiar with others cultures. Practicing role-play activities improves learners' cultural backgrounds. Using Web quest in EFL classroom develops learners' awareness of the foreign language culture and comparing local proverbs provides with foreign ones develops students' awareness about the culture of the target language.

Key Words: Teaching culture, effective techniques, authentic sources, Web quest.

المستخلص:

تدريس الثقافة من المواضيع المهمة في صفوف تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تهدف الدراسة لتقصي الأساليب الفعالة في تدريس الثقافة في صفوف تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في السودان وإبراز دور النصوص الأدبية في توعية الطلاب بثقافة اللغة الأجنبية.. أتبعَت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي كما استخدمت نظام الاستبانة لجمع البيانات من خمسين (٥٠) معلماً ومعلمة للغة الإنجليزية محلية الحواصيصا ولاية الجزيرة. استخدمت الدراسة برامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية SPSS لتحليل البيانات. توصلت الدراسة إلى عدة نتائج أهمها المناقشات الجدلية عن الثقافة ما يطور وعي الطلاب بثقافة اللغة الأجنبية ويطور الخلفية الثقافية لديهم، تدريس المواد الحجاجية من المجتمع الأجنبي يساعد الطلاب على فهم الخبرات الثقافية في المجتمع الأجنبي، ممارسة أنشطة تدريبات المهمات اللغوية تدعم الخلفية الثقافية للطلاب كما أن الأنشطة الجماعية تطور المعلومات الثقافية للطلاب. استخدام النصوص الأدبية يطور فهم الثقافات لدى الطلاب، أنشطة، التفاعل مع الأسئلة الثقافية في الإنترنت، يطور المهارات الثقافية للطلاب كما أن مقارنة الأمثال المحلية بالأجنبية يطور وعي الطلاب بثقافة اللغة الأجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس الثقافة، التقنيات الفعالة، المصادرية الحقيقية، البحث علي

شبكة الإنترنت

1. Introduction:

Teaching culture increases students' motivation to learn the target language. It also helps in supplying EFL students with examples of other society's behaviors beliefs and values. Moreover, teaching culture will lead language learners to relate the forms of a language to real people and places. However, in choosing language lessons that carry cultural content, the cultural basis of the teaching methods should be taken into consideration. As (1) argues that "learning the language through culture and culture through the language opens up new prospects of understanding contemporary social processes as well as in realizing the role of common values of human civilization, as well as national and regional cultures. According to (2), teaching culture is considered important by most teachers but it has remained insubstantial and sporadic in the most language classroom. Cultural background knowledge is necessary for language teaching. Teachers should use different methods to

help students to overcome the difficulties in language learning as well as cultural learning. Moreover, (3) claims that the way people use the second language to express themselves reflects the way they organize reality and teachers can explore the language and culture connections that occur in class. With the purpose of a better cultural acquisition from language teaching, teachers can adopt an effective method on cultural texture. (4) Has used the term cultural texture to describe the many aspects of culture that teachers need to teach to their students.

2. The Problem Statement

EFL students need to develop an awareness of cultural aspects of the target language. This study investigates the ways and techniques of developing learners' cultural backgrounds about the English language. It tries to examine the effectiveness of some techniques of teaching culture in EFL classes.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study aims at:

1. Identifying the most effective techniques for teaching culture in EFL classes.

2. Utilizing literary texts in EFL classes for enhancing learner's cultural background.

4. Questions of the Study:

1. What are the teaching techniques for teaching culture in EFL classes?

2. To what extent do literary texts enhance EFL learners' cultural background?

5. Literature Review

Every language is part of a culture. As such, it cannot but serve and reflect cultural needs. (5). There is an influential relationship between language and culture. This relation can be the matrix or the reflection of culture. The world is now increasingly opening and various cultures blend. That is to say, people with different

cultures have more and more mutual exchange and cooperation. For this reason, in EFL teaching, it is the most important task for teachers to have a thorough and profound grasp of language and culture to cultivate students' communicative competence and to develop teaching techniques.

6. Techniques of Teaching Culture

For more and a better cultural acquisition from language teaching, teachers can apply the more effective method to the cultural aspect of the target. According to (4), the term cultural texture is used to describe the many aspects of culture that teachers teach to their students. To achieve this texture, teachers need to vary three different parameters, i.e. information sources, activity types and positive interaction.

a. Activities for Personalization:

When EFL students are encouraged to make use of their text- experiences to create an imaginative situation on their real experiences by discussing many issues, they can then able to write a true/imaginary story in their real lives. (6) Illustrates that, when they elaborate their real-world experiences, students discover certain beliefs and attitudes about that experience they use to interpret text-world experience.

b. Students' Autonomy in Group Work:

Students can learn autonomously more in group work. They are encouraged to practice group activities: They decide their work partner, the topic, materials, presentation, audience involvement, etc. While working, the group members co-operate, influence, and stimulate each other. There is more interaction among members because they assume different roles and share responsibilities. There is also a team spirit since they all work towards the same goal. (7) Claims that collaborative learning is based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act. EFL students in group work, are supposed to talk with each other, through this talk they touch

on the theme of the learning occurs. According to(8), in group work activities, learning is an active, constructive process and learners benefit from others' knowledge and viewpoints, dialogue and active involvement promote learning and learning take place when learners critically reflect on their knowledge (9). This type of learning encompasses three main aspects. First, there is social and intellectual involvement where students are more active and build closer connections to other students, their courses, and their learning. Second, there is cooperation and teamwork when students build their capacities for tolerating, resolving differences, making agreements that take into account all the voices in a group, and caring how others are doing. And third, there is civic responsibility since collaborative learning encourages students to acquire an active voice through dialogue, deliberation, and consensus to foster participation and a sense of responsibility to the community.

c. Creating Cultural Interaction in EFL Classes:

Classroom interaction can create a positive cultural learning environment, such as a wide diversity of opinions, references, values, many different experiences and cultural background. According to (10), selling points for culture means the feature of classroom teaching activities that make it attractive to students. To create cultural texture, teachers must be careful not to portray the culture as monolithic, nor to only teach the pleasant aspects. Activities and materials should portray different aspects of the culture. In other words, teachers need to sell different views of the culture to their students. Introducing deliberate contrasts within a culture can be useful.

d. Interaction with Literature:

As many EFL learners struggle with a language and culture with which they are unfamiliar, literature will motivate them as it deals with themes that can be relevant to them. As said, literature cannot escape its cultural implications, and literature is a response

to a relationship between the culture of the students and that represented by the current readers of literature being presented (11)

7. Strategies for Teaching Culture:

Presenting culture in the classroom requires using teaching strategies that stimulate learners to the teaching material. According to (12), cultural activities and objectives should be carefully organized and incorporated into lesson plans to enrich and inform the teaching content, here are some teaching techniques for teaching foreign culture:

a. Using Authentic Sources:

Using authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences. Sources can include films, news broadcasts, and television shows; Web sites; and photographs, magazines, newspapers, restaurant menus, travel brochures, and other printed materials. Teachers can adapt their use of authentic materials to suit the age and language proficiency level of the students.

b. Proverbs:

Discussion of common proverbs in the target language could focus on how the proverbs are different from or similar to proverbs in the students' native language and how differences might underscore historical and cultural background. (12) argues that using proverbs as a way to explore culture also provides a way to analyze the stereotypes about and misperceptions of the culture, as well as a way for students to explore the values that are often represented in the proverbs of their native culture

c. Role Play:

In role-plays, students can act out a miscommunication that is based on cultural differences. For example, after learning about ways of addressing different groups of people in the target culture,

such as people of the same age and older people, students could role-play a situation in which an inappropriate greeting is used. Other students observe the role play and try to identify the reason for the miscommunication.

d. Using short stories:

The current use of literary works in EFL classes is to improve communicative competence and for the development of critical thinking and aesthetic appreciation. (13) Argues that, reading literary texts like short stories create students' awareness of the culture and society of the relevant country.

e. Dramatization Strategy

The drama has been widely used in teaching culture and is considered useful for clarifying cross-cultural misunderstandings. (14) Claim that when drama is taught properly, it is an ideal context for exploring the cultural values, both one's own and other people's. The drama involves learners in a role-play and simulation as well as encourages them to position themselves in the role of a member of the other culture.

8. The Current Study. Material and Method:

The study followed the descriptive-analytical method. The participants of this study were the EFL teachers of secondary schools at Elhasahisa Locality, Gezira State, Sudan. The researcher aims at measuring the teaching techniques used by EFL teachers in secondary schools for teaching culture. To do so, EFL teachers of secondary schools have participated in this study through a questionnaire. The questionnaire statements show many techniques used in EFL classes. Teachers have to mention the options that reflect their opinions about the research topic. The sample teachers who participated in this study were fifty (50). After data collection, the data were analyzed with the SPSS program.

9. Data Analyses:

The statistical analyses of the questionnaire as shown in the followings

Statement (1) Cultural interaction develops EFL learner's awareness about the cultural aspect of the target language.

Table (1) developing EFL learner's awareness about culture

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
Neutral	2	4.0	4.0	6.0
Agree	47	94.0	94.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (1) shows that most respondents (94%) agree that cultural interaction develops EFL learner's awareness about the cultural aspect of the target language. (15%) of the sample neutral and (2%) disagree with the statement

Statement (2) Teaching authentic Sources from the native speech community helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences.

Table (2) Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	10.0
Agree	45	90.0	90.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The statistical analysis of table (2) shows that (90%) agree, 6% are neutral and 4% disagree that teaching authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences.

Statement (3) Task-based activities promote the learning of real content, which enhance student's cultural backgrounds

Table (3) Using task-based activities enhance student's cultural backgrounds

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	2.0	2.0
	Neutral	1	2.0	4.0
	Agree	48	96.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0

The statistical analysis of table (3) shows that (96%) agree, (2%) are neutral and (2%) disagree that task-based activities promote the learning of real content, which enhance students cultural backgrounds.

Statement (4) Practicing group work activities promotes students cultural information

Table (4) Promoting students' cultural information

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0	4.0
	Neutral	2	4.0	8.0
	Agree	46	92.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0

The analysis of table (4) shows that most respondent (92%) agree, (4%) neutral and (4%) disagree that group work activities promote students cultural information.

Statement (5) literary texts enable students to be familiar with other cultures

Table (5) through reading literary texts students become familiar with other cultures

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Neutral	5	10.0	10.0	16.0
	Agree	42	84.0	84.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (5) shows that the majority of the sample (84%) agree, (10%) are neutral and 6% disagree that, through reading literary texts students broaden their horizons, become familiar with others cultures. Statement (6) Role-play activities improve learners' cultural backgrounds

Table (6) Using Role play activities in EFL classes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Neutral	3	6.0	6.0	10.0
	Agree	45	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (6) shows that the majority of the sample (90%) agrees, (6%) are neutral and (4%) disagree that, role play activities improves learners' cultural backgrounds. Statement (7) Using Web quest in EFL classroom, develops learners' awareness of the foreign language culture

Table (7) Using Web quest develops learners' cultural awareness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Neutral	5	10.0	10.0	14.0
	Agree	43	86.0	86.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table (7) shows that most of the sample (86%) agree, (10%) are neutral and (4%) disagree that, using Web quest in EFL classroom, develops learners' awareness of the foreign language culture. Statement (8) Using proverbs provides students with cultural information about the target language.

Table (8) Using proverbs provides students with cultural information

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Neutral	4	8.0	8.0	14.0
	Agree	43	86.0	86.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The analysis of table (8) shows that most respondent (86%) agree, (8%) neutral and (6%) disagree that using proverbs provides students with cultural information about the target language.

9- Open -ended question

Most of the EFL teachers' answers when they asked about the students' outcome when they applied Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community, teaching through reading literary texts, group work activities and role play activities, using proverbs...etc); almost of their answers supported the utilization of the abovementioned techniques and activities.

10. Conclusion and Findings

The study aims at exploring the suitable teaching techniques for teaching culture in EFL classes in Sudan and utilizing literary texts in EFL classes for enhancing learner's cultural background. The study adopted the descriptive-analytical method. The data for the study was collected using a questionnaire which was distributed among fifty (50) English language teachers of secondary schools

in Elhasahisa locality, and then the data were analyzed with the SPSS program. The findings are: practicing debates and discussions on cultural events develops EFL learner's awareness about target language culture. Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences. Task-based activities enhance student's cultural backgrounds. Group work activities promote students cultural information. Utilizing literary texts develops broaden students' horizons; make them familiar with others cultures. Role play activities improve learners' cultural backgrounds. Using Web quest in EFL classroom develops learners' awareness of the foreign language culture and comparing local proverbs provides with foreign ones develops students' awareness about the target language culture.

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Appendix (1)

Dear colleague: this Questionnaire is designed to elicit information about techniques for teaching culture in EFL classes. You are invited to indicate your views about this topic.

No	Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Cultural interaction develops EFL learner's awareness about the cultural aspect of the target language.			
2	Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage students in authentic cultural experiences			
3	Task-based activities promote the learning of real content, which enhance students cultural backgrounds			
4	Group work activities promote students cultural information			
5	Through reading, literary texts students broaden their horizons, become familiar with other cultures			
6	Role play activities improve learners' cultural backgrounds			

No	Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
7	Using Web quest in EFL classroom develops learners' awareness of the foreign language culture			
8	Using proverbs provides students with cultural information about the target language			

9-According to your experience in the field of teaching and learning, specifically when you applied (Teaching authentic sources from the native speech community, teaching through reading literary texts,group work activities and role play activities, using proverbs... etc); how the outcome of your EFL students was?.....