

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

University of 8 Mai 1945-Guelma

جامعة 8 ماي 1945 قالمة

Faculty of Letters and Languages

كلية الآداب و اللغات

Department of letters and English Language

قسم الآداب و اللغة الإنجليزية



OPTION: LINGUISTICS

**Investigating Teachers and Students' Perspectives Towards the  
Impact of Cultural Competence on Enhancing EFL Students'  
Reading Comprehension  
The Case of: First Year Master Teachers and Students at the  
University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma.**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in partial  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Language and Culture**

**Submitted by**

**Supervisor**

Ms. BOUDEBBOUZE Nouhad

Mrs. BISKRI Yamina

Ms. DERGHOUH Hayette

**Board of Examiners**

**Chairman: Mr. CHETTIBI Mohammed Walid**

**8Mai 1945 University-Guelma**

**Supervisor: Mrs. BISKRI Yamina**

**8Mai 1945 University-Guelma**

**Examiner: Mrs. CHEREIT Meriem**

**8Mai 1945University-Guelma**

**September 2021**

## *DEDICATION*

*In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

*I dedicate this modest work:*

*To Myself*

*To my Dear Parents and Family, especially my sister "Nada"*

*To my Beautiful Elegant Teachers: "SOUADKIA Nour El Houda",  
"ZEMMITI Asma" and "BOUALLEGUE Najiba"*

*To my beautiful friend "Sara", and special Friends: "Imene, Meryem and  
Amel" with whom I shared Fascinating and beautiful memories*

*To my partner in this work « Nouhed » with whom i passed unforgettable  
years. I just want to thank you for everything.*

*To my supervisor "BISKRI Yamina" for her support and guidance*

*To you reading this work*

*This work is For*

*You*

*Hayette*

## **DEDICATION**

*I dedicate this work to my parents for their financial help and support I wouldn't have made it this far without them. And I am happy to make them proud.*

*To my friend "Hayette," without her, we would have never been able to finish the dissertation in such a short time. Without her, I would never have such beautiful memories. I want to thank her for the good time we had together and for this beautiful experience.*

*To my sister "Salma" who always believed in me and encouraged me along my studies.*

*To my dearest friends "Imane, Zahra and Meriem" with whom I shared unforgettable moments during the last two years. I'm glad to have met them.*

*To my supervisor "Biskri Yamina" who guided and helped us throughout the research.*

*To "Haridi Samia" who has been a great teacher and has always inspired me. She changed a lot of things in me for the best.*

***Nouhed***

## *Acknowledgements*

*All above, our thank and gratitude is to “Almighty Allah” who helped and gave us strength and patience to start and accomplish this work.*

*Thank you Allah.*

*We would like to express our greatest appreciation and gratitude to our dearest supervisor “Yamina BISKRI” for the valuable guidance she provided during the process of accomplishing this work.*

*We are deeply grateful to the jury members Mr. CHETTIBI Mohammed Walid and Mrs. CHERET Meriem for devoting their time to read and examine our dissertation.*

*We are deeply grateful to Mrs. LESSOUED Sabrina and Mrs. HARIDI Samiya who provided us with useful references to accomplish this work.*

*Profound thanks go to all the teachers of English department, who have contributed in our education.*

*Special thanks are offered to First Year Master students and their teachers at the University of GUELMA for their valuable contribution and seriousness in answering the questionnaire.*

“general knowledge about other cultures is the first key to knowing a completely new culture. Without this key, we are sure to judge and understand the foreign culture from our own point of view, which is bound to cause communicative failure. On the other hand, overgeneralized knowledge can also hinder our understanding and communication because individual differences exist within all cultures. For full understanding, it is necessary to break apart simple cultural stereotypes with the depth of our learning and to form a kind of sensitivity to nuances in cultural differences. Together with tolerant attitudes towards foreigners and certain communicative strategies, such deep learning helps to avoid misunderstandings and even more serious conflicts in intercultural communication.”

(Wei, 2009, p.2)

## ABSTRACT

The present study aims at investigating students' and teachers' perspectives towards the effect of cultural competence on EFL students' reading comprehension. In fact, the core of foreign language teaching and learning is to enable students to understand the target language as well as to know its culture. Yet, many students of English as foreign language learners face difficulties in reading comprehension as far as target cultural aspects are concerned. Correspondingly, we hypothesized that developing First Year Master students' cultural competence would improve their reading comprehension. In order to test this hypothesis, a descriptive quantitative method is used in which two questionnaires were addressed and distributed to ninety-two first year Master students, and to twelve teachers at the department of English, University of 8 Mai 1945-Guelma. The analysis of results revealed that both students and teachers are conscious of the importance of developing students' cultural competence and its significance in improving students' reading comprehension. Moreover, most questionnaires' participants emphasize the need of bringing culture into class in a separate module and not just being integrated in other modules in the first four years. This assumes that the majority of first year Master students and their teachers believe that enriching students' knowledge and developing their competence in the target culture is a significant way to enhance their reading comprehension. Thus, our research hypothesis is confirmed. Based on these results, it is highly recommended that teachers raise their students' awareness towards the importance of being culturally competent to improve their reading comprehension particularly culture-based texts.

**Key Words:** Cultural Competence, Reading Comprehension, EFL, Target Culture.

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**CC:** Cultural Competence

**DSM:** Descriptive Statistical Method

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**FL:** Foreign Language

**FLT:** Foreign Language Teaching

**L2:** Second Language

**NC:** Native Culture

**TC:** Target Culture

**TL:** Target Language

**%:** Percentage

**LIST OF TABLES**

<b>Table 1.1:</b> Six Goals of Cultural Instruction.....	28
<b>Table 1.2:</b> Mason’s et al. Cultural Competence Model.....	33
<b>Table 3.1:</b> Students’ Experience in Studying English.....	73
<b>Table 3.2:</b> Students’ Reasons behind Studying English.....	74
<b>Table 3.3:</b> Students’ Definition of “Culture”.....	75
<b>Table 3.4:</b> Students’ views about the Relation between Language and Culture.....	76
<b>Table 3.5:</b> Students’ Views about the Importance of Culture Teaching in EFL Classes.....	77
<b>Table 3.6:</b> Students Judgements about their Exposure of English Language Culture.....	80
<b>Table 3.7:</b> Students’ Opinions about the Consequences of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture.....	81
<b>Table 3.8:</b> Students’ Awareness of the Cultural Differences.....	83
<b>Table 3.9</b> Students’ Familiarity with the Term “Cultural Competence”.....	85
<b>Table 3.10:</b> Students’ Knowledge about “cultural Competence”.....	86
<b>Table 3.11:</b> Students’ Opinions about the Necessity of Cultural Competence Development.....	87
<b>Table 3.12:</b> Students’ Techniques for Developing their Cultural Competence.....	89
<b>Table 3.13:</b> Students’ Attitudes towards Reading.....	91
<b>Table 3.14:</b> Students’ Reading Frequency.....	92
<b>Table 3.15:</b> Students’ Types of Reading Materials.....	93



<b>Table 3.16:</b> Students' Reasons Behind Not Reading.....	94
<b>Table 3.17:</b> Students' Self- Assessment of their Level of Comprehension of English.....	96
<b>Table 3.18:</b> Students' Ability of Understanding English Texts.....	97
<b>Table 3.19:</b> Students' Frequent Difficulties in Understanding while Reading.....	98
<b>Table 3.20:</b> Students' Strategies to Overcome Reading Comprehension Difficulties.....	100
<b>Table 3.21:</b> Students' Attitudes towards the Effect of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture on Reading Comprehension.....	101
<b>Table 3.22:</b> Students' Opinions about the Impact of Developing Cultural Competence on their Reading Comprehension.....	103
<b>Table 3.23:</b> Teachers' Academic Qualification.....	112
<b>Table 3.24:</b> Teachers' Experience in Teaching English at University.....	113
<b>Table 3.25:</b> Teachers' Opinions about the link between learning a language and learning its culture.....	115
<b>Table 3.26:</b> Teachers' Views about the Culture of the English Language.....	118
<b>Table 3.27:</b> Teachers' Opinions about the Lack of Cultural Exposure.....	119
<b>Table 3.28:</b> Teachers' Judgments about the Degree of Students' Awareness of the Cultural Differences.....	121
<b>Table 3.29:</b> Teachers' Views about the Necessity of Developing Cultural Competence in EFL classes.....	123

<b>Table 3.30:</b> Teachers' Different Ways to Develop their Students' Cultural Competence.....	125
<b>Table 3.31:</b> Teachers' Choice of Materials Provided to Students.....	127
<b>Table 3.32:</b> Teachers' Assessment of their Students' Level of Comprehension in English.....	128
<b>Table 3.33:</b> Teachers' Opinions about the Difficulties Encountered by their Students while Reading.....	129
<b>Table 3.34:</b> Teachers' Explanations about the Techniques used by their Students for Overcoming Reading Difficulties.....	130
<b>Table 3.35:</b> Teachers' Attitudes about the Effect of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture on Reading Comprehension.....	131
<b>Table 3.36:</b> Teachers' Assessment of Reading Comprehension Improvement through Cultural Activities.....	133
<b>Table 3.37:</b> Teachers' Judgements about the Role of Developing Cultural Competence in enhancing Reading Comprehension.....	134
<b>Table 3.38:</b> Teachers Comments on the Effect of Cultural Competence on Students' Reading Comprehension.....	136

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1.1:</b> Pederson’s Cultural Competence Model.....	34
<b>Figure 1.2:</b> Five Essential Principles of Cultural Competence Development.....	35
<b>Figure 2.1:</b> A Heuristic for Thinking about Reading Comprehension.....	48
<b>Figure 2.2:</b> Levels of Reading Comprehension.....	51
<b>Figure 3.1:</b> The Positive Views about the Relation between Language and Culture.....	76
<b>Figure 3.2:</b> The Positive Views about the Importance of Teaching Culture in EFL Classes.....	78
<b>Figure 3.3:</b> The Exposure of English Language Culture.....	80
<b>Figure 3.4:</b> The Consequences of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture.....	83
<b>Figure 3.5:</b> The Degree of Awareness of Cultural Differences.....	84
<b>Figure 3.6:</b> The Familiarity with the Term “Cultural Competence”.....	85
<b>Figure 3.7:</b> The Change in Statistics Concerning Students’ Knowledge of the Term “Cultural Competence”.....	87
<b>Figure 3.8:</b> The Positive Views about the Necessity of Cultural Competence Development in EFL Classes.....	88
<b>Figure 3.9:</b> The Different Techniques for Developing Cultural Competence.....	91
<b>Figure 3.10:</b> The Positive Attitudes towards Reading.....	92
<b>Figure 3.11:</b> The Different Types of Reading Materials.....	94

**Figure 3.12:** The Reasons behind Not Reading.....95

**Figure 3.13:** The Assessment of the Level of Comprehension in English.....97

**Figure 3.14:** The Ability of Understanding English Texts.....98

**Figure 3.15:** The Frequent Difficulties in Understanding While Reading.....99

**Figure 3.16:** The Positive Attitudes towards the Effect of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture on Reading Comprehension.....102

**Figure 3.17:** The Positive Impact of Developing Cultural Competence on Reading Comprehension.....104

**Figure 3.18:** Different Opinions about the Lack of Cultural Exposure.....120

**Figure 3.19:** Positive Attitudes Towards the Necessity of Developing Cultural Competence in EFL Class.....123

**Figure 3.20:** Different Ways of Developing Students’ Cultural Competence.....125

**Figure 3.21:** Teachers’ Opinions about the Difficulties Encountered by their Students while Reading.....130

**Figure 3.22:** The Influence of Developing Cultural Competence on Enhancing Reading Comprehension .....135

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

**Appendix I:** Students' Questionnaire

**Appendix II:** Teachers' Questionnaire

## CONTENTS

<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	I
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	III
<b>ABSTARCT</b> .....	V
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	VI
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	VII
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	X
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b> .....	XII
<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	XIII
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
1. Statement of the Problem.....	2
2. Research Questions.....	3
3. Aims of the Study.....	3
4. Research Hypothesis.....	4
5. Research Methodology and Design.....	4
5.1. Research Method.....	4
5.2. Population of the Study.....	5
5.3. Data Gathering Tools.....	5

6. Structure of the Dissertation.....	6
---------------------------------------	---

## **CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

Introduction.....	11
1.1.The Concept of Culture.....	11
1.1.1. Origins of Culture.....	11
1.1.2. What is Culture.....	12
1.1.3. Big “C” and small “c” Culture.....	13
1.1.4. Different Views of Culture.....	13
1.1.5. Characteristics of Culture.....	15
1.2. Language and Culture.....	15
1.2.1. Language and Culture interconnection.....	16
1.3. Teaching Culture.....	17
1.3.1. The importance of teaching culture.....	17
1.3.2. Challenges of Teaching Culture in EFL classes.....	21
1.3.3. Approaches to Teaching Culture.....	21
1.3.3.1. The Mono Cultural Approach.....	22
1.3.3.2. The Comparative Approach.....	22
1.3.3.3. Other Approaches.....	24

1.3.4. Teaching Culture Techniques.....	25
1.3.5. Goals of Teaching Culture.....	27
1.4. Cultural Competence.....	30
1.4.1. What is Cultural Competence.....	30
1.4.2. Models of Cultural Competence.....	32
1.4.3. Developing Cultural Competence.....	34
Conclusion.....	37

## **CHAPTER TWO: READING AND READING COMPREHENSION**

Introduction.....	41
2.1. The Reading Skill.....	41
2.1.1. Definition of Reading.....	41
2.1.2. Importance of Reading.....	42
2.1.3. Purpose of Reading.....	43
2.2. Reading Comprehension.....	44
2.2.1. Definition of Comprehension.....	44
2.2.2. Definition of Reading Comprehension.....	45
2.2.3. Reading Comprehension Components.....	46



2.2.4. Levels of Reading Comprehension.....	48
2.2.4.1. Literal Level.....	49
2.2.4.2. Inferential Level.....	49
2.2.4.3. Critical Level.....	50
2.2.5. Models of Reading Comprehension.....	51
2.2.5.1. Bottom Up Model.....	52
2.2.5.2. Top Down Model.....	52
2.2.5.3. Interactive Model.....	53
2.2.6. Reading Comprehension Difficulties.....	54
2.2.6.1. Lack of vocabulary.....	55
2.2.6.1. Lack of fluency.....	55
2.2.6.3. Lack of familiarity with the subject matter.....	55
2.2.6.4. Complexity of the text (Readability).....	56
2.2.6.5. Wrong or absence of effective reading strategies.....	56
2.2.6.6. Weak verbal reasoning.....	56
2.2.6.7. Processing information difficulties.....	56
2.2.6.8. Recalling information difficulties.....	57

2.2.7. Reading Comprehension Strategies.....	58
2.2.7.1. Skimming.....	59
2.2.7.2. Scanning.....	60
2.2.7.3. Predicting.....	60
2.2.7.4. Inferring.....	61
2.2.7.5. Questioning.....	62
2.2.7.6. Summarizing.....	63
2.3. The Role of Cultural Background in Reading Comprehension.....	64
Conclusion.....	65
 <b>CHAPTER THREE: FIELD INVESTIGATION</b>	
Introduction.....	68
The Pilot Study.....	68
Data Gathering Tools.....	68
3.1. Students' Questionnaire.....	69
3.1.1. Population of the Study.....	70
3.1.2. Students' Sample.....	70
3.1.3. Choice of the Method.....	71
3.1.4. Description of the Students' Questionnaire.....	71

3.1.5. Administration of Students' Questionnaire.....	72
3.1.6. Data Analysis and Interpretations.....	73
3.1.7. Summary of Results and Findings from Students' Questionnaire.....	106
3.2. Teachers' Questionnaire.....	109
3.2.1. Population and Sampling of the Study.....	109
3.2.2. Administration of Teachers' Questionnaire.....	109
3.2.3. Description of Teachers' Questionnaire.....	110
3.2.4. Data Analysis and Interpretations.....	111
3.2.5. Summary of Results and Findings from Teachers' Questionnaire.....	137
Conclusion.....	138

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

1. Concluding Remarks.....	141
2. Pedagogical Implications.....	142
2.1. For Teachers .....	142
2.2. For Students.....	143
2.3. For University.....	144
3. A Proposed Model Lesson .....	145
4. Recommendations.....	149

5. Limitations of the Study.....150

**REFERENCES**.....153

**Appendices**

**Appendix I** Students' Questionnaire

**Appendix II** Teachers' Questionnaire

**French Summary**

**Arabic Summary**

**GENERAL**

**INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is considered as the cornerstone and the fundamental building block of any social community. Mainly, it refers to the knowledge and characteristics of a certain group of people, including language, cuisine, religion, social habits...etc. It includes what people actually do and what they believe. We can say that it influences to a great extent how we view the world, how we try to understand it, and how we communicate and interact with one another. It is extremely essential to an individual's proper sense of who he is and where he belongs. What cannot be denied; cultures vary and every social group owns its own culture. Hence, in order to coexist, there is a need to develop cultural competence (CC). This latter covers the understanding of other's cultures and the ability to act effectively and behave appropriately in cross-cultural settings. So that communication and interaction take place in better circumstances.

Cultural competence plays a crucial role in Academia, especially in developing different skills for communicating and interacting with people across cultures. It is concerned with both productive skills and receptive ones particularly 'reading comprehension'; which is the core of this research. Therefore, the current study seeks to investigate the impact of cultural competence on developing students' reading comprehension. Moreover, it aims at motivating students to know more about the culture of the language they are learning. It will provide basic information about the two variables; cultural competence as well as reading comprehension. Also, some information about methodologies of data collection and analysis, and dissertation structure are included.

## **1. Statement of the problem**

Reading comprehension has been given a special attention in EFL classes mostly due to the influence of such skill in guiding EFL students to use the target language (TL) correctly. It enables students to increase the enjoyment and effectiveness of reading and help them to understand and deduce meaning from the text. However, in terms of classroom activities; students still face problems in their reading comprehension as far as cultural differences and cross-cultural elements are concerned. The most influencing factor, is students' lack of competence towards the target culture (TC) which enables them to understand the culture of the target language they are learning, discover its various aspects, and distinguish the similarities and differences existing between their native culture (NC) and the target one, in addition to being proficient in acting and behaving properly in cross-cultural situations. Furthermore, teachers' effortlessness in providing students with good instructions and contribute deeply in motivating them to discover new cultures and learn about them or at least about the culture of the target language can act as a barrier in front of students' reading comprehension. Consequently, they will lose interest in the foreign language they are learning, and in reading as a whole; especially when the text includes cross-cultural items, aspects, and markers. Thus, their level of comprehending the text will be low, and their passion in learning the Target language will vanish. So, what matters most is that the more students possess cultural competence, the more their reading comprehension will be improved. Consequently, working on developing high cultural competence and being open to other cultures are crucial actions towards enhancing students' reading comprehension.

## **2. Research questions**

Achieving a good reading comprehension in case of cross-cultural setting requires the possession and development of cultural competence. Consequently, our research addresses the following questions:

- 1) Does cultural competence have crucial impact in enhancing EFL students' reading comprehension?
- 2) Are teachers and students satisfied with the inclusion of culture in learning a foreign language?
- 3) Why is it important for EFL students to learn and to be competent in the TC?

## **3. Aims of the study**

Cultural competence may be considered as a key concept behind successful reading comprehension. Students who possess cultural competence would be able to improve their reading comprehension. Hence, the current research aims at investigating the relationship that may exist between the two variables (i.e. Cultural Competence and Reading Comprehension). It examines the effects of being competent in the target culture on reading comprehension. Therefore, the aims of this study is three fold:

1. To investigate the relationship that exists between cultural competence and reading comprehension.
2. To examine the impact of cultural competence on reading comprehension.
3. To raise students' and teachers' awareness towards the importance of learning about the TC and about developing cultural competence.



#### **4. Research Hypotheses**

In EFL classes, developing cultural competence is beneficial not only in enhancing students' proficiency in a foreign language communicative competence, but also in increasing their reading comprehension. Therefore, the more students possess cultural competence, the more their reading comprehension will be enhanced. Thus, we hypothesize that:

The Null Hypothesis implies that no relation exists between the two variables:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** If students were culturally competent their reading comprehension will not be enhanced.

The Alternative Hypothesis suggests that there is a relationship between the two variables. Therefore, it states that:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** If students were culturally competent their reading comprehension will be enhanced.

#### **5. Research Methodology and Design**

The present dissertation adopts the quantitative descriptive design in order to collect in- depth information about the investigated subject.

##### **5.1. Choice of the Method and Data Gathering Tools**

In order to get a deeper understanding of the relationship between cultural competence and reading comprehension, the quantitative descriptive approach was utilized in conducting this research. The reason behind choosing this method is the fact that our research describes students' as well as teachers' perspectives towards developing students' cultural competence and its effect on students' reading comprehension. Cultural competence has been analyzed from a quantitative perspective since the aim behind conducting this research is to examine the impact of cultural competence on students' reading comprehension. This investigation aims at emphasizing the hypothesis through conducting two questionnaires to both students and teachers. While one will

be given to First Year Master students of English at Guelma University, the other will be addressed to their teachers. This would allow for the confirmation or the rejection of the hypothesis.

### **5.2. Research Population and Sampling**

Our sample will be chosen randomly. It consists of students and teachers at the department of English, Guelma University of 08 Mai 1945. Participants of the sample are First Year Master students and their teachers. The reason behind selecting them as the population of the study is that they have enough knowledge about the target culture as well as they study in the second semester a module called “advanced reading”. Eventually, they are to some extent aware of the differences that exist between their NC and the TC. Consequently, their reading comprehension is in a process of evolution and improvement through time. Therefore, their contribution will be beneficial in our research and they will help in collecting more reliable data.

### **5.3. Data Gathering Tools**

The study is conceptualized to collect quantitative descriptive data which involves a description and discussion of results collected from both students’ and teachers’ questionnaires which will provide us with enough information about the importance of cultural competence in enhancing students’ reading comprehension. It is conducted to confirm the research hypothesis. In doing so, a total number of 92 First Year Master students and 12 teachers at the department of Letters and English Language, Guelma University, will contribute in answering the questionnaires as the only tool used to carry out this study. Therefore, they are appropriate tool to gather data about students’ competence of the English culture. Then, conclusions will be formulated out of the achieved outcomes, which will allow in knowing whether or not the research matches up with its goals

## **6. Structure of the Dissertation**

Besides a general introduction and a general conclusion, the dissertation consists of two parts. The first part is theoretical, it is composed of two chapters, devoted to literature review that deals with the two variables; and the second part is practical composed of one chapter which covers the analysis of responses and discussions of the obtained results. Chapter one is entirely devoted to Cultural Competence. It tackles the significance of culture teaching in foreign language classes. Moreover, it covers the concept of culture, the relation between culture and language as well as cultural competence, its models and how EFL students can develop it. The second chapter deals with the other variable which is Reading Comprehension. It discusses both reading with its importance and purpose and reading comprehension with its definition, components, levels, models, difficulties, and strategies. The third chapter explores the case study. It sheds the light on all the related aspects to the population under study. It presents the gathered data from both questionnaires. Furthermore, it analyses the participants' responses in order to obtain the needed results that help in answering the research questions. The final findings contribute in confirming or rejecting the hypothesis, and suggesting some implications and recommendations for teachers, university, and students about the integration of culture and how to develop cultural competence when teaching and learning the target culture. Finally, the research proposes some suggestions for further researches.

## **Conclusion**

Reading comprehension is a means for EFL students to practice and enhance their deep understanding of texts and messages in the target language, also to deduce meaning from them as well as making the reading process more enjoyable. In the present study, the data gathering tools will provide knowledge about the extent to which students' possession and development of cultural

competence can influence their reading comprehension. In addition, the research will contribute in raising students' awareness towards the role of developing cultural competence and being open to other cultures in enhancing their reading comprehension.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

**An Overview of Culture and Cultural Competence**

## **CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

Introduction.....	11
1.1.The Concept of Culture.....	11
1.1.1. Origins of Culture.....	11
1.1.2. What is Culture.....	12
1.1.3. Big “C” and small “c” Culture.....	13
1.1.4. Different Views of Culture.....	13
1.1.5. Characteristics of Culture.....	15
1.2. Language and Culture.....	15
1.2.1. Language and Culture interconnection.....	16
1.3. Teaching Culture.....	17
1.3.1. The importance of teaching culture.....	17
1.3.2. Challenges of Teaching Culture in EFL classes.....	21
1.3.3. Approaches to Teaching Culture.....	21
1.3.3.1. The Mono Cultural Approach.....	22
1.3.3.2. The Comparative Approach.....	22
1.3.3.3. Other Approaches.....	24
1.3.4. Teaching Culture Techniques.....	25

1.3.5. Goals of Teaching Culture.....	27
1.4. Cultural Competence.....	30
1.4.1. What is Cultural Competence.....	30
1.4.2. Models of Cultural Competence.....	32
1.4.3. Developing Cultural Competence.....	34
Conclusion.....	37

## **CHAPTER ONE: CULTURE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

### **Introduction**

In the present chapter, a reviewed literature about cultural competence is introduced. An attempt to define the concept of culture is made through shedding the light on a set of definitions and different views of culture, in addition to the characteristics of culture. We highlighted the strong relationship between language and culture with a great emphasis on the importance of teaching culture, providing approaches, techniques, and goals of teaching culture. Moreover, a brief historical account of cultural competence and its prominent models are included. We end up the chapter with a discussion of some key principles that allow teachers and students to develop their cultural competence (CC).

### **1.1. The Concept of Culture**

#### **1.1.1. Origins of culture**

In its origins, the term “culture” is diverse, and whenever we refer to it we should mention that it is not really an ancient concept, rather it is a recent one, which was first introduced in the field of Applied Linguistics. Kramsch says: “culture was to make its way to applied linguistics through the study of language as discourse” (1998, p.2). After that it emerged in the field of foreign language learning. Kramsch claims that “culture is derived from the Latin word (colere) which means to cultivate, and (cultura) meaning cultivation” (1998, p.3). It can take different objects; for instance; “ager” to become “agriculture”, and it means “field tilling” in its literal sense. O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, and Fiske (1994, p.69) stress that “[culture] stems, originally, from a purely agricultural root; culture as cultivation of the soil, of plants, culture as



tillage”. Moreover, they argue that culture can also be related to biology, in terms of growth of bacteria.

If we talk about “cultivation” in a broader sense; it is defined by Oxford Dictionary as “The act cultivating land; preparing and using land for growing crops, or the state of being cultivated” (2010, p.108). With the publishing of Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* in 1651; the first sign of culture’s term changing of meaning appeared where he uses it to refer to the education of children, “the education of children a culture of their mind”. So, according to those definitions; the term ‘culture’ can take also the object of the verb “colo” which is animus that stands for “character”, and this expression would, consequently, refer to the human character cultivation. This meaning was also shared by O’Sullivan et al. (1994, p.69) who report that cultivation can be applied not only on agriculture, but also on people. In the sense that cultivation shows the assignment and teaching people as well as taking care of their “natural capacities” to produce “perfect rules” from them. They utilized “cultivation of mind” as a metaphor to explain their ideas. Hence a cultivated or cultured person denotes a well-educated person who possesses a good intellectual level.

### **1.1.2. What is Culture?**

It is commonly agreed that culture influences the way of life of every person. This concept has been defined in various ways by different authors, and this has to do with the vagueness of the term itself. Moreover, it has aroused the curiosity of a great number of scholars belonging to several fields of study. This vagueness has prompted researchers to adopt many different definitions of the term instead of a single one. According to Hinkel (1999) there are “as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors and activities” (p.1). Likewise, O’Sullivan, et al. (1994, p.68) argue that it is because “the term

‘culture’ is multi-discursive; it can be mobilized in a number of different discourses.” They declare that, because one fixed definition of culture cannot be applied to all contexts, it is necessary to mark the research field before trying to determine the equivalent meaning of culture.

### **1.1.3. Big ‘C’ and Small ‘c’ Culture**

It is possible to split culture into two different groups: big ‘C’ and small ‘c’ culture. According to Tomalin and Stempleski, big “C” culture, also known as formal/capital culture. It comprises history, geography, institutions, literature, art, and music. Big ‘C’ culture is concerned with aspects valued by its members. However, small ‘c’ culture or “behavior culture” has been extended to encompass “culturally-influenced beliefs and perceptions, especially expressed through language, but also through cultural behaviors that affect acceptability in the host community.” (1993, p.6). Another way to look at small ‘c’ culture from a sociological perspective is “the very general aspects of culture that reflects the society’s organization, family life, interpersonal relations, customs, beliefs, work, leisure activities... etc.” (Taibi, 2002, p.23). Yet the concept of culture is much more complicated and cannot be limited to just a big’ and small ‘c’ culture.

### **1.1.4. Different Views of Culture**

In his first definition of culture, Sir Edward B. Tylor, an English anthropologist, declares that: “Culture is...the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (1871, p.33). Bierstadt simplifies the concept of Tylor by saying that “culture is the complex whole that consists of all the ways we think and do and everything we have as members of society” (1974, p.25). The definitions of Taylor and Bierstadt may be regarded as structural. They were interested in detailing the building blocks of culture due to its complexity.

Other different definitions of culture were given by various researchers, for instance; Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2009, p.36) define culture as “the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving”. Indeed, this definition attempts to encompass all aspects of culture.

From a Psychological perspective, culture has been described as a “system of information that codes the manner in which the people in a group interact with their social and physical environment” (O’Hagan, 2001, p.15). In Education, Gibson (1999) argues that culture has been most widely defined as a unique method of bringing together specific groups of people and creating the so-called lifestyles (p.18). From a Behavioral perspective, Campbell claims that culture is “a complex web of information that a person learns, and which guides each person’s actions, experiences, and perceptions” (2000, p.38). Behaviorists believe that easy-to-understand cultural essence is one of its most important aspects, since immigrants who come from many cultures and societies can easily adapt to the culture of the society in which they live. Other authors see culture as a method of looking at a person's life (Diller & Moule, 2005, p.45), or an adaptable system that aids life and life rehearses (Lynch &Hanson, 2004, p.69).

Another definition of culture is given by Yule (2006, p. 216) who states that “[Culture refers] to all the ideas and assumptions about the nature of things and people to what we learn, when [we] become members of social groups.”, which emphasizes the essence of culture itself, the common belief of people in the same community, and the connection between culture, language and society. Yet, Brown’s definition (2007) might be the simplest one of all time. He clearly defines culture as a “way of life” (p. 188). The definition of culture is endless and really different. Nevertheless, it is

clear that culture is a bond which permits people to live together, and governs attitudes, beliefs, values, and symbols that people unquestionably adopt.

### **1.1.5. Characteristics of Culture**

Culture has five fundamental characteristics; It is learned, shared, based on symbols, integrated, and dynamic. These fundamental characteristics are shared by all cultures. To begin with, much of learning culture is unconscious because we did not actually inherit it, we learn culture from family, peers, institutions and the media. Daniels (2004, p. 92) argues that “A person is not born with cultural concepts but instead learns them through socialization.” Furthermore, culture is shared since we share culture with other members of our community, we can act and predict how others will act socially. In addition, culture is based on symbols. Symbols differ from one country to another, and are arbitrary. They only make sense when people agree with their application in the culture. Among the shared symbols there are; language, money, and art. Language is the symbolic component of culture's most significant elements. Moreover, culture is integrated, it is the relationship between different components of a culture. In other terms, for a better understanding of culture, people need to be acquainted with many facets of it and not just with few. Finally, culture is dynamic, Nieto (1999) argues that “cultures are always hybrids” (p.50). It is just a process of cultural interaction and change. When most civilizations come into contact with other civilizations, ideas and symbols will be exchanged. All cultures are evolving, otherwise it will be difficult to adapt to changing conditions.

### **1.2. Language and culture:**

After dealing with several definition and characteristics of “culture”, it is time to shift the attention to the examination of the existing bond between language and culture.

### **1.2.1. The language and culture interconnection:**

What cannot be denied is the fact that language and culture are two sides of the same coin. That is, they complement each other; in the sense that language influences culture, and is influenced by culture. In this matter, Brown (2007) says: “A language is part of culture, and a culture is a part of language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.” (p.189).

Sharing the same view, Sun (2013) describes language as the essential means via which a culture emanates its elements including its beliefs, norms, and values. He also says that “If there is no culture, language will be like water without a source or a tree without roots” (p.370).

This view is also shared by Sapir (1956, p.27) who believes that “language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives”. In the light of these views, we can say that these scholars stress the fact that culture can never exist in a vacuum, and the same is for language; they are inseparable since, on the one hand we use language to transmit our culture either verbally or non-verbally, and on the other hand, we produce language which is the primary way that reflects our cultural identity.

The idea of the relationship between language and culture has attracted a large number of scholars who developed different views to explain this relationship, and as an attempt to understand it we will discuss two similar situations. The first is stated by Brown (1986) which is the fact that the Eskimo tribes possess various labels/ words for “snow” in order to differentiate between its distinct types, while many African cultures possess no word for “snow” (p.32). The second situation is stated by Yule, which is about the absence of words to name “horses” in the native cultures of the Pacific because they had no horses in their lands (2006, p.216). Therefore,

both situations demonstrate the strong link between language and culture, in the sense that there will be no words to express things that do not exist in the culture of that language, and vice-versa.

This strong connection between language and culture should be taken into consideration in foreign language teaching, since the main aim of foreign language teaching is to explore the beliefs, and traditions, and customs of the speech community, in addition to helping students become culturally and communicatively competent (Sun, 2013, p.371).

### **1.3. Teaching Culture**

#### **1.3.1. The importance of teaching culture:**

After getting deep in talking about the inseparability of language and culture, it is quite necessary to mention the crucial position that culture possesses in foreign language teaching (FLT). Since culture is interdependent and closely related with language, teaching culture should be considered as an integral part of teaching English as a foreign language. In any EFL classroom, teachers should bear the responsibility of not only teaching language but rather of teaching its culture by referring to it either in an explicit or implicit manner.

In this matter, Kramsch (2006) argues that: “culture has always been an integral component of language teaching” (p.11). He also stresses that:

culture is not an independent aspect of language learning or teaching, it is a feature of language, it is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners’ proficiency when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of

their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. (Kramsch, 1993, p.1)

In the light of this quotation, it can say that Brown emphasizes that teaching language means teaching its culture, and they can never be separated because teaching language as an abstract system only is not enough since it only provides learners with the grammatical and linguistic competences. Hence, this system will not equip them to utilize it in real world situations (Cunningsworth, 1995, 20). In the same vein, Lafayette (1988) notes that a large number of teachers put their whole focus on teaching grammatical and lexical aspects of language consuming a great amount of time and efforts while considering culture as the smallest and unnecessary element in the curriculum (p.39).

As a consequence, this will serve as an obstacle in front of learners who will face many difficulties in understanding the target language texts as well as encounter culture shocks due to the fact that they are not exposed to authentic language environment. For this reason, many hardships occur whenever they communicate with native people, in addition, their communicative abilities will get weakened and their self-esteem will be low. Bada (2000) states that: “the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers” (p.101).

Indeed, teaching culture in EFL classes is extremely important and is considered as a cornerstone that should be a part of any foreign language curriculum. This idea was stressed by various scholars who strongly called for the presence of cultural elements in EFL teaching classes. Krasner (1999, p.89) is one of them who claims that it is something inevitable for language learners to incorporate culture in foreign language teaching classes, since raising learners' awareness toward the target culture allows them to be open and respectful to other cultures, and more tolerable toward native speakers, in addition to enriching their cultural baggage. For instance, they will discover the appropriate ways to express themselves; from greetings, requesting, addressing people, to agreeing or disagreeing with them. In fact, these examples form only a small part of language practices in which the basic knowledge of the target culture is required. Moreover, learners will discover various cultural differences which exist between their own culture and the culture being learned bearing in mind the fact that not all cultures perceive behaviors and intonations patterns the same way people do in their mother culture.

Another importance about learning the culture of the target language (TL) being studied is that just like being exposed to a new culture enlarges learners' knowledge about the target culture (TC), it also increases their proper sense of who are they and where they belong. Hence, the more they learn about different cultures, the more they discover about themselves and their identity. Brière (1984) assures this when he says that:



It is obviously not possible to become aware of one's own identity as a member of a national culture without making contact with foreign cultures. One must leave the United States intellectually or physically in order to become aware of what it means to be an American. Such an objective is so important that it should stand as sufficient justification for making the study of foreign languages and cultures a requirement in American schools.

(p.563)

It is clear now that making a separation or operating a divorce between learning a language and learning its culture is quite impossible. Since, this latter makes the learning process more interesting that less motivated learners become motivated, in addition to increasing their critical thinking and raising their self-confidence to communicate fearlessly with native people.

Therefore, when saying teaching a foreign language; tutors need to consider that this process is not merely about teaching syntactic and grammatical systems to improve learners' grammatical and linguistic proficiency, but rather it is more about introducing and teaching explicitly the various cultural elements in addition to pragmatic meanings. In short, the curriculum should attach the cultural dimensions to the linguistic studies. Because as it was previously mentioned; it will be quite problematic to learn a language while neglecting its culture: "to speak a language is to speak a culture, to exchange language which embodies a particular way of thinking and living" (Byram, 1991, p.169).

### **1.3.2. Challenges of Teaching Culture in EFL classes**

Many challenges stand in front of the smoothness of foreign culture teaching process. Yang and Chen (2016) claim that there are two main profound barriers for culture teaching. The first one is teachers' beliefs, while the second is their lack of opportunities concerning their professional development. Since, they are not really aware of neither the strong bond that exists between language and culture, nor of the benefits of culture teaching in foreign language course (p.23). Therefore, these two scholars stress that it is of great importance that professional activities about teaching culture need to be exposed to teachers, in addition to introducing them to the differences between their culture and the culture they are teaching; because their knowledge about these differences will positively influence their teaching process.

### **1.3.3. Approaches to Teaching Culture**

After dealing with the great importance of culture teaching and the challenges facing it, this section sheds the light on the approaches to teaching culture.

When digging deeply in the long and rich history of teaching culture, one can easily notice that culture has been approached in different ways, and before tackling such approaches, we need to consider that an approach is a theory or philosophy followed by a particular set of teaching practices. In order to classify the different approaches to culture teaching; two main perspectives should be taken into consideration. The first, includes those which account for the native culture NC only, while the second, encompasses those which make a comparison between their native culture and other foreign cultures. Therefore, these two perspectives result in two main approaches, which are: the mono-cultural approach and the comparative approach.

### 1.3.3.1. The Mono-Cultural Approach

The mono-cultural approach, as its name suggests, is the one which focuses only on the NC, and it dates back to the 1970's when a strong decision was taken by language educators to incorporate the cultural aspects of language, labeling their lectures devoted to culture as *Landskunde* in Germany, *background studies* in the United States and the United Kingdom, *civilization* in France...etc.

A similar approach to the previous one was also introduced, and it is known as **Foreign cultural approach**. It is based on teaching and investigating a single culture; here the focus is on the foreign culture. It does not really compare the learners' native culture with the foreign one, rather it just focuses on developing their cultural and communicative competences to reach native or native-like levels.

### 1.3.3.2. The Comparative Approach

This approach is based on making a comparison between learners' native culture and other foreign ones. Buttjes and Byram claim that learners should not be provided only with "a one-way flow of cultural information", rather they need to be motivated and supported to reflect both cultures; their native culture and the foreign one (1991, p101). This approach stresses the importance of enriching learners' own knowledge, values, and beliefs; since, these aspects form the basis on which a successful communication with foreign culture members depends on.

Byram (1994) argues that "learners cannot simply shake off their own culture and step to another" (p.43). By this he means that learners should give importance to both cultures and not

just get rid of their own culture and move to the foreign one, because “their culture is a part of themselves” and to deny any part of it, it is to deny something within their own being” (p.44).

So, it is true that the comparative approach provides double perspective, however, it does not aim to evaluate and judge which culture is better than the other, instead it suggests that learners should discover the similarities and differences between cultures to widen their knowledge and mindset, as well as to know that many other ways of doing things do exist and not just the way that they adopt. Thus, they will learn to respect, accept, and be tolerant with other cultures.

Risager (1998, p.245) suggests two other approaches that can fall under the comparative approach, and they are: the intercultural approach, and the multicultural approach.

**The intercultural approach:** this approach holds the same essence of the comparative approach, which is cultures are learned in a better way through comparison. Though the attention here is given more to the target culture TC, this approach may provide the differences and the similarities between the country of the mother language and that of the foreign one. The aim behind this approach is to develop and improve the intercultural as well as the communicative competences of learners; so that they can act as mediators between their mother culture and the foreign culture.

**The multicultural approach:** just like the intercultural approach, the multicultural approach gives a great importance to comparison. However, what makes them different is that the latter claims that a single culture is a combination and a mixture of several cultures. The attention here is drawn to the target culture’s ethnic and linguistic diversity, comparing it to the learners’ own culture. this approach stresses that cultures are not monolithic.

### 1.3.3.3. Other Approaches

In addition to the previously mentioned approaches, many other worth mentioning approaches that are suggested by various scholars are discussed as follows:

**The Transcultural Approach:** it is also suggested by Risager (1998, p.246) and it views the foreign language as an international language. The main aim behind it is to encourage learners to use it in international communication. For instance; English, because it is viewed and considered as the global language, the language of technology, economy, tourism, and business, and because it is used all over the world, a great number of institutions encourage their learners to learn it, and use it in international communication.

This approach was criticized by Byram who claims that such an approach will not enable learners to deal with country-specific topics; that is to say, topics that “characterize its uniqueness for the language learners” (1997, p.55) because they are learning only topics that are of international significance in all cultures. In addition to this, this approach denies the strong bond between language and culture.

**The Problem Oriented Approach:** Seelye declares that the essence of this approach is the idea of raising students’ interest in the foreign culture through encouraging and motivating them to do a research by their own about a foreign culture. According to this approach, learners are the center and the teacher is only a guide who should provide his/her learners only with a research problem that should be both suitable for them and specific because the more specific the topic is, the more significant the outcomes will be. In addition, he/she needs to guide learners in bibliographical work (1993, p.47). He claims that:

[R]ather than be told to read a book on the general topic chosen, students can be taught to skim and to read carefully only limited sections that are germane to their specific area of interest. Otherwise, the student will fast become bogged down in the fantastic explosion of knowledge that threatens to engulf all scholars, especially those in science and social sciences. (Seelye, 1993, p.47)

**The Task Oriented Approach:** this approach is similar to the previous one in the idea of making students active participants, through doing their research by their own. However, it is different in the fact that it requests students to work in pairs, or groups tackling various aspects of the target culture, then discussing them with each other and finally comparing the gathered aspects with their own NC (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993, p.9).

These approaches are not the only ones, since many other approaches emerged and were developed, however, they did not last for a long time due to the criticism they have received from different scholars.

#### **1.3.4. Teaching Culture Techniques**

Similarly, to foreign language teaching, teaching a foreign culture in a successful manner is not an easy task and requires different techniques to adopt. These techniques fall under the above mentioned approaches of culture teaching mainly to achieve the goal of bringing the target culture in the classroom. In this matter Hughes (2002, p.15) introduces eight techniques for a successful foreign culture teaching, stated as follows:

- **Comparison method:** in this method, the teacher chooses some items of the TC and presents them with their equivalent in the NC. A great deal of importance is given to

highlighting the differences between the two cultures, so that learners will know the areas where a problem may appear.

- **Culture assimilators:** Seelye (1993) argues that this technique is based on the description of episodes of “Target cultural behavior” that describe “critical incidents” of cross-cultural interaction” that are supposed to be misinterpreted by learners. These learners are required to carefully read the episode, then choose the correct answer from “four plausible explanations of the behavior described in the episode” (p.48). He also views assimilators as a more beneficial technique than books in the sense that “Assimilators are more fun to read; they actively involve the students with cross-cultural problem; and they have been shown to be more effective in controlled experiments.” (p.48)
- **Cultural capsules:** this technique deals with “miniexposé” of the small aspect of the target culture that was confusing for the foreign language learners (p.48). In this technique; learners are asked to describe an aspect of the target culture, then discuss the differences between their native culture and the foreign one. They are likely required to prepare it outside the classroom, then perform it orally in the class for about 5 to 10 minutes. Their presentations maybe accompanied with illustrations, photos, and other visual materials, in addition to questions to encourage discussion in the class.
- **Drama:** the teacher chooses a number of students and asks learners to perform as members of the target culture. if any events were misinterpreted; the teacher’s clarifications should take place.
- **Audio motor or Total-physical Responses:** in this technique, the teacher tries to discover to what extent his students have experience in the TC. He can use questions on which students are supposed to listen then answer.

- **Newspapers:** in this technique, students are asked to make a comparison of two newspapers; one of the TC and that of the NC. This technique is very beneficial for enriching students' cultural baggage in the sense that newspapers include several aspects of culture.
- **Projected media:** this technique, as the name shows, is based on providing students with films presented with various activities in which the target culture is reflected.
- **The culture island:** the teacher who adopts this technique uses some pictures and other materials to attract the attention of his students towards the target culture.

After dealing with all these techniques, one can easily observe that the majority of these techniques are based on the comparison between the learners' native culture and the target culture being taught. Therefore, the key behind any foreign culture teaching process is the comparison.

### **1.3.5. Goals of Teaching Culture**

Concerning the purposefulness of culture teaching Seelye argues that "Cultural instruction must be purposeful if it is to lead anywhere." By this he means that foreign culture teaching is not something that goes in vain and foreign culture teachers never teach for none. That is why, we can say that similarly to foreign language teaching which has an aim of developing students' linguistic and communicative competences, foreign culture teaching also has a goal which is engendering intercultural communication and making it easier, in addition to building "a context of understanding what is going on in the target culture" (1993, p. 29). That is to say, understanding sociocultural implications of the foreign culture as well as the implications of its use in real communicative situations is the main goal that culture teaching sets for its learners.



Seelye (1993) emphasizes that “there should be a sound reason behind each and every cultural activity”, and he establishes what he calls a “super goal” for culture teaching: “All students will develop the cultural understandings, attitudes, and performance skills needed to function appropriately within a segment of another society and to communicate with people socialized in that culture.” (p.29). Moreover, six instructional goals for teaching culture are suggested by Seelye through which he emphasizes that tutors need to “help the students develop *interest* in *who* in the target culture did *what*, *where*, and *when*, and *why*” (these are the first five goals), and to “develop some sophistication in evaluating statements about the culture and in finding out more about it” (this is the sixth goal). These six goals of teaching culture are summarized in the following table (Seelye, 1993, p.31):

- |   |
|---|
| <p><b>Goal 1</b>---- <i>Interest</i>: The student shows curiosity about another culture (or another segment or subculture of one’s own culture) and empathy toward its members.</p> <p><b>Goal 2</b>---- <i>Who</i>: The student recognizes that role expectations and other social variables such as age, sex, social class, religion, ethnicity, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave.</p> <p><b>Goal 3</b>---- <i>What</i>: The student realizes that effective communication requires discovering the culturally conditioned images that are evoked in the minds of people when they think, act, and react to the world around them.</p> <p><b>Goal 4</b>---- <i>Where</i> and <i>When</i>: The student recognizes that situational variables and convention shape behavior in important ways.</p> <p><b>Goal 5</b>---- <i>Why</i>: The student understands that people generally act the way they do because they are using options their society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs, and that cultural patterns are interrelated and tend mutually to support need satisfaction.</p> |
|---|

**Goal 6**---- *Exploration*: The student can evaluate a generalization about the target culture in terms of the amount of evidence substantiating it, and has the skills needed to locate and organize information about the target culture from the library, the mass media, people, and personal observation.

**Table 1.1:** Six Goals of Cultural Instruction (Seelye, 1993)

Tomalin and Stempliski, in the same year, review and modify Seelye's goals of cultural instruction (1993, p.8). According to them culture teaching is there:

- "To help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors.
- To help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and places of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
- To help students to become more aware of the conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture.
- To help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.
- To help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
- To help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and recognize information about the target culture.
- To stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people."

After studying the various goals of teaching culture, introduced by different scholars, Stern (1992) concludes that a common cognitive aspect is what brings all these cultural goals together, this aspect is “the knowledge about the target culture, awareness of its characteristics and differences between the target and the learners’ own culture.” (pp. 212-215).

## **1.4. Cultural Competence**

### **1.4.1. What is Cultural Competence**

The subject of cultural competence has recently gained a considerable position in research in various domains, including; social work, nursing, education, healthcare...etc. However, despite the fact that there has been an increase in research done in this field, there is no universally accepted definition till now, in the sense that this notion has evolved from various perspectives, needs, and interests. Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Issacs’ seminal work in 1989 provides a clear definition of cultural competence that is considered as the cornerstone for the foundation of this field. They define cultural competence as: “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (Cross et. al. 1989, p.13). In other words, cultural competence means the ability to understand and effectively communicate with people from different cultures (This definition is the one adopted in the practical part). The term ‘culture’ is used here because it refers, as it was previously mentioned, to the patterns that are integrated in the human behavior including, beliefs, customs, traditions, and ideologies of a given group. While the term ‘competence’ is used to refer to the capacity of functioning in an effective manner.

A large number of researchers belonging to various fields use or cite the definition provided by Cross in their works (Diller & Moule, 2005, p.5; Ford & Whiting, 2007, p.36; Hernandez &

Issacs,1998, p.22; Keefe, 2005, 45). In the same matter, Krajewski-jaime, Brown, and Ziefert (1993) expand this definition and define cultural competence as: “a set of academic and interpersonal skills that allow service providers to increase their understanding and appreciation of cultural similarities and differences with and between groups so that they are able to draw on a particular community’s values traditions, and customs in developing effective and appropriate interventions” (p.3).Denboba, (1993, p.36) also views cultural competence as:

a set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program or among individuals and which enable them to work effectively cross culturally. Further, it refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviors of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff who are providing such services. Striving to achieve cultural competence is a dynamic, ongoing, developmental process that requires a long-term commitment.

He claims that if we see it from an individual perspective; it is about “an examination of one’s own attitudes and values, and the acquisition of the values, knowledge, skills and attributes that will allow an individual to work appropriately in cross cultural situations” (1993, p.37).

Another definition of cultural competence is given by Purnell and Paulanka (2005) who make attempts to further clarify this notion through distinguishing between three aspects, which are; cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural competence (p.55). On the one hand, cultural awareness is about appreciating cultural signs, including the material culture such as; food, dress, physical signs...etc. Cultural sensitivity, on the other hand, is more about personal attitudes including the degree of awareness that someone has concerning the use of words or actions that might be perceived in an offensive manner by someone who belongs to a different cultural background. Lum (2005) distinguishes between those two previously mentioned notions by

claiming that the former refers to the fact of being aware that there exist certain differences between cultural groups, while the latter includes “internal changes of attitudes and values” (p.7) in the sense that people alter and modify their attitudes and values according to the cultural situations regarding the cultural differences, and backgrounds to which people do belong. However, cultural competence, goes beyond those two discussed aspects and “integrates and transforms knowledge about individuals and groups into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes...to operate effectively in different cultural contexts” (p.8).

In the field of Education, researchers face difficulties in defining cultural competence or even agreeing on a single definition. The use of cultural competence is more limited to education. Ladson-Billings (2001) views it as a crucial component for having a culturally relevant pedagogy, by claiming that “...cultural competence refers to the ability of students to grow in understanding and respect of their own culture” (p.98). He also briefly relates it to teachers by providing some indicators. These indicators highlight the necessity of teachers’ understanding of the importance that culture has in education, as well as making efforts to knowing their students’ culture “as the basis for learning” (p.99). In the same vein, with a respect to educators, Diller and Moule (2005) define cultural competence in a more narrowed way as “The ability to successfully teach students who come from other culture than your own. It entails mastering complex awareness and sensitivities, various bodies of knowledge, and a set of skills that...underlie effective cross-cultural teaching” (p.5).

#### **1.4.2. Models of Cultural Competence**

Since cultural competence become a prominent field in research, many models have been introduced by various scholars in order to explain the different stages of cultural competence. Some of them are widely known, while others are not.

Mason, Benjamin, and Lewis (1996) establish a developmental model of cultural competence at which they introduce five stages. The first stage is called “cultural destructiveness” at which the cultural differences are refused to be acknowledged. The second stage is “cultural incapacity”, where the differences are totally ignored. The third stage is known as “cultural blindness”, in which cultural differences are not ignored but viewed as unimportant. The fourth stage is “cultural pre-competence”, at which cultural differences are viewed as important and a need for cultural competence arises here. The last stage is “cultural competence”, in this stage cultural differences are recognized, appreciated, valued, and seen as resources (p.99).

<b>Cultural Destructiveness</b>	Refusal to acknowledge the presence or importance of cultural differences; Differences are punished and suppressed; Schools endorse the myth of universality.
<b>Cultural Incapacity</b>	The individual or organization chooses to ignore cultural differences; No attention is devoted to supporting cultural differences; Emphasis may be on the cognitive growth and maturity of youngsters versus addressing the issues of cultural awareness.
<b>Cultural Blindness</b>	Individuals and organizations believe that cultural differences are of little importance; People are viewed through a western cultural mainstream lens; Messages are communicated to students that their culture is of little consequence to the learning experience.
<b>Cultural Pre-Competence</b>	The individual or organization recognizes and responds to cultural differences; There is an open acknowledgement of the need for cultural competence; Educators may seek out new information regarding diversity by attending training sessions or interacting with those individuals who have insider cultural information.
<b>Cultural Competence</b>	The individual and organization value and appreciate cultural differences; Exploration of issues related to equity, cultural history, knowledge, and social justice; Students’ cultural experiences are valued and integrated into the learning process.

**Table1.2:** Mason et al.’s Cultural Competence Model (1996)

Pederson (1994) also develops a model for cultural and multicultural competence. His model consists of three main domains; awareness, knowledge, and skills. Each domain of these is built upon the previous one, and one cannot move to the subsequent domain without mastering the preceding one. The first domain is based on the awareness of one's own attitudes, stereotypes, biases, and assumptions about the behavior of individuals. The second refers to the process of understanding the cultural heritage of one's own and how it affects his/her attitudes, values, as well as others' worldviews and perspectives. The third, refers to the integration of the previously mentioned components, knowledge and awareness, as an attempt to develop effective communicative and interactive skills with people belonging to diverse groups (p.102).



**Figure 1.1:** Pederson's (1994) Cultural Competence Model

### **1.4.3. Developing Cultural Competence**

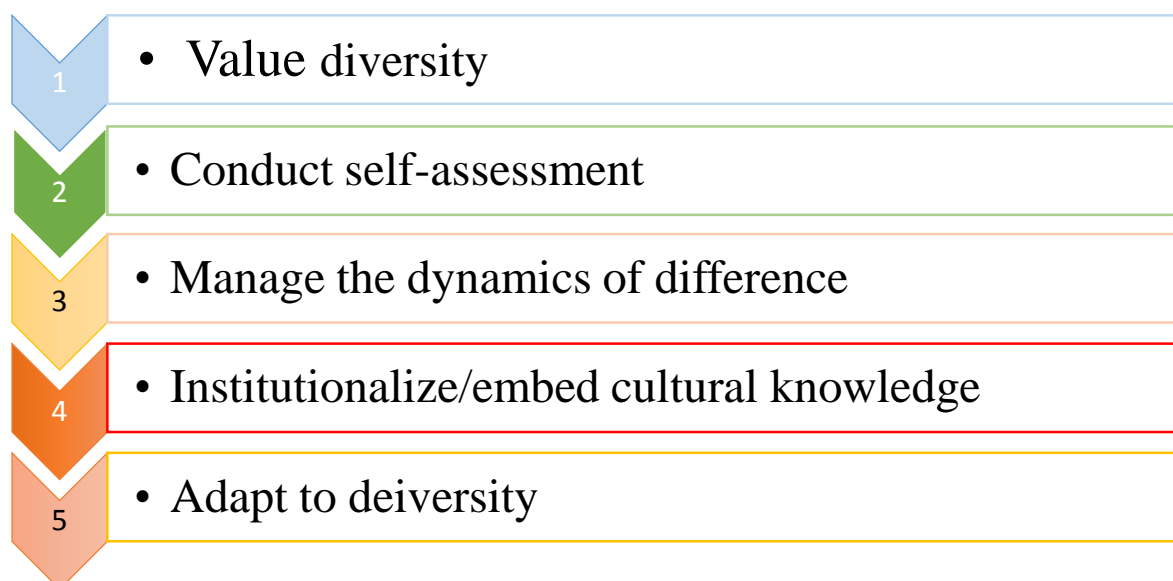
After discussing the various definitions of cultural competence provided by different scholars belonging to distinct fields of study, we came up with a conclusion which states that it is true that cultural competence is a broad concept that is viewed from various perspectives. However, the majority of scholars agree on that it is the ability to operate effectively in cross-cultural setting, and they stress the great importance of developing cultural competence.

Mason, Benjamin, and Lewis (1996), Pederson (1994), Kalyanpur and Harry (1999) agree on the fact that the process of developing and improving students and teachers' cultural competence requires five foundational principles which support any strategies designed to accomplish that aim.

These principles include:

1. "Valuing diversity.
2. Engaging in cultural self-assessment.
3. Understanding the dynamics of difference.
4. Developing cultural knowledge.
5. Adapting to diversity." (p.23)

According to the above mentioned researchers, these five constructs are considered the building block for the development of the strategies which are designed to improve students and teachers' cultural competence.



**Figure 1.2:**Five Essential Principles for Cultural Competence Development



The essence of the first principle is the acknowledgment and celebration of various values, customs, and viewpoints. It is about demonstrating acceptance, and respect between and within distinct cultures. The idea behind the second construct is that one's cultural self-assessment of his own identity, values, and customs allows him/her to know what are the areas that he/she needs to alter or enhance. The third one, is based on the idea of stereotype bringing in every interaction, in the sense that we all do bring stereotypes in our interaction especially with people from different cultural backgrounds. These stereotypes will affect the way we interact with people. That is why, Mason, Benjamin, and Lewis (1996), Pederson (1994), Kalyanpur and Harry (1999) emphasize on discussing such stereotypes in order to bridge the gaps between the cultures and realize a mutual understanding, respect and tolerance, as well as avoid any misunderstandings. Concerning the fourth construct, these scholars stress the necessity of developing cultural knowledge about one's self as well as that of others. They insist on that students should seek out for a wide range of information about the different cultures and to be culturally knowledgeable and cultivated in order to reach a good level of cultural competence. According to these scholars, knowing the "Other" and his culture is an extremely important phase to be culturally competent and this can be achieved through different ways including; "listening appreciatively to others, reading extensively, using media materials...etc." Moving to the last principle, which is "adapting to cultural differences" or "adapting to diversity", this latter is based mainly on the process of integrating funds of cultural knowledge in their daily life, organizations or systems. In addition to valuing these differences and considering them as ways of enriching their own culture. (Mason, Benjamin, & Lewis 1996; Pederson, 1994; Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999)

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have shed light on the notion of culture in general, the relation that it has with language, its importance in the teaching and learning process including the approaches, techniques, and goals. In addition to that, aspect of cultural competence, models and effective principles for its development were clarified. Therefore, we have tackled many issues related to culture in general and to cultural competence in particular.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **Reading and Reading Comprehension**

## CHAPTER TWO: READING AND READING COMPREHENSION

Introduction.....	41
2.1. The Reading Skill.....	41
2.1.1. Definition of Reading.....	41
2.1.2. Importance of Reading.....	42
2.1.3. Purpose of Reading.....	43
2.2. Reading Comprehension.....	44
2.2.1. Definition of Comprehension.....	44
2.2.2. Definition of Reading Comprehension.....	45
2.2.3. Reading Comprehension Components.....	46
2.2.4. Levels of Reading Comprehension.....	48
2.2.4.1. Literal Level.....	49
2.2.4.2. Inferential Level.....	49
2.2.4.3. Critical Level.....	50
2.2.5. Models of Reading Comprehension.....	51
2.2.5.1. Bottom Up Model.....	52
2.2.5.2. Top Down Model.....	52

2.2.5.3. Interactive Model.....	53
2.2.6. Reading Comprehension Difficulties.....	54
2.2.6.1. Lack of vocabulary.....	55
2.2.6.1. Lack of fluency.....	55
2.2.6.3. Lack of familiarity with the subject matter.....	55
2.2.6.4. Complexity of the text (Readability).....	56
2.2.6.5. Wrong or absence of effective reading strategies.....	56
2.2.6.6. Weak verbal reasoning.....	56
2.2.6.7. Processing information difficulties.....	56
2.2.6.8. Recalling information difficulties.....	57
2.2.7. Reading Comprehension Strategies.....	58
2.2.7.1. Skimming.....	59
2.2.7.2. Scanning.....	60
2.2.7.3. Predicting.....	60
2.2.7.4. Inferring.....	61
2.2.7.5. Questioning.....	62
2.2.7.6. Summarizing.....	63

2.3. The Role of Cultural Background in Reading Comprehension.....64

Conclusion.....65

## **CHAPTER TWO: READING AND READING COMPREHENSION**

### **Introduction**

Reading is one of the fundamental skills without which learning a language can never take a place, and it is considered as a cornerstone in any foreign language learning process. This chapter, provides a comprehensive picture of the reading skill in general, and reading comprehension in particular. It starts with some definitions of reading, its elements, and purposes. After that, we shed the light on reading comprehension; its definition, components, levels, models, difficulties encountered by readers during the reading process, in addition to its strategies. Finally, it stresses the role of cultural background knowledge on reading comprehension, highlighting various important studies about this matter.

### **2.1. The Reading Skill**

#### **2.1.1. Definition of Reading**

Because reading is difficult and requires a lot of knowledge, many researchers and linguists have made various efforts to describe the actual process of reading. For instance, Goodman (1967) comments that “reading is really a mystery, that nobody knows how reading works and that reading is in effect a psycholinguistic guessing game” (p.69).

Moreover, Leu & Kinzer claim that “reading is a developmental, interactive, and global process involving learned skills. The process specifically incorporates and can be positively and negatively influenced by nonlinguistic internal and external variables or factors” (1987, p.9). Correspondingly, according to Tarigan (2008, p.7) “reading is a process carried out and used by reader to acquire message that is conveyed by the writer through word symbols”.

Based on the above mentioned definitions, reading can be considered as a method of actively seeking meaning, which is influenced by internal and external non-linguistic factors. Reading can also be seen as an important life skill for immediate and long-term success, as well as a source of information and enjoyment.

### **2.1.2. The Importance of Reading**

English language learning requires the presence of the four essential skills “listening, speaking, reading, and writing”; They are regarded as the building block of any language learning. McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara (2013) consider reading as a significant and a highly important skill in English language learning (p.110). One can never underestimate its importance since it is the key which opens the door for knowledge about a given language accompanied with its culture. We all do know the great importance that the reading skill possesses, and to what extent developing it is a must, but the question which arises here is why reading is so important? In this regard, Mikuleckey and Jefferies (1996, p.1) argue that reading is important because it is the main assistant that helps learners to improve the other language’s necessary skills. For them, the role of reading is very significant in terms of helping students to:

- Think in English;
- Enrich their linguistic repertoire including; vocabulary, register...etc.;
- Enhance their writing skill (writing styles);
- Practice the English language in case they live in a non-English -speaking countries, and;
- Enlarge their knowledge about worldviews, different cultures, new facts and experiences, and to be open minded (Mikuleckey & Jefferies, 1996, p.1).

Therefore, reading, as a language skill, is very important for its significance in the process of language learning, in terms of improving the language's general skills; particularly, writing through enlarging the reader's vocabulary, writing styles, as well as enabling him/her to discover and gain more knowledge about diverse cultures, ideas, worldviews...etc. Therefore, the more learners read, the more they become skillful in writing and knowledgeable about the world.

### **2.1.3. Purpose of Reading**

It can never be denied that reading is a purposeful task in which people read different texts in different ways, and for different aims. Each reader has his/her own purposes and needs which motivate him/her to read. Some do read just for pleasure and enjoyment, while others read to gain more knowledge, and to reach educational goals. In this context, Harmer (2001, p.200) tries to categorize reasons behind reading into two main sections "instrumental and pleasurable". The former involves readers who read for the sake of obtaining knowledge about the world, attaining an educational purpose, improving their critical thinking abilities, or seeking for a given information like in the case of reading road signs to reach a certain destination. While the latter involves readers who seek for fun, entertainment, and enjoyment. These people do not read scientific articles, rather they read stories, novels, puzzles...etc.

In contrast, it has been shown by several studies that readers determine their purpose unconsciously even before they start reading. In this respect, Grabe and Stoller (2002) argue that "when we begin to read, we actually have a number of initial decision to make, and we usually make these decisions very quickly, almost unconsciously in most cases" (p.5). So, in the light of what has been said, we can say that all readers do have purposes for their reading, which they made either consciously or unconsciously. However, the purposes that readers possess before reading



would organize and facilitate the process of reading in the sense that; readers when they set purposes before reading they become more aware of their needs from reading a given text. That is why Grabe and Stoller identify several purposes of reading and classify them under seven main headings. For them readers read to:

- Scan and search for a given information;
- Skim and quickly gain a general knowledge;
- Learn from the text;
- Improve their writing skill;
- Integrate information;
- Analyze and criticize the text, and most importantly
- Have a general comprehension (2011, p.6).

## **2.2. Reading Comprehension**

The ultimate purpose of reading is comprehension; to understand and comprehend what one reads. Thus, these two aspects can never be separated, because reading without a comprehension will result in the uselessness and meaninglessness of reading. As an attempt to understand the concept of “Reading Comprehension” we need to consider the meaning of the notion of comprehension first.

### **2.2.1. Definition of comprehension**

The majority of reading specialists and scholars agree on a general definition of this notion and refer to it as the construction of meaning that is grasped from connected texts (Pang, Mauka, Bernabard, & Kamil, 2003, p.13; McNamara, 2007, p.85; Brassel & Rasinski, 2008, p.38). McNamara (2010) views comprehension as “the ability to go beyond the world, to understand the

ideas and the relationship between ideas conveyed in the text” (p.335). He claims that the comprehension of a single word is totally different from understanding a whole text. Another view about comprehension is given by Pearson (1978) who describes it as “invoking the *new to known* principle” (p.11). By this he means that in the process of reading, the reader relates what he reads now from the new text to what already exists in his background knowledge in order to achieve a successful understanding of what is read. Koda (2004) confirms Pearson’s view when he says “Comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known” (p.4). In the same sense, Paris assumes that “comprehension means making sense of words, connecting ideas between texts and prior knowledge, constructing and negotiating meaning in discussion with others” (2008, p.1). From these definitions we can simply understand that the process of comprehension is an active process which requires the reader to interact, and get involved with the text through the use of his/her prior knowledge (Pang et al., 2003, p.14).

Therefore, these scholars highlight the strong bond that exists between the prior knowledge of the reader and the comprehension process, in the sense that, this latter cannot be attained without the integration of the former.

### **2.2.2. Definition of Reading Comprehension**

As we know, the core of the reading process is reading comprehension. This latter has been defined by a great number of researchers who agree that it is the process of comprehending and understanding written texts via the extraction and construction of meaning. Lenz (2005) claims that “reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from the text” (p.1). That is to say, the reading comprehension process is mainly about the relationship that a reader creates

between his prior knowledge and what is being read. In the same vein, Snow (2002, p.11) refers to reading comprehension as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language”. These scholars assume that reading comprehension is a mental and cognitive process which is based on the understanding of ideas found in the written text, through combining the already stored knowledge with the newly constructed meaning from the text.

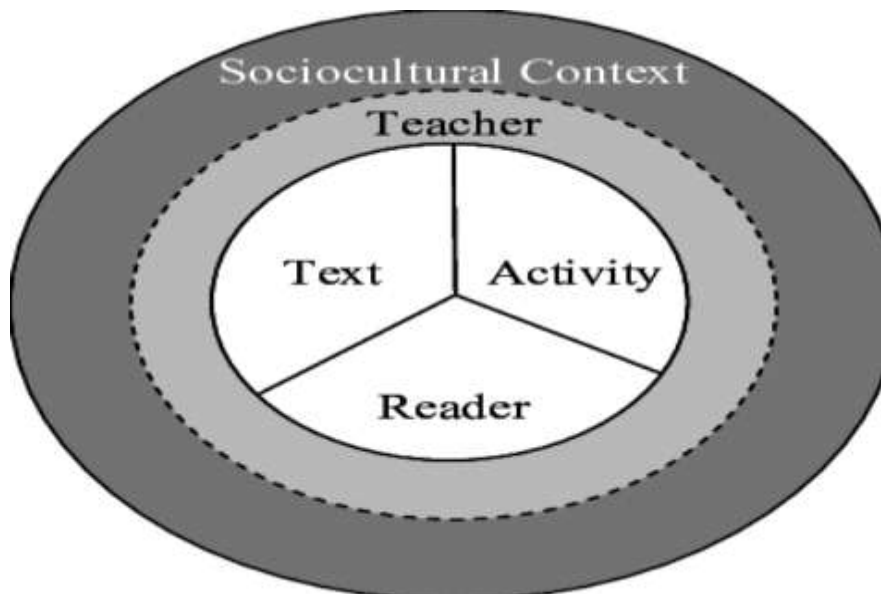
Furthermore, according to Anders (2002) reading comprehension is “the construction of the meaning of a written or spoken communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message” (as cited in Harris and Hodges, 1995, p.2). Moreover, Grellet argues that “reading comprehension means understanding a written text to extract the required information from it as sufficiently as possible” (1981, p.182). Accordingly, Grellet stresses that the process of reading comprehension is all about gaining the required information from the text being read in a sufficient manner. Similarly, Flores, Moran, and Ozro (2004, p.323) claim that reading comprehension is the mind’s capacity to comprehend ideas found in the passage as well as to understand the writer’s message and purpose that he wants to convey. By this they mean that it is really important, in the process of reading comprehension, to have a good reader who goes beyond the lines to reach as much understanding as possible.

### **2.2.3. Reading Comprehension Components**

According to Snow (2002) reading comprehension involves three main components; “the reader, the text, and the activity” (p.12). These dimensions exist mainly in the large socio-cultural context.

The first component entails the reader's abilities to decode and recognize words, background knowledge, experiences and intelligence which he/she brings while reading. In this matter, Alderson (2000, p.32) states that this element involves the reader's prior knowledge which, for him, comprises schemata (the knowledge he has), affection (the affective factors including; interest, motivation, attitudes...etc.), and the aim of reading.

The second component is the material being read; either printed or digital. Alexander (1988) assumes that the quality of the reading material plays a great role in influencing the reading comprehension process, in terms of complexity and simplicity of the text (p.89). In case of complex texts, the reader who does not have a rich background knowledge will not be able to understand and to overcome the obstacles presented in this text, thus comprehension will not take place. Therefore, just like the reader is an important element in the reading process, the text also possesses a prominent position and should be chosen in a careful manner; in the sense that there is an interaction between them both. Hence, when ideas are organized and simplified the interaction becomes easier and the goal of comprehension is attained. Concerning the third component, activity or the context as named by Sweet and Snow (2003, p.11), includes three other main dimensions which are; the purpose behind reading, processes engaged in reading, and the outcomes or the experiences the reader gains from what he has read.



**Figure 2.1:** A Heuristic for Thinking about Reading Comprehension (Snow, 2002, p.12)

In the same respect, Hafner (1974) argues that “reading comprehension involves much more than readers’ response to the text” (p.35). Consequently, we can say that, in addition to Alderson (2000), Alexander (1988), and Snow (2002), Hafner also shares the view that reading comprehension is not an easy task, it is rather a complex process of understanding all what the writer wants to say either explicitly or implicitly, in addition to using mental processes in order to create the interaction between the writer’s words and the reader’s knowledge. Hence, the process of reading comprehension requires firstly, an active reader who can perform all the previously mentioned steps and secondly, a simple text in order to ensure the interaction between these two elements to achieve the wanted result which is mainly a considerable level of understanding.

#### **2.2.4. Levels of Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is a demanding process that requires a number of skills and abilities to accomplish several steps to reach the understanding of meaning either the explicit or the implicit one and this, cannot be realized unless there is an interaction between the text, the reader and the

author. Scanlon, Anderson, and Sweeney (2010) argue that reading comprehension is a process that functions in a gradual manner through passing on three levels of complexity (p.278). These levels are; Literal, Inferential, and Critical levels of comprehensions.

#### **2.2.4.1. Literal Level**

The literal level, as its name suggests, is based on the understanding of the literal meaning of the passage, which means; what the text explicitly says. This level is regarded as the lowest level of comprehension since the reader has only one simple task that of reading the lines, and grasping only the superficial meaning from it. In this regard, Manzo (1993) refers to reading the lines as “the process of decoding the words in order to reconstruct the author’s basic message” (as cited in Manzo & Manzo 1993, p.5). At this level, the reader needs to identify the ideas and information presented in the text or what Westwood (2001) calls “Factual information” (p.32), that is; the reader does not have to go beyond that. For Instance, in case of a story, the reader does not need to look for the moral integrated in the text, or the hidden messages of the characters, rather he/she needs just to identify simple things such as; the protagonist, the place and time of the story...etc. Alderson (2000, p.8) says that this level is the simplest one, in the sense that, the reader is not doing any complex mental processes for grasping hidden meaning or relating it to prior knowledge or even commenting and giving opinions. Instead, he/she is just building knowledge about the text being read. Hence, this level is considered as the basis for further comprehension levels (Lamont, 2006, p.63).

#### **2.2.4.2. Inferential level**

This level can be referred to as “reading between the lines”. Manzo (1993) explains it stating that it is “the process of making inferences in order to reconstruct the author’s *implied messages*”

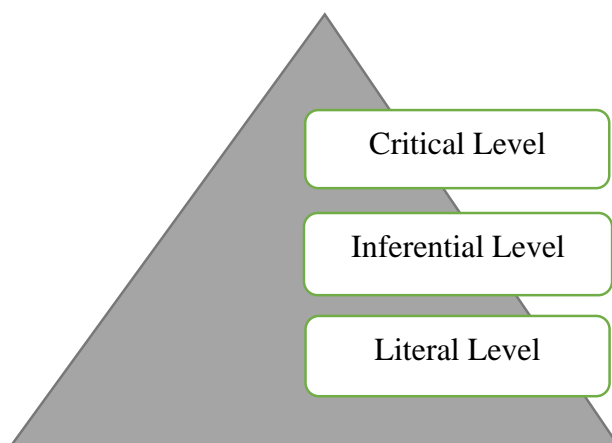
(p.6). By this he means that the reader is in a more complex stage where he/she needs to read first the lines, understand their literal meaning, then based on that meaning he/she goes beyond to grasp what the author wants to convey, and deduce the implicit messages. Therefore, this level is considered to be more complex than the literal one due to the inferential and complex processes it involves. Keeping the same example of the story; the reader at this level does more efforts in understanding the psychological side of the characters and trying to extract the deep meaning of their speeches. Moreover, in addition to the inferential processes that are done at this level, the reader needs to employ many strategies to assure as much comprehension as possible, among which we have drawing conclusions, and predictions to what happens next (Bobrow, Anderson, Sekeres, Byer, Collins, & Gottlieb, 2006, p.276). That is to say, the reader draws conclusions from what he/she reads like in case of predicting the way the story finishes before even reaching its end. Therefore, this inferential comprehension is a task that requires both inferencing efforts and strategies (King, 2007, p.269).

#### **2.2.4.3. Critical Level**

This level is the highest and most complex level of reading comprehension, since it requires the reader to read beyond the lines. Manzo (1993) defines it as “the process of judging the *significance* of the author’s message, and constructively applying it to other areas of knowledge and experience” (p.6). In other words, this level is based on making judgements and analysis on what is read and relating it to the background knowledge. Hence, the reader forms views about both the text and the author. Concerning the former, Westwood assumes that the reader deals with it in terms of “its clarity, accuracy and any apparent exaggeration or bias” (2001, p.21). While the latter is about the reader’s detection of the style of the author, his word selection, and his view point (Westwood, 2008, p.32). Therefore, critical comprehension is not an easy-to reach task; it is

an effortful one that demands a good and skillful reader with a critical ability to show his/her appreciation, assessment, and honest opinion about both the text and the author's style.

As a result, to reach a successful understanding of any text, it is highly important to mention that these three levels of comprehension are what make this understanding possible and this can be achieved only through moving from the lowest level to the highest one; through understanding the literal meaning, then the inferential one, to reach the critical understanding and evaluation of that text.



**Figure 2.2:** Levels of Reading Comprehension

### **2.2.5. Models of Reading Comprehension**

As an attempt to gain the maximum benefit from the reading process, several scholars establish a number of models that explain what occurs in the reading process; beginning from the first moment when the eye meets the graphic symbols until the construction of meaning. Rumelhart refers to this as the process of transferring the graphic symbols to ideas and thoughts (1977, p.24). Among the variety of models introduced by different scholars, we opted for discussing the simplest and most comprehensible one that is attributed to Harris and Sipay (1980, p.55) which includes; the Bottom Up Model, the Top-down Model, and the Interactive Model. Ngabut (2015, p.25) is



the one who introduces this model and claims that it can be used on the basis of both the reader's aim and the text's size. Therefore, she and other scholars explain this model and its elements:

#### **2.2.5.1. The Bottom-Up Model**

In this model, the focus is on the text itself not on the reader. It is about the process of decoding the smallest units of the text including; phonemes, morphemes, and words. The process starts by the reader's ability to identify the small linguistic units, then moving to the anticipation of the words using his/her background knowledge to reach the wanted understanding of meaning (Ngabut, 2015, p.25).

This model views reading comprehension as a process of reading which is mainly about decoding letters and linguistic units. The Bottom-Up model is also known as "Phonics" and it is hierarchical model that starts from the lowest level of reading in terms of the recognition of letters until completing the whole passage (Gentry, 2008, p.39). For instance, the reader decodes the text starting with the discrimination of letters, spelling them out, connecting the written symbols with the correct pronunciation, matching them together then forming words, after that linking these words into phrases, sentences, and finally constructing meaning (Gray & Rogers, 1956, p.58). The problem with this model is that it focuses only on the level of words because the reader will not be able to remember the meaning of each word, rather he/she remembers the meaning of the whole idea after connecting a number of words together.

#### **2.2.5.2. The Top-down Model**

Unlike the previous model, this model puts a great focus on the reader and her/his cognitive and linguistic competences which are extremely crucial in the process of meaning making of texts. According to this model, the reading process is related to Psycholinguistics, in the sense that the

reader, as it was previously mentioned, relates her/his prior knowledge to the new information found in the text in order to comprehend and grasp its meaning. In other terms, the Psycholinguistic approach emphasizes the process of relating the concrete written knowledge of the text with the abstract knowledge that the reader has in her/his mind (schemata) including; thoughts and expectations. After this, the reader guesses the meaning of each word so that the comprehension occurs (Ngabut, 2015, p.26). In this context, Grabe (1988) confirms Ngabut's idea in his words about reading "...a dialogue between the reader and the text" (p.56).

Therefore, this model is the opposite of the preceding one, in the sense that it sheds the light on the largest elements, using the prior knowledge then moving to words in smaller units, and finally understanding what is read. As a result, this model highlights the reader's need for having intelligence and experience to effectively reach the wanted comprehension.

### **2.2.5.3. The Interactive Model**

This model, as the name suggests, is based on the simultaneous interaction of the two previously discussed models "the bottom-up and the top-down" models. According to Esky "the interactive model takes into account the continuous interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing in the construction of the meaning of a text" (1988, p.93-100). As a confirmation of Esky's view Nunan (1989) states that both models are required for the efficiency and effectiveness of the reading process, in the sense that the interaction which occurs between these two models fills the existing gap between them; since the focus is on both the linguistic level (letters and words) and the cognitive level (background knowledge) (p.12). That is to say, readers combine both the lexical meaning (word structure) and their background knowledge in order comprehend a given text. They use them interchangeably, and this means that when readers do not understand the word structure

they do many top-down processes using their prior knowledge, and vice versa. Therefore, the top-down and bottom-up models are complementary and go hand in hand (Ngabut, 2015, p.27).

Ngabut also stresses that when the reader interacts more with texts he/she becomes a more effective reader. Thus, his/her reading skill will be improved. In addition to that, she argues that the reading process demands a good reader with a rich background as well as considerable ability of decoding starting from the lowest level of letters to the largest level (texts) (2015, p.27). Therefore, being an effective reader means having the ability to use the bottom-up model in case of decoding words of given passage, besides the ability to use the top-down processing in case of the confirmation of meaning grasped from the text.

#### **2.2.6. Reading Comprehension Difficulties**

Since we have already talked about the complexity of reading comprehension process, it is quite clear that readers, particularly EFL ones, face various obstacles when reading. This is explained in Wiggin's words when he argues that "Many foreign students lack the ability or training to understand the implicit messages that result from an interaction of syntax and rhetoric" (1977, p.4). Despite the great importance of this issue, only few studies are conducted on it. Every scholar explains reading comprehension difficulties in a different way, but most of them agree that these difficulties can fall under two main categories; Linguistic difficulties which deal with the text level, and the Cognitive difficulties which deal with the mental capacities to process information. In this regard, Westwood, who claims that learning English is regarded as a difficult thing for many foreign language learners, (2008, p.14), also argues that there exist eight major difficulties that impede reading comprehension. We summarized them as follows:

### **2.2.6.1. Lack of Vocabulary**

Vocabulary knowledge is considered as the cornerstone of reading comprehension because this latter is closely linked to the vocabulary baggage that readers possess. In other words, readers who do not have adequate knowledge of vocabulary will face difficulties in recognizing and understanding the meaning of words in a given text. Thus, they will not be able to reach the writer's hidden messages. Simply put, if they do not understand the meaning at the surface level, how would they understand the deep meaning. Accordingly, Hoover and Cough (1990) assume that "there can be no reading comprehension without the ability to decipher or recognize words (p.5).

### **2.2.6.2. Lack of Fluency**

This difficulty deals with the speed of reading, whether it is slow, appropriate, or fast. Both fast and slow reading affect the understanding of a text and hinder it. Readers with slow rate will neither be able to process words nor understand ideas. While those with fast rate will not be able to deduce the hidden meaning. Therefore, there is a great emphasis on readers to use a proper speed when reading because this enables them to read carefully, relate ideas and construct both explicit and implicit meanings.

### **2.2.6.3. Lack of Familiarity with the subject being read**

It is so obvious that knowledge and familiarity with the subject matter is a crucial aspect, and influences the understanding of meaning. Thus, readers who are knowledgeable and familiar with the topic they tend to read can easily grasp the meaning of the text including its details.

#### **2.2.6.4. Complexity of the text (Readability)**

When saying complexity of texts, we refer to various aspects; whether it is about complex vocabulary or structure, long sentences, difficult concepts...etc. Thus, every text has a specific level of complexity which distinguishes it from other texts particularly in terms of understanding. This means that readers when they read complex texts will have less in-depth understanding than when they read simple ones. For instance; scientific texts which explain medical phenomena using technical terminologies are hard to understand unlike expository texts which include descriptions and explanations of facts, and narratives which are easy to grasp.

#### **2.2.6.5. Wrong or absence of effective reading strategies**

Readers, in most cases, face many difficulties in comprehending a given text because they either do not rely at all on reading strategies (they do not know how to skim or to scan) or they rely on those strategies, but use them wrongly, and this of course will impair their reading comprehension.

#### **2.2.6.6. Weak verbal reasoning**

Reasoning refers to the individuals' ability to generally understand the text, in addition to their capacity to go beyond what the author writes to create the bridge between what they read and what they already know. So, it is mainly about the readers' intelligence and active mental capacities. Therefore, people who have weak reasoning face many difficulties in understanding what is being read.

#### **2.2.6.7. Processing information difficulties**

This problem is related to the readers' memory, in the sense that readers with a high working-memory capacity process information better than others with low working- memory capacity in

terms of amount and comprehension. That is why, it is highly demanded that readers need to reduce factors which function as obstacles, and weak spots for them such as slow reading, anxiety, and stress to ensure a better and a successful comprehension.

#### **2.2.6.8. Recalling information Difficulties**

When readers remember successfully what is being read, this will help them to better understand and strengthens their comprehension. However, those who have difficulties in remembering, will result in poor comprehension. For this reason, there is a necessity for readers to highlight and summarize the main points before, during, and after reading, because this will enable them to recall information easily. Alexiou (2009) assumes that some psychologists indicate that “differences in cognitive abilities and cognitive development may account for the difficulties encountered by some young learners in early reading and writing” (p.47, as cited in Milton & Alexiou, 2009). Accordingly, Alexiou highlights that the divergence of the readers’ cognitive abilities is what explains why some readers face difficulties in comprehending what they read while others do not. Therefore, these active cognitive and mental abilities facilitate the process of both reading and writing.

To sum up, from all what has been said; the fact that reading comprehension is a demanding task is so apparent. Since, it requires readers to be skillful, employ strategies effectively, face the different difficulties intelligently by using their cognitive abilities actively, and above all they need to select texts appropriately regarding their level and reading abilities. Otherwise, if they do not do so, they will perceive reading as a painful and exhausting process instead of enjoyable activity.

### **2.2.7. Reading Comprehension Strategies**

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in learning a second or a foreign language. That is why, because of the previously discussed difficulties that learners meet in comprehending what they read; a larger number of scholars suggest various strategies for readers in order to develop their reading comprehension. Each of them introduces different strategies according to his/her perspective. But, before digging deep in discussing the strategies, we need first to define what does the term strategy stand for as well as what do we mean by reading strategies.

According to Kvint (2009) a strategy is “a system of finding, formulating, and developing a doctrine that will ensure long term success if followed faithfully” (p.59), that is a strategy is that method followed to reach a particular goal, or develop a given skill. In the same sense, reading strategies stand for technique which readers use to better comprehend a particular text. McNamara (2007, p.6) claims that “A reading comprehension strategy is a cognitive or behavioral action that is enacted under particular contextual condition, with the goal of improving some aspects of comprehension”. In other words, reading comprehension strategies can refer to those different techniques used by the reader to uncover, decode, and fully comprehend the writer’s message. Accordingly, the use of these strategies enhances the readers’ comprehension through helping them attaining a comprehensive understanding of texts, in addition to overcoming the previously discussed obstacles and difficulties.

In this study, we are going to shed the light on the most prominent strategies of reading comprehension as far as foreign language learners are concerned. These strategies are: Skimming, Scanning, Predicting, Inferring, Questioning, and Summarizing; each strategy is used according to the purpose that the reader has.

### **2.2.7.1. Skimming**

There are many definitions of this strategy given by various scholars among them Brown who advocates that “skimming is the process of rapid coverage of reading matter to determine its gist or main idea” (2004, p.213). In the same vein, Verma (2015, p.301) defines it as a process of “looking over a text/book quickly, in order to get a general or superficial idea of the content.” Therefore, these two scholars stress that skimming is a process of quick-text reading to grasp only the general meaning.

Grabe and Stoller (2002) also share this view in their words “skimming is a specialized type of reading in which the reader reads quickly for a general understanding of the text and for the gist of the passage” (p.266). Therefore, skimming is mainly about having a general idea about a text before making any efforts in close reading (Grellet, 1999, pp.2-25). However, skimming is not always used to have a general idea, sometimes it is used to look whether or not a specific information is found in the text (Verma, 2015, p.301; Grellet, 1999, pp.2-25). That is to say, skimming is a rapid process of either gaining knowledge about the text’s general idea or having a look to check the existence of a certain information in that text. For this reason, readers do not concentrate on the meaning of difficult words, or appreciate the writer’s style, or even try to deduce the hidden meaning. Instead, they have a look only on the titles, and the subtitles as well as the overall information. In terms of its significance, skimming is useful in case of large and limited time allocated, in addition to cases when readers possess a considerable prior knowledge about the topic (Beale, 2013, p.84). Verma, also, believes that skimming is a useful technique which helps readers to be more confident since they think that they can easily understand a text without taking every word into consideration (2015, p.302).



### **2.2.7.2. Scanning**

Unlike skimming, scanning is a “very high-speed reading” (Mikulecky & Jefferies, 1996, p.15) through which readers look for a very specific information in the text, and do not give much importance to all the details. Scanning is when the readers move their eyes rapidly looking for a given information that is relevant to their purposes and serve their needs (Wood,2008, p.98; Verma, 2015, p.302, Williams, 1996, p.100). For this reason, Mikulecky and Jefferies assume that readers in the process of scanning, already have a purpose in their mind to be related or a question to be answered. That is why, it is not necessary for them to read all the passage word by word, but rather extract only the needed information. In this respect, texts’ arrangement and organization plays a major role in facilitating this process. This arrangement can take different forms; either alphabetically, chronologically, thematically...etc. Therefore, this strategy is very beneficial in terms of being accurate.

### **2.2.7.3. Predicting**

This strategy refers to the process of expecting and guessing the content of the text before reading; either by reading the title or having an existing knowledge about the author (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016, p.235). A similar understanding is put forward by Magliano (1993, p.35) when he asserts that “Prediction strategy involves thinking about what might be coming next in the text. It is applied by effective reader that mean, they used pictures, headings and texts as well as personal experience to make predictions before they begin to read”. So, he means that predicting is all about guessing what the text will be about with the help of titles, headings and prior knowledge. Macceca agrees with this view, but at the same time puts more emphasis on the significance of the reader’s prior knowledge in the process of making predictions in her words “Readers look at the title, the

pictures, the organization and the word chosen, and they compare and contrast what they see with what they already know” (2014, p.107). Furthermore, Moreillon (2007) strongly stresses the fact that the process of predicting relies mainly on the “inferences drawn from the author’s or illustrator’s creations” (p.76).

Therefore, the main idea which can be understood from what these researchers claim is that predictions are not the simple and spontaneous processes of guessing and expecting what is next, rather they are “educated guesses”, as described by Macceca (2014, p.107). Strategic readers use both the meaning they deduce from the text in addition to the stored knowledge in their predictions. Another important point about this strategy is advocated by Cunningham, Hall, and Cunningham (2011) when they say that “the important part of predictions is not whether they are right or wrong, but that they are made” (p.55), This means that in the process of prediction, what matters most is the reader’s prediction and expectation not their correctness or wrongness, because such expectations and predictions will be altered as readers continue to read. Therefore, this will help these readers to be active readers and engage in the text and comprehend it.

#### **2.2.7.4. Inferring**

In its broader meaning, inferring means guessing and drawing conclusions on two basics; the information found in the text, in addition to the prior knowledge of the reader. In this context, Zimmerman (2009) claims that “Drawing inferences from text is a technique which requires readers to use their prior knowledge (schemata) and textual information to draw conclusions, and critical judgements, and form unique interpretations of the text” (p.23). In other words, Inferring is the strategy via which readers make guesses about the given material relying on both the material itself and their background knowledge which includes “Knowledge of the world, contextual

knowledge, subject-matter knowledge and linguistic knowledge” as discussed by Pang et al. (2003, p.13).

Moreover, Adonis (2006) describes this strategy as deductive reasoning, in the sense that it consists of various cognitive processes including analyzing data, guessing, relating prior knowledge, and reaching conclusions (as cited in Poskitt and Skeels, 2012, p.258). This means that readers need to be active and effective in order to attain a successful reading comprehension, through relating things with their background knowledge and deduce all what is missing. In this respect, Zwaan and Singer (2003, as cited in Meyer and Gravani 2012, p.10) report that making inferences fills the missing gaps to gain a coherent comprehension. For this reason, the writer, based on this technique, is not going to mention all information about the topic, instead he/she gives fragments, that enable readers to become active through encouraging them to infer, and make conclusions via combining the presented information with what they already possess in their schemata.

#### **2.2.7.5. Questioning**

Generating and asking questions about a given material is considered as another effective strategy which engages students in the reading process, it helps them to focus on the meaning of the text via asking themselves several questions for better understanding. In his definition of questioning Myers (2006) argues that this technique is mainly about the readers’ ability to formulate and ask questions in both literal and inferential senses throughout the reading of the text (before, during, and after reading) in order to better understand (p.64). Gear shares this view and adds that readers try to determine the purpose of their reading via asking questions before reading, make attempts to understand the content as well as the hidden messages through asking questions

during reading, and finally try to deepen their understanding by questioning after reading (2008, p.63).

However, finding answers to the generated questions is not always an easy task. In this matter, Moreillon (2007, p.59) claims that there are three types of questions explained in his words “Questions that can be answered in the text, questions that require thinking or research beyond the text, and questions that seem to not have answers at all”. That is why, we cannot say that questioning is an easy process since it requires readers to spend much efforts when answering them.

The significance of this strategy appears clearly in Moreillon’s words “Questioning keeps readers engaged” (p.60). Thus, this strategy helps readers to integrate information, identify major ideas, and make a summary of these ideas, in addition to the motivation and curiosity this strategy raises among readers; in terms of knowing the answers of their questions whether they are correct or wrong.

#### **2.2.7.6. Summarizing**

According to Mikuleckey and Jefferies “Summarizing is the retelling of the important parts of a passage in a much short form” (1996, p.167). In other terms, summarizing is the last step used by readers in the process of reading comprehension, that involves their ability to pull together, recapitulate what they have read or understood from the material focusing only on the important and relevant ideas and neglecting the irrelevant ones (Myers, 2006, p.88). This strategy has a great importance in helping readers to recall texts quickly and to be more aware of its organization.

In addition to all these strategies, Krashen (1993) considers “Extensive Reading” as an important strategy for improving reading comprehension. He argues that “reading is good for you. The research supports a strong conclusion... Reading is the only way to become good readers,

develop a good writing style, and adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers” (as cited in Jacobs and Farrell, 2012, p.101). This means that for Krashen extensive reading is a very helpful technique for improving both reading and writing skills.

In the same context, Palmer believes that “Intensive Reading” can also be considered as a crucial and beneficial reading strategy. According to him:

Intensive reading tends to teach reading as set of component skills and usually refers to careful close reading...of shorter, more difficult foreign language texts with the goal of deeper detailed understanding. Texts are studied intensively in order to introduce and practice reading skills that are distinct (1968, as cited in Thomas, 2009, p. 387).

Thus, for Palmer, intensive reading is significant in terms of helping readers to use various reading strategies, as well as enhance their reading comprehension.

### **2.3. The Role of Cultural Background in Reading Comprehension**

Teaching the culture of the target language, as it was discussed in the previous chapter, is an essential component that needs to take place in any foreign language curriculum. It is beneficial at several levels specifically reading comprehension. Correspondingly, Altarriba and Forsythe (1993) claim that “Prior knowledge and cultural background greatly influence comprehension processes. Individuals may comprehend information better if they are culturally familiar with information, that is, when they have appropriate cultural schemata” (p.145). This means that students who have target cultural knowledge will be able to comprehend texts more than those who do not have. Thus, they can understand cultural specific terms whenever they face them, this is because they are already familiar with that culture and have a background knowledge about it. This view is also shared by Kilickaya (2004), when he stresses that “learning about the culture of the target language speakers and about one’s own culture needs tools that help learners in

negotiating meaning and comprehending the communicative and cultural texts in which linguistic codes are utilized” (p.36). Therefore, these researchers highlight the great importance of teaching culture on various levels in general, and on reading comprehension in particular. Simply put, one cannot understand what he reads unless he possesses an adequate knowledge about the culture of that target language. Accordingly, developing cultural competence plays a crucial role in enhancing students’ reading comprehension.

### **Conclusion**

We can conclude that reading comprehension with its levels and elements is a crucial aspect of foreign language teaching and learning. In addition to being a beneficial process for a number of reasons, it is a purposeful process which demands strategies to follow in order to ensure a successful comprehension and overcome the different difficulties that readers encounter when reading, among which; lack of vocabulary knowledge and familiarity particularly with cultural context. For this reason, this chapter highlighted the significance of reading as an important skill as well as the role of cultural background knowledge in facilitating and improving reading comprehension.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **Field investigation**

## **CHAPTER THREE: FIELD INVESTIGATION**

Introduction.....	68
The Pilot Study.....	68
Data Gathering Tools.....	68
3.1. Students' Questionnaire.....	69
3.1.1. Population of the Study.....	70
3.1.2. Students' Sample.....	70
3.1.3. Choice of the Method.....	71
3.1.4. Description of the Students' Questionnaire.....	71
3.1.5. Administration of Students' Questionnaire.....	72
3.1.6. Data Analysis and Interpretations.....	73
3.1.7. Summary of Results and Findings from Students' Questionnaire.....	106
3.2. Teachers' Questionnaire.....	109
3.2.1. Population and Sampling of the Study.....	109
3.2.2. Administration of Teachers' Questionnaire.....	109
3.2.3. Description of Teachers' Questionnaire.....	110
3.2.4. Data Analysis and Interpretations.....	111
3.2.5. Summary of Results and Findings from Teachers' Questionnaire.....	137
Conclusion.....	138



## **CHAPTER THREE: FIELD INVESTIGATION**

### **Introduction**

The present chapter is devoted to the practical part of this research, which seeks to reveal the views and attitudes of EFL students and their teachers towards the role of cultural competence in enhancing reading comprehension. It presents and analyzes the findings from data collection in the current study in accordance with the theoretical framework. In doing so, one data gathering tool has been used. Thus, two questionnaires were administered to both First Year Master students and their teachers, at the University of Guelma. Also, this chapter presents the analyses and interpretations of the collected data, in order to answer the research questions, and eventually prove or disapprove the research hypothesis. It concludes with some pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and some recommendations for further research.

### **The Pilot Study**

In conducting a study by means of a questionnaire, the researcher needs to make a pilot study. It enables the researcher to get a clear idea about the questions to be asked in the main study.

The pilot study was conducted on 10 teachers and 10 students. However, only six students and four teachers, accordingly, had taken part in the piloting of the questionnaires. Their feedback was taken into consideration in rewording questions, adding new ones, and omitting some questions.

### **Data Gathering Tool**

Questionnaires, in their broader meaning, are considered as reliable instruments that are used to collect the needed data about a given topic under Investigation. They are flexible data gathering

tool. The reason behind their flexibility is the fact that they can be utilized in various fields. This idea is highlighted by Griffee (2012, p.153) who assumes that “Questionnaires as data-gathering instruments are popular research instruments in many fields including communication, education psychology, and sociology”.

In regard to their significance in language teaching and learning, he adds “in applied linguistics; questionnaires are used only for primary research, but also to supplement other kinds of research interests.” (p.153)

As a matter of fact, although researchers may encounter many difficulties in administrating the questionnaire, yet they are still among beneficial, practical, and easy to conduct research instruments. Dornyei (2003, p.5) provides some benefits that questionnaires can offer to researchers. These benefits are summed up as follows:

- Questionnaires are practical, economical, easy to arrange research instruments
- Their dissemination by any ordinary person will not harm their validity
- They are analyzed in efficient way through the use of scientific procedures and software devices
- They are not time consuming since they allow the collection of data from a large number of population just in few time.

### **3.1. Students Questionnaire**

The first questionnaire is submitted to explore students’ perspectives toward cultural competence and its impact on their reading comprehension. It, also, deals with the extent to which

students are interested in the culture of the English language, and their viewpoints about its incorporation in EFL classes.

It is divided into four main sections: population of the study, students' sample, research method, description of students' questionnaire, and administration of students' questionnaire.

### **3.1.1. Population of the Study**

This research is concerned with two types of population: students and teachers. Concerning the present study, the sample on which the study was conducted has been selected from First Year Master students at the Department of Letters and English Language, University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma, registered in the academic year 2020/2021. The informants have been randomly chosen to respond to the research instrument addressed to them. Thus, it can be said that this sample would permit the researcher to generalize the results to the whole population.

### **3.1.2. Students' Sample**

As an attempt to carry out our research, a sample of ninety-two (92) First Year Master students of English are chosen randomly from a whole population of 120 LMD students (six groups) at the Department of English, University of 8 Mai 1945- Guelma.

The reason behind selecting First Year Master students is related to the fact that they study advanced reading as an independent module for a whole semester. Furthermore, they have a considerable background knowledge of the culture of the English language. Moreover, they have experienced the use of language accompanied with its culture for four years.

### **3.1.3. Research Method**

The present study follows a Descriptive Statistical Method (DSM) to identify, analyze, and describe factors related to reading comprehension, cultural competence, and the impact of the latter on improving EFL students' reading comprehension. Therefore, the Descriptive method is designed to describe, explain, and validate the research findings and to investigate the data gathered. Thus, the quantitative research is adopted to gather data from both students and teachers. Apuke (2017, p.41) argues that "a quantitative research method deals with quantifying and analyzing variables in order to get results. It involves the utilization and analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer questions like *who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how*". In other terms, this method is designed for the investigator to gather data, to test research hypothesis, and to answer research questions through a questionnaire which is defined by Brown (1995) as "...any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers." (as cited in Dornyei, 2003, p.6).

### **3.1.4. Description of the Students' Questionnaire**

This questionnaire is principally designed on the basis of the elements discussed in the theoretical part. It is made up of 29 questions organized under four main sections, each section focuses on a particular aspect (see Appendix A). Both closed-ended and open-ended questions are used in this questionnaire. The former, includes both Yes/No questions and/or Multiple choice questions, while the latter includes free answer questions where participants answer freely using their own words. In addition, follow-up questions are used to provide further justifications.

The first section is devoted to general information. It consists of questions about students' background information. It includes two main questions (Q1 to Q2). The second section deals with students' attitudes towards the concept of culture in general and cultural competence in particular, where various questions about culture, culture and language relationship, cultural competence, and how to develop it are asked. It includes fourteen questions (Q3 to Q16). Furthermore, the third section examines learners' knowledge about the reading skill, reading comprehension, difficulties and strategies, in addition to its relation with cultural competence as well as the impact of cultural competence on reading comprehension. It is composed of eleven questions (Q17 to Q28). The fourth section contains only one open-ended question (Q29) which gives students full freedom to add any comment/suggestion about the topic under investigation. The reason behind the variation of questions is to collect reliable data and confirm the validity of the research.

### **3.1.5. Administration of Students' Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was administered at the department of Letters and English Language, 8 Mai 1945, University- Guelma, to First Year Master students during two days May 23<sup>th</sup> and May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021. It is worth noting that because of the pandemic period of COVID 19 participants were not easily found, and few of them did not reply on all the questions. Furthermore, the questionnaire was distributed with the presence of EFL teachers in a period of 15 minutes. The majority of the questionnaires were handed back in the same day, while only a few number of them were handed back in the next day. Impressively, students showed a great interest to answer the questionnaire because they were excited to see a sample of a research questionnaire since they will be dealing with it next year, in addition they were interested in the topic itself and considered it as an important and new subject to be discussed.

### 3.1.6. Data Analysis and Interpretations

This section consists of the results and findings of students' questionnaire. It is divided into four main parts: general information, students' attitudes towards culture and cultural competence, reading comprehension and cultural competence, and the last which is further suggestions and/or comments.

#### 3.1.6.1. Analysis of Results and Findings from Students' Questionnaire

The following section contains a detailed analysis of the questionnaire results.

##### 3.1.6.1.1. Section One: General Information

**Question 1.** How long have you been studying English?

*Table 3.1: Students' Experience in Studying English*

Option	Number	Percentage
11 years	80	86.96%
More than 11 years	12	13.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

The first question is about students' English studying experience. According to the obtained results, the majority of the students have studied English for 11 years (86, 96%), while only (13.04%) have studied English for more than 11 years. Maybe, this means that some students failed in their studies or missed some years. Generally speaking, this reveals that our informants have a

considerable experience in learning English as a foreign language as well as learning its culture. Therefore, the sample is suitable to our research to understand the questionnaire questions.

**Question 2.** Why did you choose to study English?

*Table 3.2: Students' Reasons behind Studying English*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>It is the international language</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14.13%</b>
<b>It is compulsory</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4.34%</b>
<b>You need it for a job</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9.79%</b>
<b>You want to travel abroad</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15.22%</b>
<b>You love it</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>56.52%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

Concerning students' reasons behind studying English, more than the half (56.52%) chose English as their field of study because they love it. While (15.22%) of the participants chose to study it because of their dream to travel abroad. In addition, (14.13%) of them declared that they chose it because it is the international language. However, (9.79%) of our sample chose it due to the limited use of English in Algeria except for teaching and a few other fields. Finally, (4.34%) of the respondents studied English because it was imposed on them. Therefore, our respondents are interested in learning the English language and learning its culture due to different reasons. They are motivated to study it and do well to enhance their language skills and competences.

### 3.1.6.1.2. Section Two: Students' Attitudes toward Culture and Cultural Competence

**Question 3.** What comes to your mind when you hear the term “Culture”?

*Table 3.3: Students' Definition of “Culture”*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Is the language of a given group</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>It is the history of a given group</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>It is the set of shared believes that distinguishes a given group from the other</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the abovementioned table, the total number of students (100%) chose the correct definition of “culture” which refers to “the shared beliefs, values, customs, and traditions which distinguish a given group from the other”. Therefore, all the participants are aware of the meaning of the term “culture”, and having a firm grasp of what culture is.



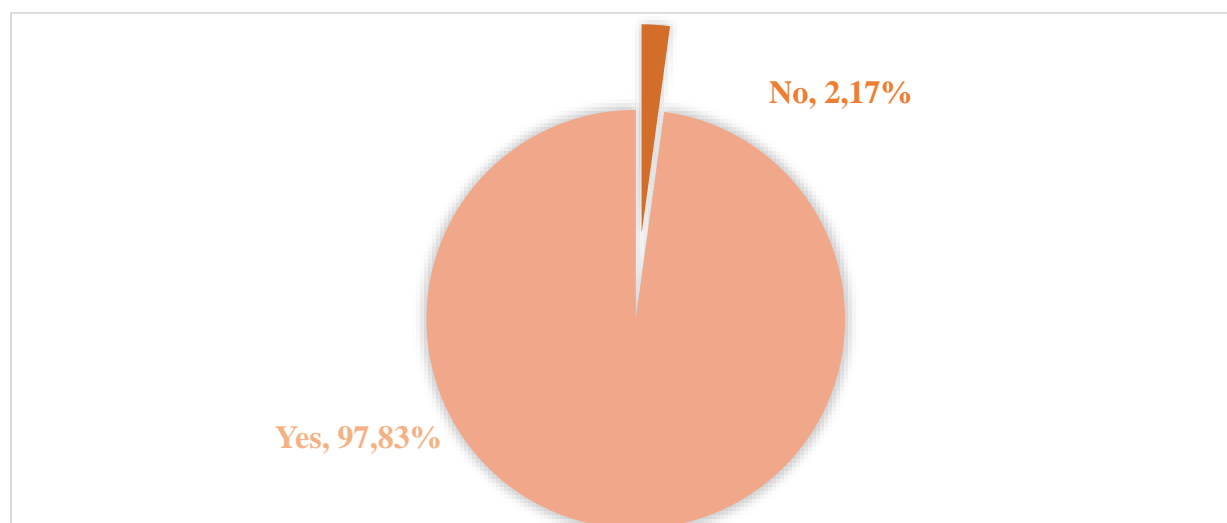
**Question 4.** Do you agree that language reflects culture?

*Table 3.4: Students' Views about the Relation between Language and Culture*

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	90	97.83%
No	2	2.17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

This question reveals that the overwhelming majority of students (97.83%) agreed that language reflects its culture. While only (2.17%) believed that language does not reflect its culture. From these results, we can say that learners are aware of the relationship between language and culture. This implies that learners do appreciate the presence of culture in their life and its relation with the different linguistic aspects.

*Figure 3.1: The Positive Views about the Relation between Language and Culture*



**Question 5.** If “yes” why?

All of the students who said “yes” believe that language and culture cannot be separated since language reflects and represents culture, in addition to that language bears and contains culture. This reveals that they are aware of the strong bond between learning a language and learning its culture. Moreover, they are more likely to acquire the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that are essential to cultural competence.

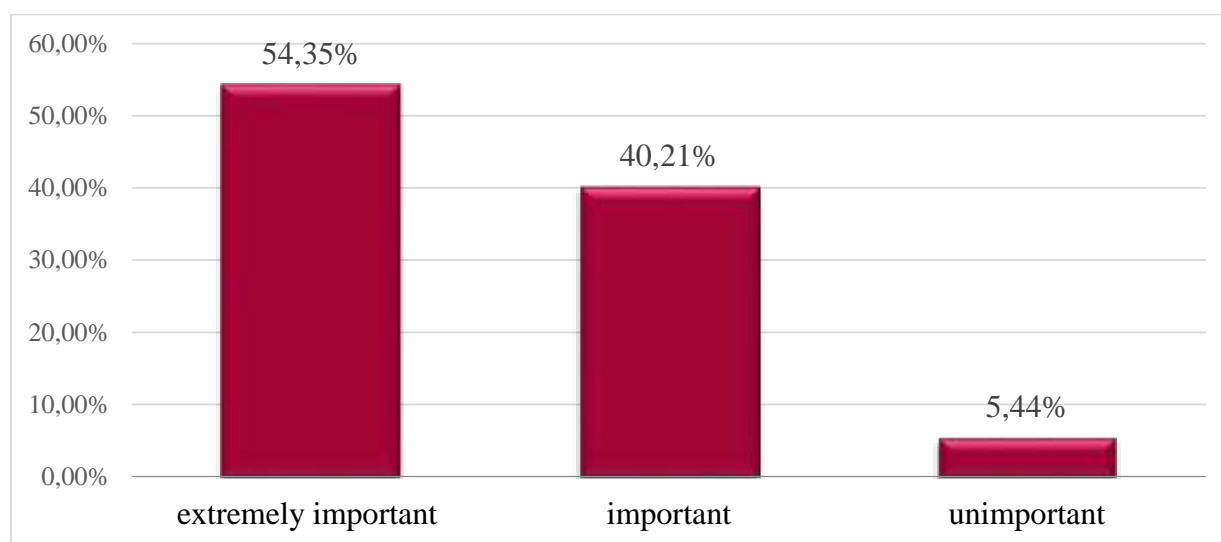
**Question 6.** From your point of view, to what extent teaching culture in EFL classes is important?*Table 3.5: Students’ Views about the Importance of Culture Teaching in EFL Classes*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Extremely important</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>54.35%</b>
<b>Important</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>40.21%</b>
<b>Normal</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.44%</b>
<b>Extremely unimportant</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above demonstrates that more than the half of students (54.35%) claimed that teaching culture in EFL classes is extremely important. While (40.21%) of them assumed that it is important. In addition, only (5.44%) of our participants thought that teaching culture in EFL

classes is not important. However, no one (0%) said that it is extremely unimportant. Therefore, the majority of First Year Master Students believe that culture is an essential component in EFL classes, and this is due to the great position it possesses in enhancing EFL students' skills particularly cultural ones.

**Figure 3.2: The Positive Views about the Importance of Teaching Culture in EFL Classes**



**Question 7.** Whatever your answer is, please justify

In this question, we wanted to explore students' justifications behind their perspectives about the importance of culture teaching in EFL classes. These justifications are summed up as follows:

- It is quite important to learn the culture of the target language in order to be proficient in intercultural communication, and know what is appropriate to say in specific situations.
- Culture teaching is important in facilitating the understanding and cooing with native people when traveling abroad.

- It is important to see its reflection on learners and introducing them to multi-globe parts in the world.
- Teaching culture helps in enriching the vocabulary, understanding idiomatic expressions and avoiding misunderstandings either when they are heard or read.

Those who said that culture teaching is not important in EFL classes justified their view by saying:

- One can learn a foreign language without necessarily being exposed to its culture, especially when focusing on the linguistic system of that language.
- Teaching language is not specific to its culture.
- There is no need to learn about the foreign culture since there are no opportunities to travel abroad.

Therefore, from their justifications and viewpoints we can understand that our informants are aware of the importance of teaching the target culture in EFL classes, due to various reasons among which; understanding the target culture's idiomatic expression and sayings in both situations either between a speaker and a listener or between a writer and reader.

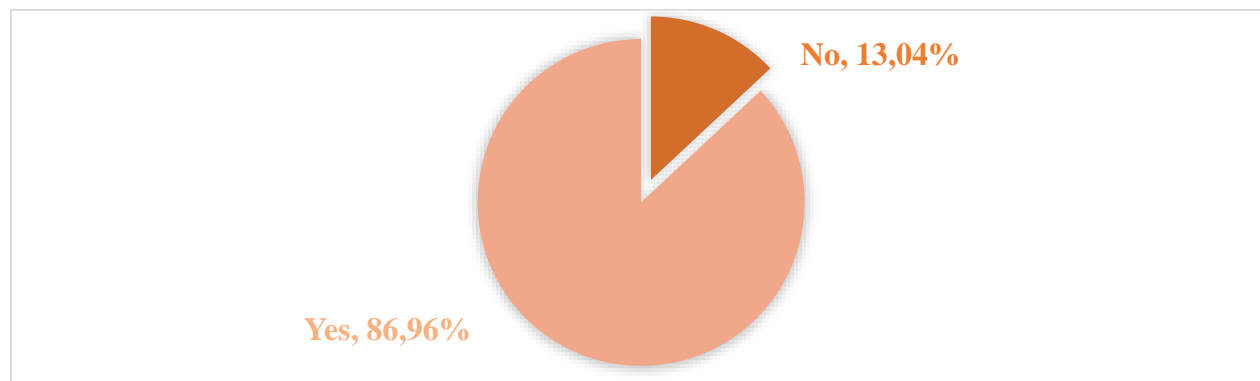
**Question 8.** Are you exposed to the culture of the English language inside the classroom?

**Table 3.6: Students Judgements about their Exposure of English Language Culture**

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	80	86.96%
No	12	13.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

This question was asked to confirm whether or not First Year Master students are being exposed to the culture of the English language during class. The results demonstrate that the majority (86.96%) of the respondents declared that they are exposed to the culture of the English language, whereas (13.04%) claimed that they are not being exposed to the culture of the English language in classrooms. This reveals that the majority of learners are knowledgeable about the English culture and maybe competent concerning the English culture. This means that their cultural competence was gradually developed since they stated that they were exposed to English culture.

**Figure 3.3: The Exposure of English Language Culture**



**Question 9.** Please explain

The justifications of those who said “Yes” agree that:

- The modules of Literature, civilization, and communication do provide some insights about the English culture both explicitly or implicitly.

Those who said “No” claim that:

- It is true that culture is integrated in some modules, however this is not sufficient enough for us to be competent about the English language culture. Instead, the university needs to incorporate the module of culture since first year and not leave it till the last year of Master2.

From these results and justifications, we can say that the majority of students declared that some of the courses they study made them feel that they are exposed to the culture of the English language sufficiently. While a small portion believed that despite the various modules they studied, they are still not exposed enough to the culture of the English language. They called for the incorporation of an independent module of English culture since the beginning of their university studies.

**Question 10.** Learning a foreign language without being exposed to its culture results in:

*Table 3.7: Students’ Opinions about the Consequences of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Misunderstanding the foreign language meaning</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>54.35%</b>

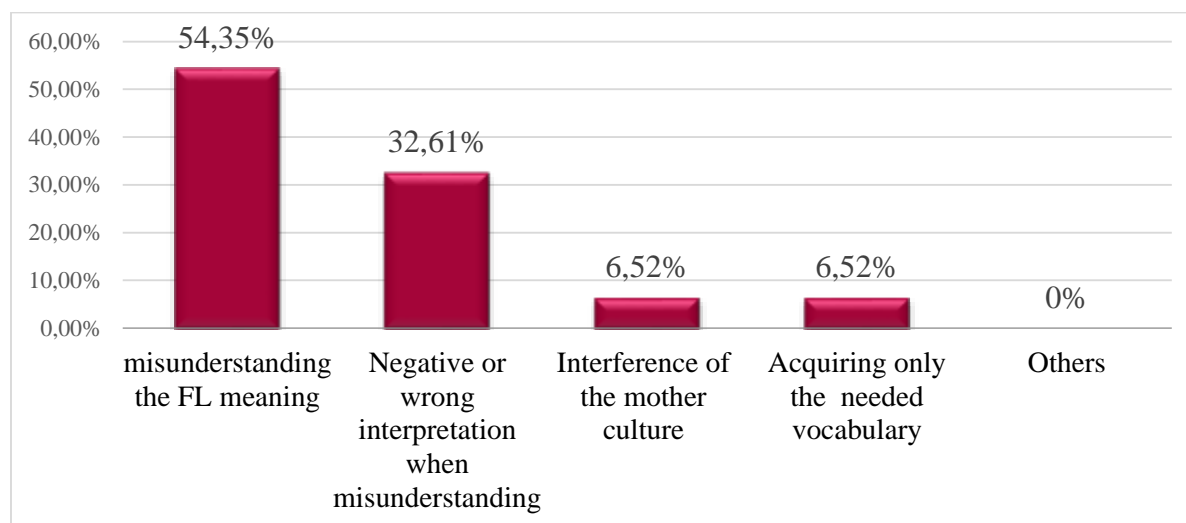
---

<b>Negative or wrong interpretation when misunderstanding</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32.61%</b>
<b>Interference of the mother culture</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6.52%</b>
<b>Acquiring only the needed vocabulary</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6.52%</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

---

The results obtained reveal that students' opinions about the consequences of not being exposed to the culture of the TL vary. The highest percentage (54.35%) represents those students who believed that when learners are not exposed to the foreign language culture, they will misunderstand the foreign language meaning. While (32.61%) of our sample declared that it will result in negative or wrong interpretation when misunderstanding. This means that students who are more exposed to English culture are more likely to develop adequate reading comprehension abilities and achieve academic success. Also, (6.52%) of students assumed that the results will be the interference of the mother culture. Similarly, (6.52%) of them thought that the result of being unexposed to the foreign culture will be the acquisition of the needed vocabulary only. Therefore, these results demonstrate that most of the students believe that not being exposed to the foreign language culture has a great impact on their understanding of the foreign language. This indicates that the absence of culture teaching will lead to the lack of cultural competence and as a consequence their skills will be weak, particularly reading comprehension.

**Figure 3.4: The Consequences of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture**



**Question 11.** Are you aware of the differences between your culture and the culture of the English language?

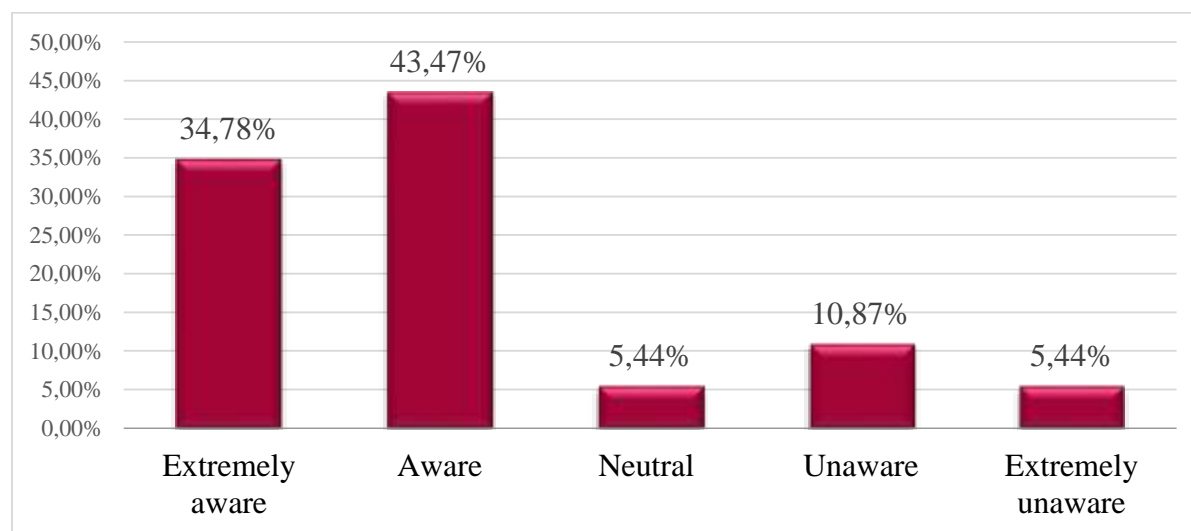
**Table 3.8: Students' Awareness of the Cultural Differences**

Option	Number	Percentage
Extremely aware	32	34.78%
Aware	40	43.47%
Neutral	5	5.44%
Unaware	10	10.87%
Extremely unaware	5	5.44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>



A considerable number of our sample (43.47%) argued that they are aware of the existing differences between their mother culture and that of the target language. While others (34.78%) declared that they are extremely aware. In addition, (10.87%) of the sample said that they are unaware. However, some of them (5.44%) claimed that they are neutral. The same percentage (5.44%) of the participants argued that they are extremely unaware. This reveals that a good amount of students is aware of the differences between the Arabic culture and the English culture. Therefore, they are culturally competent because cultural differences awareness is a major element of cultural competence as defined by many scholars.

**Figure 3.5: The Degree of Awareness of Cultural Differences**



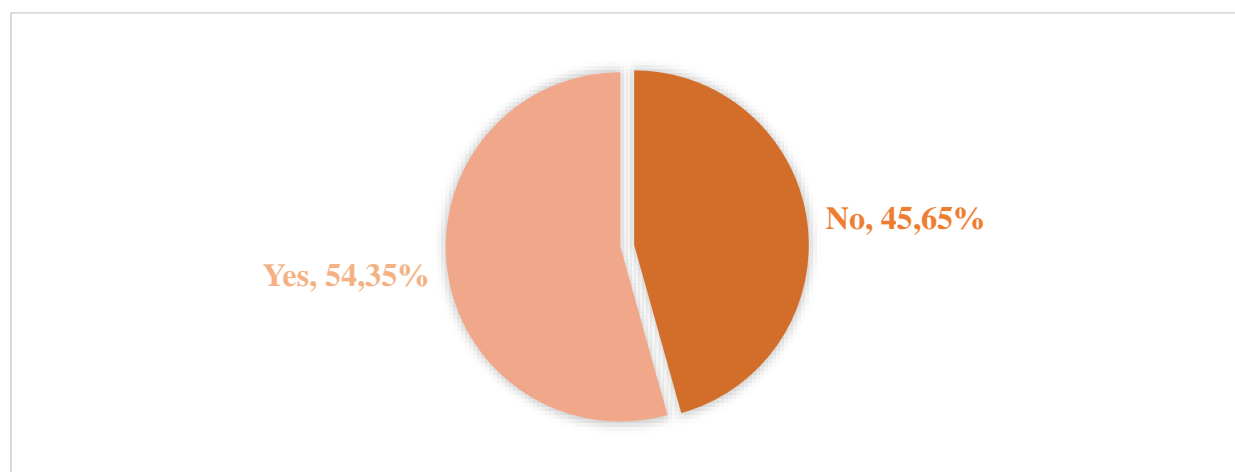
**Question 12.** Are you familiar with the term “Cultural Competence”?

**Table 3.9: Students’ Familiarity with the Term “Cultural Competence”**

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	50	54.35%
No	42	45.65%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the results demonstrate, in the table above, more than the half of the students (54.35%) knew what “cultural competence” means. While (45.65%) were not aware of the meaning of “cultural competence. Nearly half of the participants did not know what is meant by cultural competence and this is opposing to what is stated in the previous question results. So, students are not really aware that cultural differences are essential to cultural competence.

**Figure 3.6: The Familiarity with the Term “Cultural Competence”**



**Question 13.** Do you think that “Cultural Competence” means?

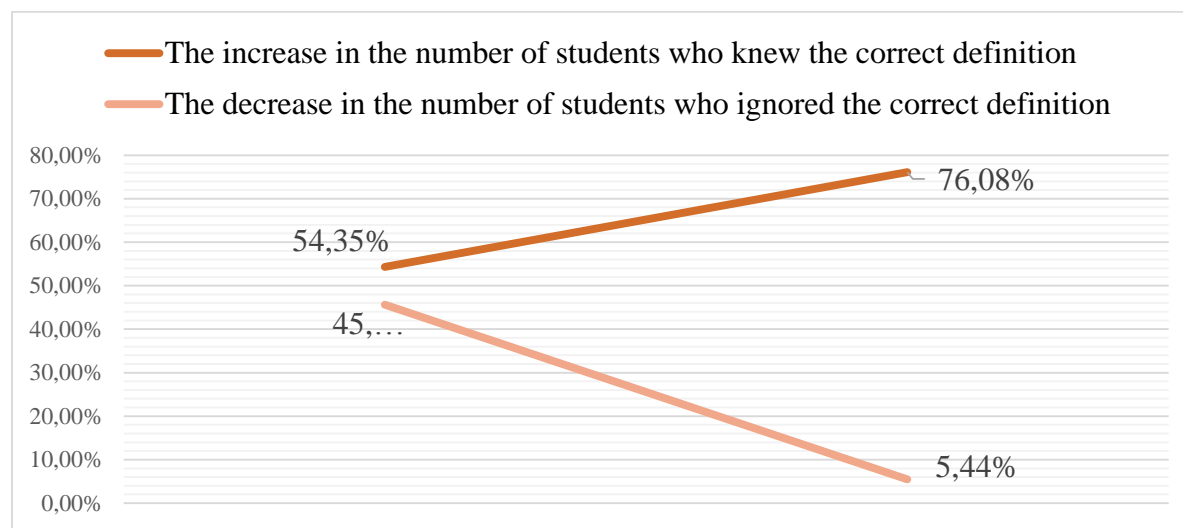
*Table 3.10: Students’ Knowledge about “cultural competence”*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>The knowledge about the mother culture</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.44%</b>
<b>The knowledge about the target culture</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13.04%</b>
<b>The ability to understand and effectively communicate with other people from different cultures</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76.08%</b>
<b>The interference of one’s own culture in her/his judgments</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.44</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is clearly demonstrated in the table above that the majority of our respondents (76.08%) chose the correct definition of cultural competence that stands for “the ability to understand and effectively communicate with other people from different cultures”. Others (13.04%) opted for the second option which is the knowledge about the target culture. while only few people did not succeed in knowing the correct answer since (5.44%) of the participants thought that cultural competence is the knowledge about the mother culture. the other (5.44%) of the sample believed that it means the interference of one’s own culture in his judgments. Therefore, we can understand that the number of students who knew about the right definition of cultural competence increased, while the number of those who did not know about it decreased after providing them with options

of definitions. That is, these students were already familiar with the meaning of cultural competence but not really sure.

**Figure 3.7: The Change in Statistics Concerning Students' Knowledge of the Term "Cultural Competence"**



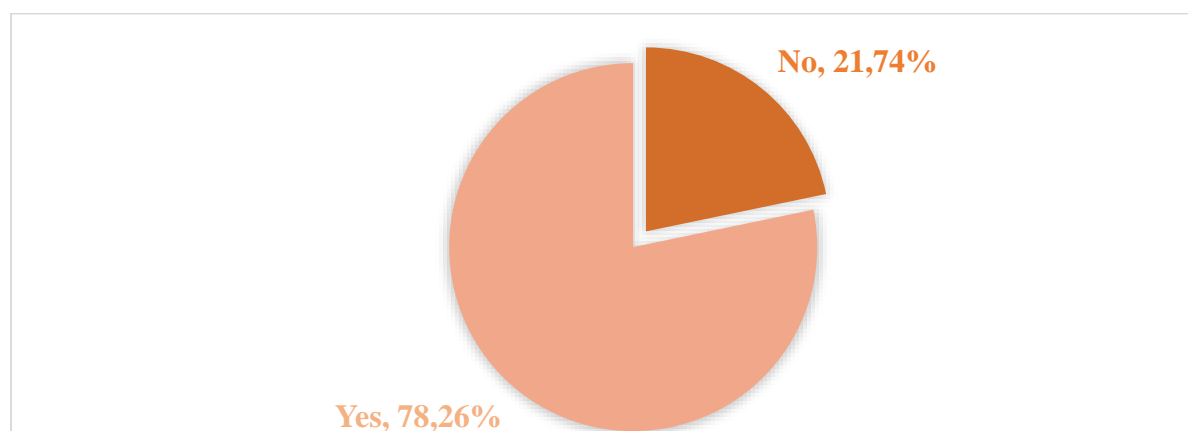
**Question 14.** Do you think that developing cultural competence is necessary in EFL classes?

**Table 3.11: Students' Opinions about the Necessity of Cultural Competence Development**

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	72	78.26%
No	20	21.74%
Total	92	100%

This question was asked to investigate students' views about whether or not it is important to develop cultural competence in EFL classes. The majority of students (78.26%) viewed that developing cultural competence in EFL classes is important. While, (21,74%) of them claimed that it is not really important. This reveals that, most of First Year Master students are aware of the importance of developing cultural competence in EFL classes.

**Figure 3.8: The Positive Views about the Necessity of Cultural Competence Development in EFL Classes**



**Question 15.** If “Yes” please explain

For those students who opted for (yes), they explained why they think that developing cultural competence is important in EFL classes. For them developing cultural competence helps in:

- Having an adequate cultural background knowledge as well as facilitating the process of foreign language learning, in terms of knowing the language with its various aspects and most importantly vocabulary knowledge, since this latter comprises the majority of cultural markers that characterize a given culture (concerning cultural bonded elements, idiomatic expressions, sayings...etc.). Therefore, when we interact with the

target culture especially in reading; these cultural elements will not stand as a barrier in front of our comprehension.

- Making students open minded and tolerant toward the target culture.
- Interpreting ambiguous cultural issues.

Thus, according to the above justifications we can say that students are completely aware of the importance of developing cultural competence in EFL classes and its impact on the process of foreign language learning in its various dimensions, particularly in intercultural communication and reading comprehension, because according to them; one cannot effectively interact with a target text and fully comprehend what he/she reads from hidden meaning of cultural norms unless he/she develops cultural competence.

**Question 16.** How do you develop your cultural competence?

*Table 3.12: Students' Techniques for Developing their Cultural Competence*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Being open to different cultures and getting knowledge about them</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.44%</b>
<b>Communicating and interacting with native people</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27.17%</b>
<b>Watching movie, TV shows about the TC</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>39.13%</b>
<b>By reading about TC</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22.82%</b>

---

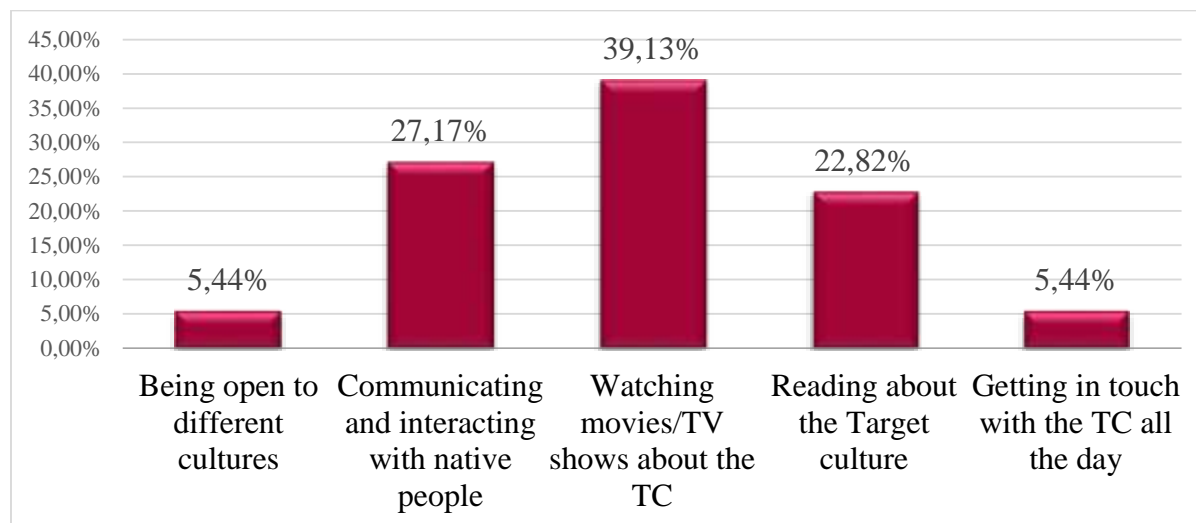
---

<b>By getting in touch with the target</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.44%</b>
<b>culture all the day</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

---

In this question, students picked up, from a number of options, the ways through which they develop their cultural competence. The highest percentage of students (39.13%) declared that they develop it through watching movies and TV shows about the TC. While (27.17%) of them said that they develop it through communicating and interacting with native people. Others (22.82%) stated that they develop it through reading about TC. In addition to that, (5.44%) of respondents claimed that they try to enhance their cultural competence through being open to different cultures and getting knowledge about them. Finally, the other (5.44%) of them said that it is through getting in touch with the target culture all the day. In the light of these views, we can say that the respondents provided diverse techniques in order to develop their cultural competence mainly through watching TV and interacting with native people and reading about that native culture. Therefore, these students appreciate cultural competence and its importance on their language learning process.

**Figure 3.9: The Different Techniques for Developing Cultural Competence**



### 3.1.6.1.3. Section Three: Reading Comprehension and Cultural Competence

**Question 17.** Do you read?

**Table 3.13: Students' Attitudes towards Reading**

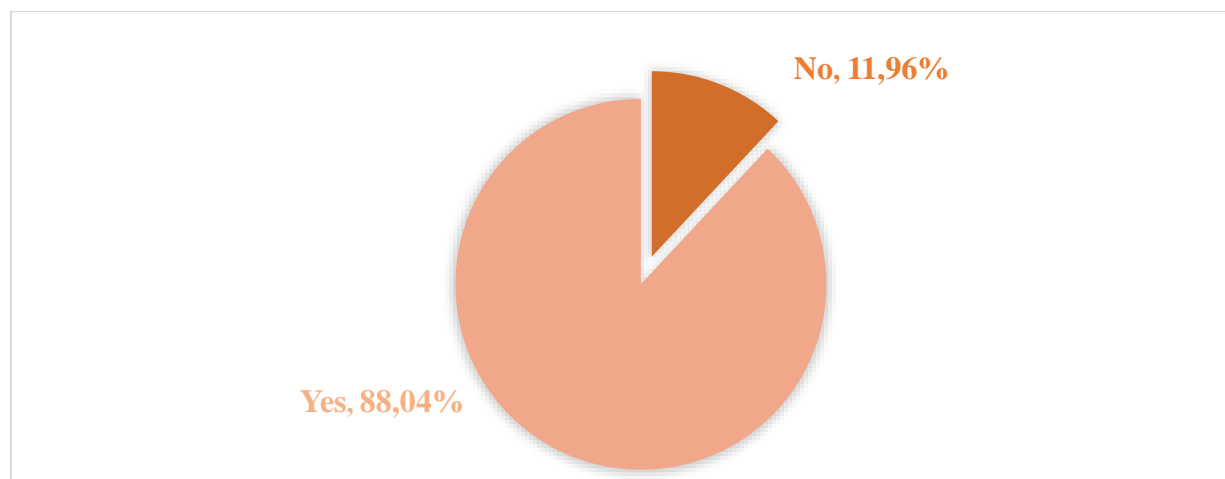
Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	81	88.04%
No	11	11.96%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results show that the majority of the participants (88.04%) reads, while only few respondents (11.96%) do not read. This reveals that First Year Master students are aware of the importance of reading that is why the majority of them practice reading, for various reasons and



among them what can be deduced from the previous analysis of the second section which is reading to learn more about the target culture in general and to become culturally competent in particular.

**Figure 3.10: The Positive Attitudes towards Reading**



**Question 18.** How often do you read?

**Table 3.14: Students' Reading Frequency**

Option	Number of answers	Percentage
Always	09	9.79%
Sometimes	71	77.17%
Rarely	12	13.04%
Never	0	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

As obtained from students' answers of this question, the highest percentage of participants (77.17%) said that they read sometimes, (13.04%) of them read rarely, and (9.79%) of them always read. However, no one (0%) stated that they never read. More interestingly, the major goal of reading comprehension instruction, therefore, is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and competences that they must have if they are to become competent. This demonstrates that the majority of our sample reads in order to enrich their cultural knowledge and develop their cultural competence.

**Question 19.** If “you read”, what is the kind of materials do you read?

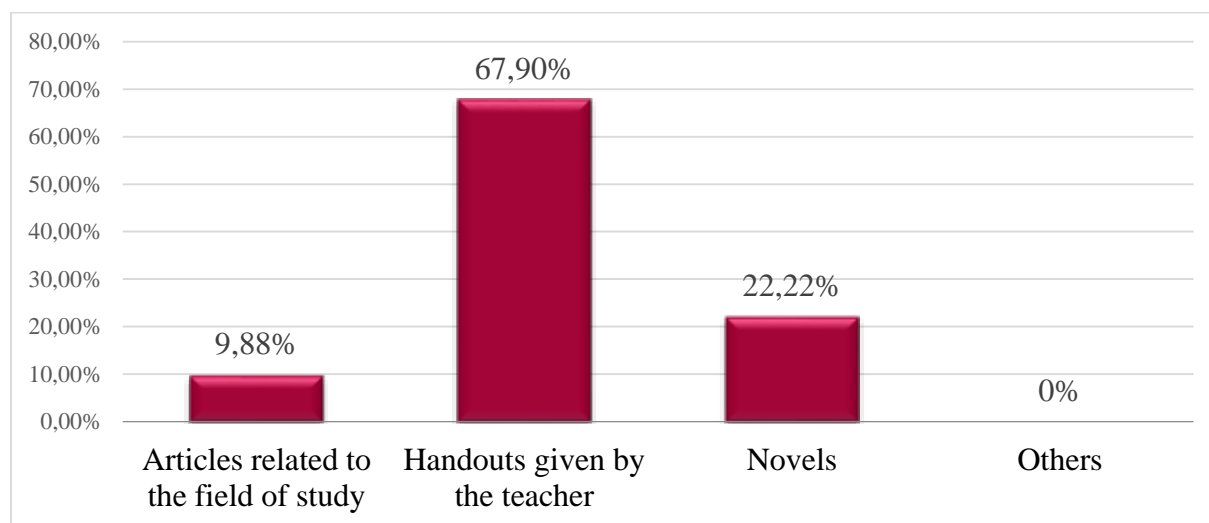
*Table 3.15: Students' Types of Reading Materials*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Articles related to the field of study</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9.88%</b>
<b>Handouts given by the teacher</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>67.90%</b>
<b>Novels</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22.22%</b>
<b>Others</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100%</b>

Concerning types of reading materials, students' answers differed according to what they prefer to read. (67.90%) of the participants declared that they read handouts given by their teachers. (22.22%) of them said that they prefer to read literary texts including novels, short stories...etc. (9.88%) of them said that they read articles related to their fields of study. Notably, none of them

chose ‘others’ option. Consequently, we can notice that academic reading “handouts” are the most readable material for First Year Master students of English in order to pass their exams. This, also, represents that there are some students who preferred to read literary texts in order to know more about English literature and particularly English culture.

**Figure 3.11: The Different Types of Reading Materials**



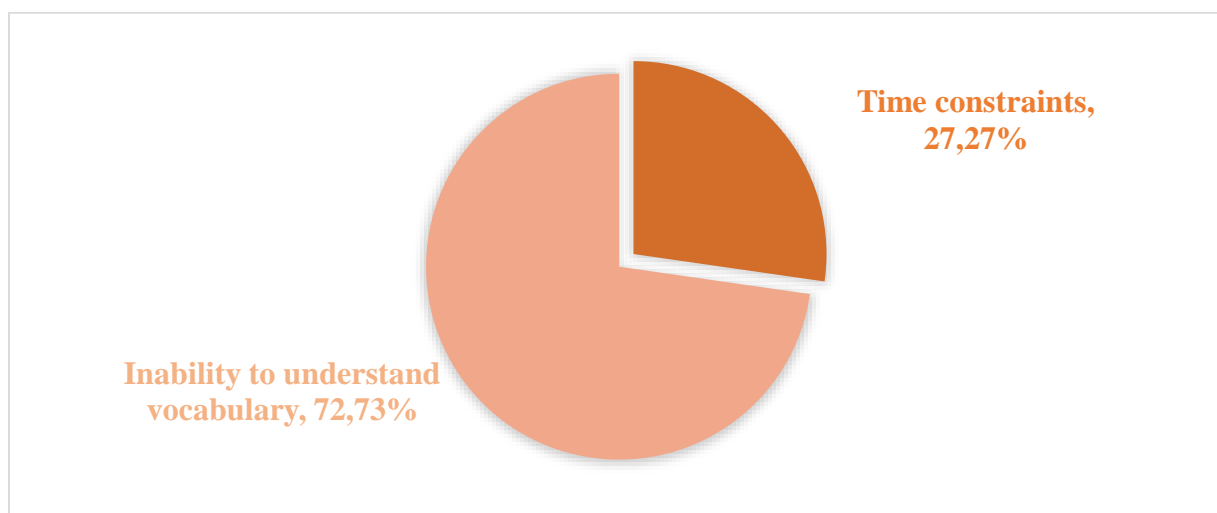
**Question 20.** If “you do not read”, what are the factors that prevent you from reading?

**Table 3.16: Students’ Reasons Behind Not Reading**

Option	Number	Percentage
The inability to understand vocabulary	87	2.73%
Time constraints	3	27.27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

This table shows that a significant majority of students (72.73%) said that they do not read because of their inability to understand vocabulary. While (27.27%) declared that the main factor that prevents them from reading is time constraints. Therefore, these students do not read mainly because of the lack of vocabulary knowledge. Reading comprehension as an important language skill is greatly influenced by many factors such as students' familiarity with vocabulary in general and their familiarity with culture in particular. Moreover, when students are familiar with cultural norms, they make a better interpretation of the text and consequently they read more and this, in turn, may improve their reading comprehension.

***Figure 3.12: The Reasons behind Not Reading***



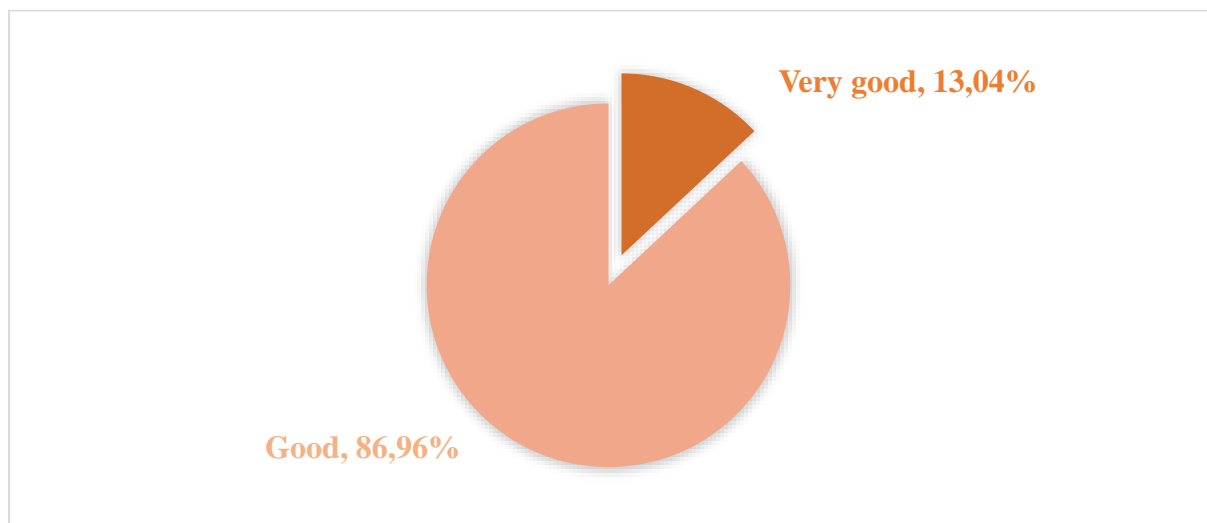
**Question 21.** How do you assess your level of comprehension in English?

*Table 3.17: Students' self-Assessment of their Level of Comprehension of English*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Very good</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13.04%</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>86.96%</b>
<b>Bad</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Very bad</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

This question was asked to examine students' evaluation of their level of comprehension in English, and as it was expected their answers varied only between good and very good. Since the majority (86.96%) judged their level of comprehension in English as good. While the rest (13.04%) viewed that their level is very good. Therefore, the majority of our sample view that they have a good level of comprehension in English.

**Figure 3.13: The Assessment of the Level of Comprehension in English**



**Question 22.** After four years of studying at university, are you able to understand English texts easily?

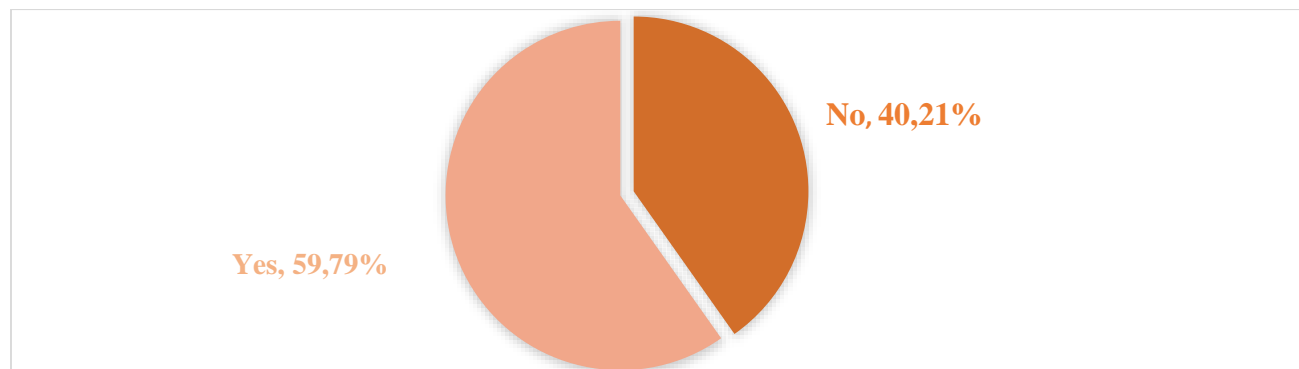
**Table 3.18: Students' Ability of Understanding English Texts**

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	55	59.79%
No	37	40.21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

More than the half of students (59.79%) said that they do understand English texts easily. While (40.21%) declared that they do not understand English texts easily. Therefore, despite being students of English for 4 years at the university; a considerable number of First Year Master

students do not understand English texts easily. This may be due to their lack of vocabulary knowledge as some of them previously mentioned (Q 20).

**Figure 3.14: The Ability of Understanding English Texts**



**Question 23.** What are the frequent difficulties that stand in front of your understanding when you read?

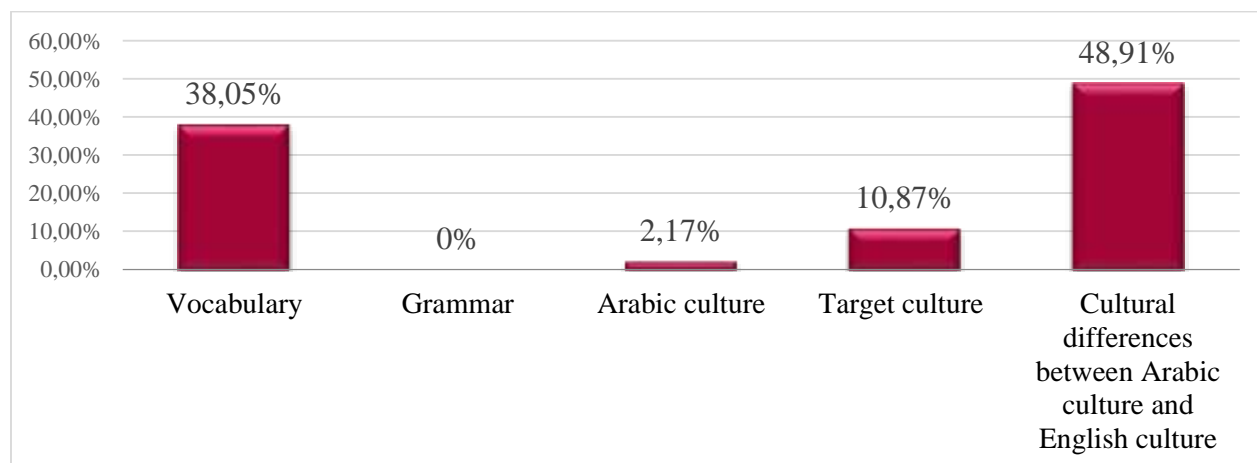
**Table 3.19: Students' Frequent Difficulties in Understanding while Reading**

Option	Number	Percentage
Vocabulary	35	38.05%
Grammar	00	00%
Arabic culture	2	2.17%
Target culture	10	10.87%
The cultural differences between Arabic culture and English culture	45	48.91%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the answers above, (48.91%) of our respondents declared that the most common difficulties that stand in front of them when reading are the cultural differences between Arabic culture and English culture. While (38.05%) of the students said that “vocabulary” is their main obstacle in the process of understanding what they read. In addition, (10.87%) of them claimed that the target culture itself is an obstacle in front of comprehending English texts. Only (2.17%) of our sample said that Arabic culture makes it difficult to understand what they read. However, no one (0%) chose grammar.

Therefore, we can understand that the two major problems of reading comprehension encountered by students while reading are the cultural differences that exist between their native culture and the target one in addition to the vocabulary of that target culture. So, if we can relate it to the previous questions, we can say that students face such difficulties because they are not made aware of the cultural differences unlike what they declared previously (Q11) and, therefore, are not culturally competent in a sufficient way to allow them comprehend every single word they read in the TC. Since if they were sufficiently culturally competent and open to the culture of the English language, they would easily understand and comprehend whatever they read.

**Figure 3.15: The Frequent Difficulties in Understanding While Reading**





**Question 24.** What do you do to overcome these difficulties?

*Table 3.20: Students' Strategies to Overcome Reading Comprehension Difficulties*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Use Dictionaries</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38.05%</b>
<b>Ask teachers and classmates</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32.61%</b>
<b>Read again</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.17%</b>
<b>Guess from what has been read</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27.17%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

The obtained results show the strong convergence between three major answers. (38.05%) of our sample said that they use dictionaries. (32.61) of them stated that they ask their teachers and classmates. (27.17%) of students declared that they just guess from the context. While only (2.17%) of the respondents said that they read again. Therefore, the most useful ways these students use when facing difficulties in understanding what they read, either because of their lack of vocabulary knowledge or because of the differences between the Arabic culture and the English one, are the use of dictionaries and asking classmates or teachers. Another slightly used strategy is the technique of guessing from the context, in addition to reading again.

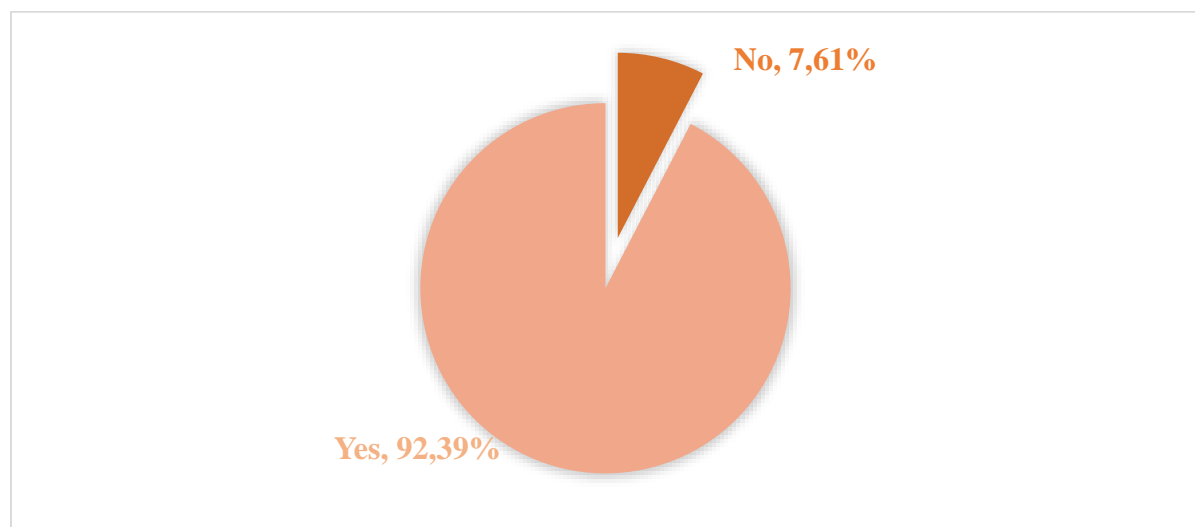
**Question 25.** Do you agree that ignoring the aspects of culture effects your reading comprehension?

***Table 3.21: Students' Attitudes towards the Effect of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture on Reading Comprehension***

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>92.39%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7.61%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

In response to question (Q25), students viewed that ignoring the aspects of culture influences their reading comprehension, and we can say that the largest majority (92.39%) said “yes”, while only few others (7.61%) noticed that it does not really have an effect on reading comprehension. Therefore, we can say that First Year Master students are aware of the fact that ignoring aspects of the English culture will effect negatively on their reading comprehension. This implies that there is a kind of paradox. Furthermore, there is no relationship between respondents' answers to this question and previously mentioned questions results. So, more clarification is needed in the following question.

**Figure 3.16: The Positive Attitudes towards the Effect of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture on Reading Comprehension**



**Question 26.** If “Yes” please explain

Our sample views that neglecting and ignoring the aspects of the target culture in general and English culture in particular has a negative impact on their reading comprehension. They answered in convergent manner, and their responses are explained as follows:

- Since language and culture are two facets of the same coin, we cannot read a given text in the TL neglecting its culture, because without this latter we cannot understand the former.
- If we ignore or neglect the culture of the target language, we will not be able to understand the vocabulary on the one hand, and on the other we will not be able to grasp the hidden meaning of the writer and of idiomatic expressions and so on.
- If we ignore the culture of the English language we will feel that we are reading for no purpose, because the main aim of reading is to develop our ability to understand people

and communicate with them. Therefore, if we do not know the culture how would we understand, and feel that we are in real intercultural context.

Therefore, from all these justifications, we can say that our sample is completely aware of the fact that ignoring aspects of the target culture affect their reading comprehension. Since they all agreed on that if they neglect the culture of the English language there will be a lot missing, and their reading will be fragmented. Therefore, they will not grasp the hidden meaning of the writer, and maybe even the explicit one.

**Question 27.** Do you think that developing students' cultural competence will enhance their reading comprehension?

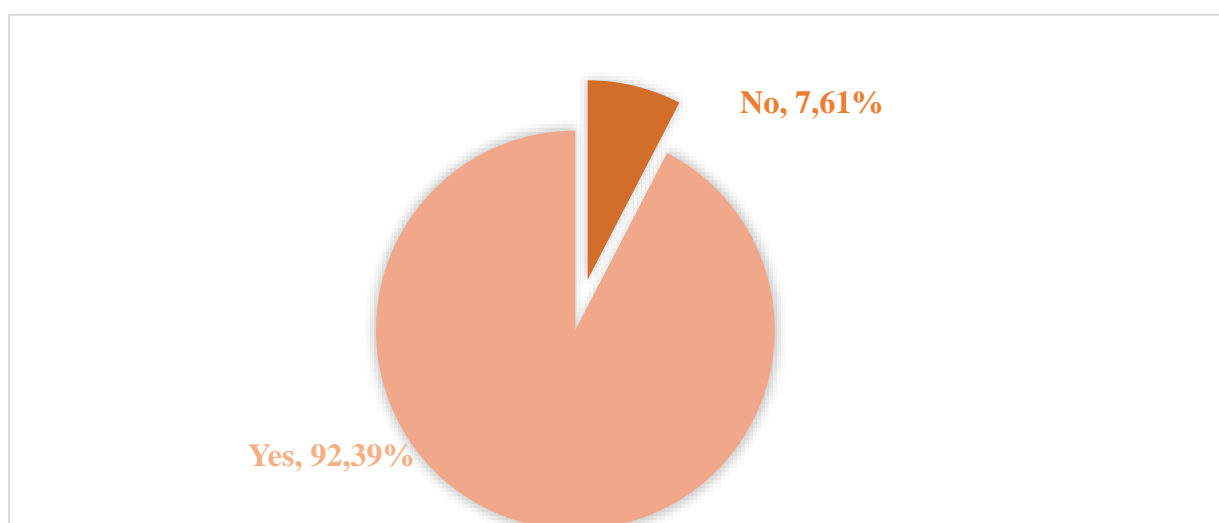
***Table 3.22: Students' Opinions about the Impact of Developing Cultural Competence on their Reading Comprehension***

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>92.39%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7.61%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

As an addition to the previous question, this question was asked to confirm students' opinions about whether or not developing cultural competence will enhance their reading comprehension. (92.39%) of students said "yes", while only (7.61%) of them said "no". Therefore, we can conclude that the same portion who said that ignoring aspects of the target culture affects reading comprehension in the previous question is the same portion who agreed that developing cultural

competence enhances reading comprehension. Thus, those students were aware of the fact that cultural competence is necessary in their comprehension of what they read as far as the target culture is concerned. While few respondents were not aware of the importance of cultural competence in enhancing their reading comprehension.

**Figure 3.17: The Positive Impact of Developing Cultural Competence on Reading Comprehension**



**Question 28.** If “Yes”, please explain

In this question, students explained how cultural competence development has a positive impact, in terms of enhancing their reading comprehension. They answered as follows:

- Developing cultural competence will help students to have an adequate cultural background knowledge, in the sense that they will understand the target texts easily and grasp the explicit meaning and the hidden one of the writer and idiomatic expressions. Moreover, if students were not culturally competent they will not understand such idiomatic expressions. Thus, their reading will be meaningless because they neither

understand nor benefit from what they read. In simpler terms, cultural competence is a mediator between their native culture and the target culture.

- Developing cultural competence will help students to live the situations mentioned in the text as if they are real, and they will not feel that they are non-natives. However, if they are not culturally competent they will find a great gap, thus feel like strangers and ignorant of that culture.

#### **3.1.6.1.4. Section Four: Further Suggestions or Comments**

**Question 29.** Do you have any suggestions and/or comments about what you have dealt with in the previous sections?

Half of Students (50%) added comments and suggestions. They all agreed on three main points; whereby they insisted on the importance of devoting an independent course for the target culture since First year. In addition, they stressed on the importance of knowing the target culture to master the language, and more specifically to improve reading comprehension.

Moreover, they emphasized that the target culture will provide a deeper meaning and understanding to the texts being read or lessons being presented.

Their suggestions are explained as follows:

- It is really important that our department devotes a course for the English culture from the beginning of university studies, because it is not sufficient to study the target culture explicitly for only one semester in Master 2.

- If anyone wants to master the target language and to be a native like, he/she needs to get to know its culture, to dig deeply in its various aspects, and to practice the language in its context i.e.: its culture.
- If one does not know the culture of the TL he is studying, he ca never be able to fully comprehend the language of that culture.

Generally speaking, it seems from the above suggestions and comments that students are aware and appreciate the important role that cultural competence has in improving reading comprehension in terms of enriching cultural knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge, and reading comprehension. Furthermore, they are requesting for a module devoted to culture from the beginning of their studies at the university. All this is due to the fact that they are totally conscious about the drawbacks of not being exposed to the target culture in various aspects, particularly reading comprehension.

### **3.1.7. Summary of Results and Findings from Students' Questionnaire**

The data gathered from the questionnaire have been presented and analyzed in the previous section. Accordingly, this part attempts to summarize the findings.

The obtained results of students' questionnaire demonstrate that the majority of students declared that they have been studying English for eleven years, and that studying English was their own choice because they love it, and it was not compulsory. Almost all respondents justified their choice in which they indicated that they want to have a good career and travel abroad.

The findings of section two, which is about students' attitudes towards culture and cultural competence, reveals that the total number of students are aware of what does the term "culture" means, and they all agreed on that it is "the shared beliefs, customs, values, and traditions which

distinguishes a given group from the other”. Furthermore, they concur on that language reflects culture and justified with “language and culture can never be separated, language bears culture and represents it, and culture reflects and is reflected by language”. Moreover, the overwhelming majority believes that it is extremely important to teach culture in EFL classes. In the light of this importance, they justified with the fact that “in order to be proficient enough in the target language with its various aspects, one needs to learn the culture of that language not only in informal setting but also in academic formal setting, so that he/she can possess adequate cultural knowledge which will helps him/her in the future career.

In addition, they claimed that they are exposed to the target culture but not in a sufficient way, since the culture based module only exists explicitly in the last year which is the Master two, while before that year it is only included in other modules such as literature and civilization. Therefore, they recommended for starting to study such module since the beginning of their university career. Those students wanted to be more exposed to the target culture. However, when they expressed their opinions about the consequences of not being exposed to the English culture, the majority of them declared that lack of exposure to the target culture would result in the misunderstanding of the foreign language meaning. Also, most of the participants were aware of the cultural differences between their mother culture and the target one, the majority of these students demonstrated their awareness of such differences. Concerning cultural competence, the overwhelming majority showed that they are knowledgeable about the meaning of this concept, and they believed that cultural competence is extremely important since for them developing cultural competence enhances the foreign language learning and improves their level of the different language skills, particularly reading comprehension. Moreover, watching movies and TV shows about the target



culture in addition to communicating with native people are the main strategies used by questionnaire participants in order to develop target cultural competence.

In the light of the third section, the majority of our sample reads sometimes and the most important material our participants read are the handouts given by their teachers. More interestingly, time constraints and lack of vocabulary knowledge are the reasons behind some students' lack of reading. They added that they are able to understand the English texts but not really in an easy manner. They perceive their level in comprehension as good, and not very good, since they face many difficulties related mainly to the cultural differences between the Arabic culture and the English culture in the first place, and because of the lack of vocabulary knowledge in the second place. Concerning this latter, students specified the kind of vocabulary that stands as a barrier in front of their understanding to borrowings, cultural markers and cultural bonded elements. Additionally, using dictionaries and guessing from the context; are the main techniques they use to overcome such difficulties. First Year Master students claimed that ignoring the aspects of culture influences to a great extent the reading comprehension. Thus, they concluded by recommending for the integration of a culture-based course from first year, due to which they can develop different language skills and above all reading comprehension.

To sum up, based on the data collected from analyzing students' questionnaire results, it can be assumed that the majority of the students confirmed the research hypothesis that supposes the positive impact of cultural competence on enhancing students' reading comprehension.

## **3.2 Teachers' Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is used as a data collection tool to explore teachers' perspectives towards cultural competence and its impact on reading comprehension. It highlights their views concerning the importance of teaching the culture of English language, and to what extent developing their students' cultural competence enhances their reading comprehension.

### **3.2.1. Population and Sampling of the Study**

This questionnaire is directed to Master One teachers at the department of English, University of 8 Mai 1945. It has been sent to many teachers. However, only 12 have responded to it. All the teachers who contributed in answering this questionnaire have taught Master One in different courses. The sample that we chose seem appropriate to provide the needed data concerning the topic under investigation. As university teachers, they can identify what helps their students to enhance their reading comprehension, and to investigate teachers' awareness about the role of cultural competence in enhancing reading comprehension.

### **3.2.2. Administration of Teachers' Questionnaire**

Unlike students' questionnaire, which was administered manually, teachers' questionnaire was administered both manually and online to Master One teachers of Guelma. Yet, due to the pandemic period of COVID 19 and the batch study system; participants were not easily found. Only twelve questionnaires were gathered. Moreover, questionnaire answers took time to be finally collected.

### **3.2.3. Description of Teachers' Questionnaire**

Teachers' Questionnaire aims at exploring teachers' perspectives and viewpoints concerning the impact of developing students' cultural competence on enhancing their reading comprehension. It consists of 26 questions organized under four main sections in order to elicit information from the participants about the research topic. The questions used in the questionnaire are mainly related to the theoretical background of the present research study. They are of different types; closed as well as open-ended *questions*. Closed-ended questions that contain either a definite set of answers to choose from or 'yes' or 'no', mixed questions that ask the participants to select a given answer from a number of choices, then to justify their answers and open-ended ones which request the participants to indicate their different points of view (see Appendix B).

#### **3.2.3.1. Section One: Background Information (Q1-Q2)**

In this opening section, teachers are asked to identify their qualifications, and their experience of teaching the English language at the university.

#### **3.2.3.2. Section Two: Cultural Competence and Attitudes about Culture (Q3-Q15)**

This section consists of 11 questions in order to explore teachers' attitudes and perspectives towards culture and cultural competence. It also, investigates their views concerning the relationship between culture and language, the importance of teaching culture as well as pointing out their knowledge about cultural competence, its development, and the techniques these teachers use to promote their students' cultural competence.

### **3.2.3.3. Section Three: Reading Comprehension and Cultural Competence (Q16-Q25)**

It is composed of 10 questions. The first four questions deal with information about the kind of materials that teachers provide their students with, in addition to the level of comprehension of English their students possess. Moreover, questions about the difficulties faced by these students, and the ways teachers make attempts to help them overcome such difficulties are also included. The other six questions deal with reading comprehension in relation to culture and cultural competence whereby teachers demonstrate their perspectives about the impact of ignoring cultural aspects on their students' reading comprehension. Then, they were asked about the kind of cultural activities they employ to improve their students' reading comprehension. This section concludes with examining teachers' opinions towards the impact of cultural competence on EFL students' reading comprehension.

### **3.2.3.4. Section Four: Further Suggestions (Q26)**

In this section we gave the ultimate freedom to teachers for expressing their opinions, adding any comments and/or suggestions concerning the topic under investigation.

## **3.2.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This section contains results and findings from teachers' questionnaire. It is divided into 4 main parts: general information, Teachers' attitudes towards culture and cultural competence, reading comprehension and cultural competence, and further suggestions.

### 3.2.4.1. Section One: General Information

**Question 1.** What academic qualification do you hold?

*Table 3.23: Teachers' Academic Qualification*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Licence</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Master</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Magister</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>PhD</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in the table above, the largest majority of teachers (75%) have a Magister degree. While (25%) of the sample have PhD degree. Based on their responses, it is demonstrated that they are qualified enough to provide reliable and credible data.

**Question 2.** How long have you been teaching English at University?

*Table 3.24: Teachers' Experience in Teaching English at University*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>From 1 to 7 years</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16.67%</b>
<b>From 7 to 10 years</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16.67%</b>
<b>More than 10 years</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>66.66%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the above mentioned results, the majority of teachers (66.66%) have an experience of more than 10 years. While (16.67%) of them have experienced teaching English between 1 and 7 years. Finally, the other (16.67%) have an experience from 7 to 10 years. Thus, from these findings we can say that our sample consists of well experienced teachers who gained, throughout their teaching experience, a great amount of knowledge about the teaching and learning process, and about the target culture. This means that these teachers can be in a position to strengthen their students' language competences through teaching English in its cultural context.

### **3.2.4.2. Section Two: Teachers' Attitudes Towards Culture and Cultural Competence**

**Question 3.** What is your definition of the term “culture”?

All teachers provided many similar definitions of the term “culture”, here are some:

- “The construct is deeply disputed; we have plenty of definitions. Simply, it is a way of life that includes many other aspects such as religion, traditions, beliefs, music, food...etc.”
- “Culture is an umbrella term that covers many notions, concepts and aspects of human life in any society. Therefore, it is not an easy task to provide a well determined definition. However, it is all socially religious, literary, historical and moral values that shape a social life of a given society. It contributes and enters in all human life situations, fields, interrelationships as in art, education, common history...etc.”
- “Culture encompasses all the customs, traditions, and beliefs (+ language) of a given community”.
- “The term has two meanings. The first reflects literature and fine arts of a given society. The second, refers to the life style of a particular group”.

All the definitions provided by teachers highlight the same core of culture which is the collection of customs, beliefs, traditions which distinguishes one group from the other.

**Question 4.** Can you explain the relationship that exists between language and culture?

All teachers answered this question and explained the relation between language and culture, and their explanations are summed up as follows:

- Language is the bearer of the language.
- Language is one of the most important and basic component of culture without which culture cannot be described, identified, expressed, produced, differentiated, spread over, and transmitted.

- Language is the mirror of culture, it reflects culture and is reflected by culture. they have a reciprocal relationship. However, language is part culture, and culture is expressed through language.

According to the above answers, teachers shared the same explanation of the relationship between language and culture. they all agreed that language is the container of culture, it reflects culture and is reflected by it. Therefore, they can never be separated.

**Question 5.** Do you think that learning a particular language requires learning its culture?

**Table 3.25: Teachers' Opinions about the link between learning a language and learning its culture**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above answers we can say that the whole number of teachers believed that learning a particular language requires learning its culture. Therefore, all teachers are aware of the necessity of learning the culture of the language being learned, and the importance of bringing into class the TC. In other words, they have awareness of the integrated role of teaching both language and culture. Moreover, the teachers were aware of the fact that culture is related to language and that it is important to deal with culture in language teaching



**Question 6.** Whatever your answer is, please justify

Teachers' justifications concerning the strong link between learning a language and learning its culture are as follows:

- Language and culture cannot be separated in the first place, for one is embedded in the other.
- The language transmits different aspects which reflect the culture of a given society.
- Culture and language are closely related, and the knowledge of each requires the knowledge of the other.
- Language is understood through its context, and the context is related to culture in all cases.
- Culture sometimes can justify certain words, phrases and context in which they should be used

What can be understood from the obtained justifications is that learning the culture of the target language is highly required, since one cannot learn the real life language unless she/he is aware of the culture of that language including its beliefs, ideologies, customs and so on. These responses reveal that the teachers acknowledged the importance of language in relation to culture. It is worth noting that an understanding of the relationship between language and culture is important for all those involved in language education (teachers as well as students). Correspondingly, this proves that there is a relationship between the teachers' beliefs about the role of culture and their students' views as it is clarified in students' questionnaire (Q 6). When teachers are aware of the importance of the relationship between language and culture, this will help them develop their students' cultural competence, that is to say, the how and why to use it in real life in general and to enhance students' reading comprehension in particular.

**Question 7.** What do you think about incorporating a specific devoted course for the target culture in the curriculum?

Concerning the incorporation of a specific course for the TC, teachers declared that although it is an already existing module directed to Master 2 students, it is highly advocated to start bringing the TC into class from First Year at the university. Their opinions are briefly explained as follows:

- ❖ It is very important for students to learn about the target culture from their First Year at university because they need to locate the language and meaning within a particular cultural structure that is different from their own.
- ❖ Students need to learn the target culture from the beginning of their university career due to its great importance in ameliorating their level because knowing the culture of English language is a plus, and a reinforcement for mastering a language, since the linguistic notions are better learnt and acquired in their cultural context.
- ❖ It is really necessary because students are going to perceive the way native speakers behave, think, and express themselves. That is, they will be in more authentic situations. Thus, they will become more open to other cultures, respectful and tolerant with the existing cultural differences between their own culture and the culture of the target language being learnt.

The above ideas show that our sample is completely with the integration of a specific course for the target culture from the beginning of university studies due to its great importance in shaping students' thinking and helping them to master the language adequately. This means that these teachers understood the necessity and importance of the TC in L2 acquisition for better language achievements. They realized that it is beneficial to devote sufficient time to English culture

instruction. Thus, teachers will be able to implement lessons and use appropriate activities, addressing the specific needs of their students. Teaching culture separately, also, helps teachers to teach students effective learning strategies that will enable them to independently develop their cultural competence and allow them to be more tolerant towards the TC.

**Question 8.** Do you find yourself interested in knowing the target culture you are teaching?

*Table 3.26: Teachers' Views about the Culture of the English Language*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Always</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>66.67%</b>
<b>Often</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33.33%</b>
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Seldom</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Never</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

The aim of this question is to know to what extent teachers are interested in knowing the culture of the English language. Their answers were converging between always and often, since (66.67%) of the respondents indicated that they always find themselves interested in knowing the culture of the English language. While (33.33%) of them declared that they often find themselves interested.

Therefore, the majority of our sample are interested in the culture of the English language, and want to convey this interest to their students.

**Question 9.** In your opinion, acquiring a language without being exposed to its culture results in?

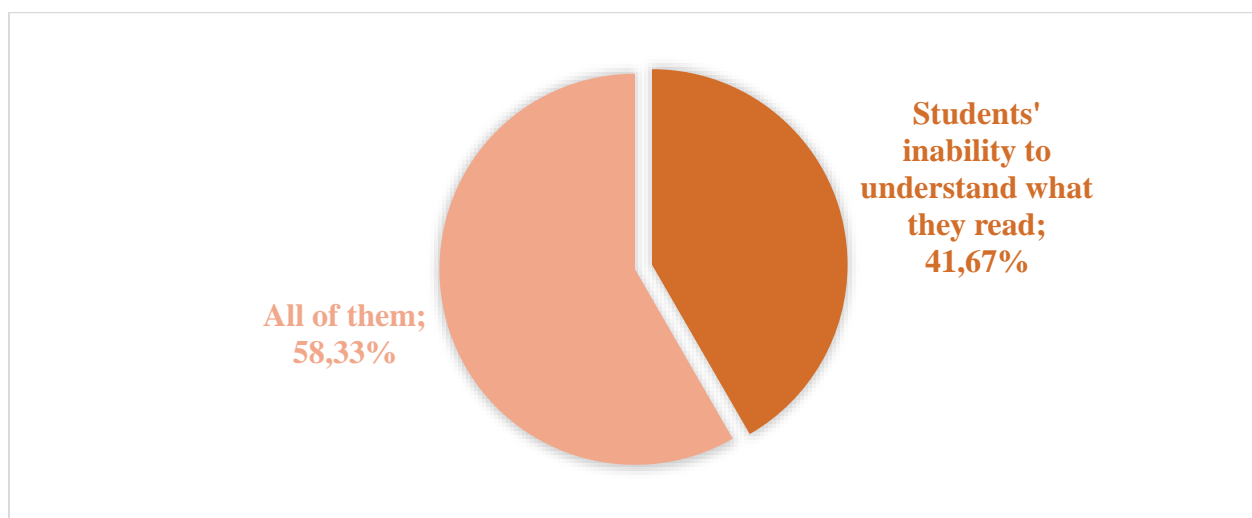
*Table 3.27: Teachers' Opinions about the Lack of Cultural Exposure*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Misunderstanding the foreign language meaning</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Negative or wrong interpretation when misunderstanding</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Interference of the mother culture</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Acquiring only the needed vocabulary</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Students' inability to understand what they read</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41.67%</b>
<b>All of them</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>58.33%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the demonstrated results in the above table, we can say that more than half of the teachers (58.33%) declared that all the previously mentioned options are consequences of not being

exposed to the culture of the TL being learned. While a considerable number (41.67%) viewed that being unexposed to the TC will result in the lack of students' understanding of what they read in the target language. Therefore, it is clear that teachers are conscious about the drawbacks of neglecting the aspects of culture when learning a foreign language. For them, this will weaken their level in English, decrease their understanding and comprehension especially in reading texts in that target language. They may also be aware of the fact that students, through using the language in its cultural context, can make them acquire some useful norms and attitudes such as how to be an effective reader and also how to recognize the foreign cultural patterns; since reading comprehension entails the use of both linguistic and cultural knowledge.

***Figure 3.18: Different Opinions about the Consequences of the Lack of Cultural Exposure***



**Question 10.** How much do you think your students are aware of the differences between their own culture and the target one?

**Table 3.28: Teachers' Judgments about the Degree of Students' Awareness of the Cultural Differences**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Not at all aware</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Slightly aware</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Moderately aware</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Extremely aware</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above table states that half of our sample (50%) viewed that their students are moderately aware of the differences between their own culture and the target one. In addition, the other (50%) viewed that their students are extremely aware of such differences. This means that being aware of cultural differences and knowing how to deal with related differences is critical for the success of students' vocabulary acquisition through reading comprehension, and its Impact on students' cultural competence.

They will help students to get rid of the negative influence of Arabic on their thinking and on their way of reading. Therefore, students' brains become systemized whenever they see a word automatically without thinking relate it to an appropriate cultural context.

Accordingly, teachers' answers confirm the previously discussed answers of students views about their awareness of those cultural differences (Q11). Generally speaking, teachers need to draw students' attention to them since they are considered so important to develop students' cultural competence.

**Question 11.** What do you know about “cultural competence”?

This question was given to teachers to investigate their knowledge about cultural competence. They provided various definitions that are summed up as follows:

- ❖ It is the ability to interact appropriately and effectively with people from different cultures.
- ❖ It is the ability to understand and tolerate aspects of the “Other’s” culture and not having to struggle with it.
- ❖ It is the knowledge about culture and ability to use this knowledge in speaking, understanding the foreign language, as well as interacting with people belonging to foreign cultures.
- ❖ It is when a person is competent in the target culture, i.e. to be able to understand everything related to it and to communicate effectively with foreigners.

We can understand from these definitions that teachers are completely aware of what does “cultural competence” mean, and they all agreed that it is the ability to effectively and appropriately interact with people in cross-cultural setting.

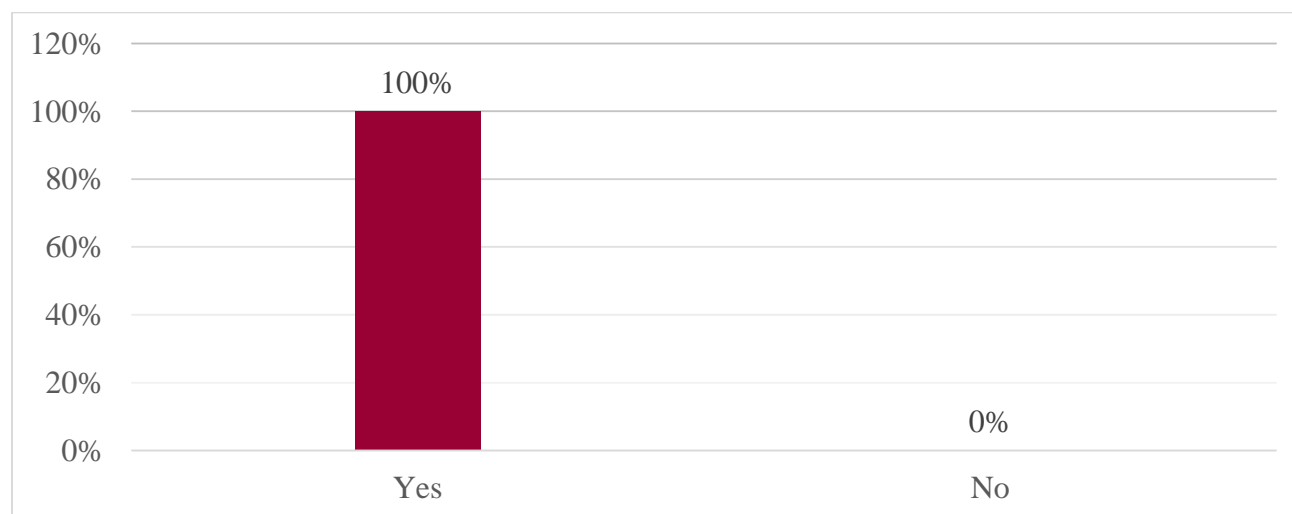
**Question 12.** Do you think that developing cultural competence is necessary in EFL classes?

**Table 3.29: Teachers' Views about the Necessity of Developing Cultural Competence in EFL classes**

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	100%
No	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above statistics demonstrate that the whole sample think that developing cultural competence is necessary in EFL classes. This reveals that teachers appreciate cultural competence and they are conscious about the importance of developing it.

**Figure 3.19: Positive Attitudes Towards the Necessity of Developing Cultural Competence in EFL Classes**





**Question 13.** If “Yes”, please justify

The teachers mentioned a number of reasons behind the necessity of developing cultural competence in EFL classes. We summarized these reasons as follows:

- It is needed for both teachers and students, because the two need to contextualize what they teach and learn according to the TC in order to avoid misunderstandings mainly in courses where culture plays an important role such as: literature, civilization, communication...etc.
- To avoid miscommunications and allow to have certain skills that make them able to understand and produce a language that is appropriate to the right context in which language occurs.
- It enhances students' interactional abilities, and raise their awareness towards the “Other's” culture.

From these responses, teachers confirmed that developing cultural competence in EFL classes is of a great importance. Similarly to students' results (Q 14), this means that most of the respondents were made aware of the importance of cultural competence. This recommends the teachers to attract their students' attention towards such competence and encourage them to improve it.

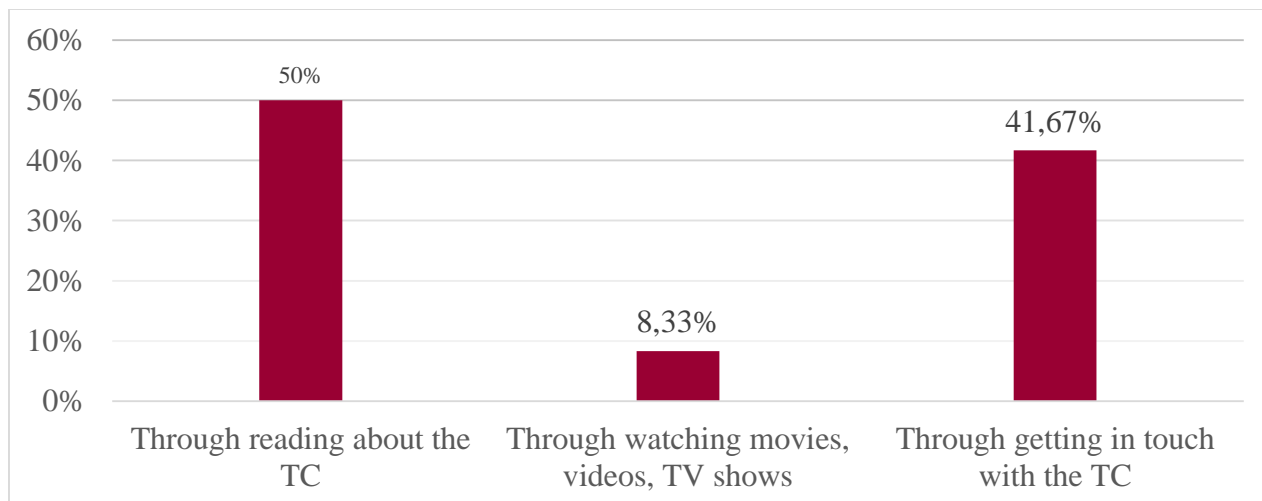
**Question 14.** How do you develop your students' cultural competence?

**Table 3.30: Teachers' Different Ways to Develop their Students' Cultural Competence**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Through reading about TC</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Through watching videos/movies/ TV shows</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8.33%</b>
<b>Through getting in touch with the Target culture</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41.67%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

The reason behind this question is to know the different ways teachers use to develop their students' cultural competence. (50%) of the teachers stated that they develop it through encouraging their students to read about the target culture. Whereas, (41.67%) of them mentioned that they develop it through getting them in touch with the TC. Finally, (8.33%) of the respondents said that they develop it through asking their students to watch movies, videos, and TV shows about the TC. This reveals that, teachers are aware of the importance of developing their students' cultural competence and rely on different strategies to help them develop it.

**Figure 3.20: Different Ways of Developing Students' Cultural Competence**



### Question 15. Others like

A considerable number (33%) of teachers suggested some other ways that help in developing students' cultural competence. Their suggestions are:

- Provide links of authentic websites.
- Motivating them to listen to songs.
- Social Media; encourage them to communicate with native people.
- Provide them with authentic materials to read.

### 3.2.4.3. Section Three: Reading Comprehension and Cultural Competence

**Question 16.** What kind of material do you provide your students with?

*Table 3.31: Teachers' Choice of Materials Provided to Students*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Articles</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41.67%</b>
<b>Novels</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Books</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33.33%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

The aim of this question is to know what kind of material do our sample of teachers exactly provide their students with. We can observe from the above table that there is a convergence in the results, since (41.67%) of teachers said that they provide their students with articles more. Others (25%) claimed that they prefer to provide them with novels. While (33.33%) said that they provide their students with books. Therefore, our respondents try to provide different materials to their students in order to benefit more and encourage them to read.

**Question 17.** How do you assess your students' level of comprehension in English?

*Table 3.32: Teachers' Assessment of their Students' Level of Comprehension in English*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Very good</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>58.33%</b>
<b>Medium</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41.67%</b>
<b>Bad</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Very bad</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

This question examines teachers' evaluation of their students' comprehension in English. As indicated above, the majority of informants (58.33%) affirmed that their students' level of comprehension in English is good, whereas a remarkable percentage (41.67%) admitted that their students' level is medium. However, no one (0%) chose the degrees of (very good, bad, or very bad). What is worth mentioning here is that there is contradiction between teachers' evaluation of students' comprehension level and the students' own evaluation, since as it was already discussed (Q 21), students see that their level is between good and very good. However, teachers perceive it as between good and average.

**Question 18.** What are the frequent difficulties do your students encounter while reading?

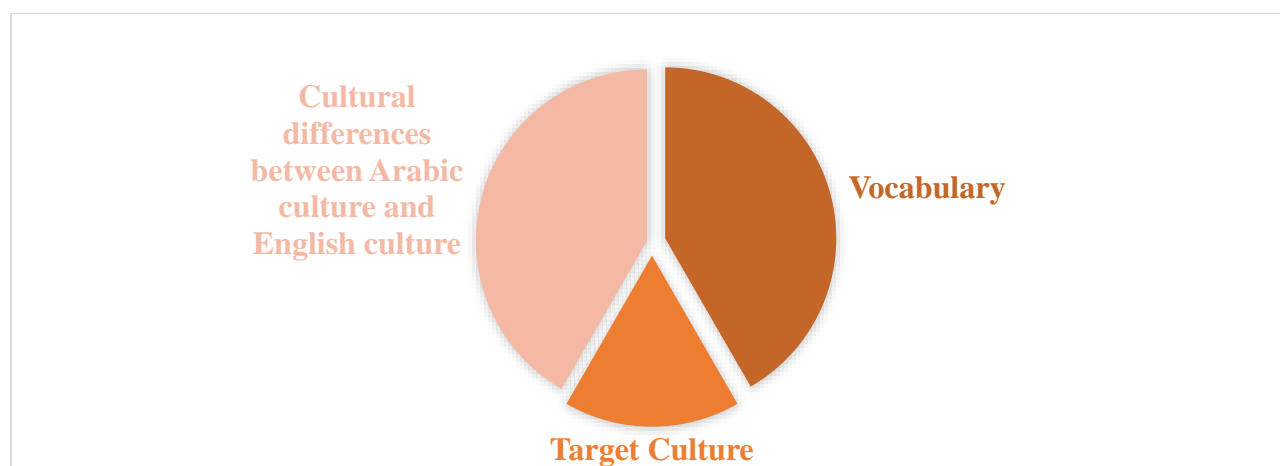
*Table 3.33: Teachers' Opinions about the Difficulties Encountered by their Students while Reading*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41.67%</b>
<b>Grammar</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Arabic culture</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Target culture</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16.66%</b>
<b>Cultural differences between the Arabic and Target culture</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41.67%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

This question sheds the light on the kind of difficulties encountered by students from the perspectives of teachers. The answers of this question are narrowed into three main difficulties; cultural differences between Arabic and English cultures, vocabulary, and the target culture itself. A considerable percentage of (41.67%) is devoted equally to both cultural differences and vocabulary, since teachers chose vocabulary and added a note that specifies the kind of vocabulary which is “those specific to cultural terms” while the rest (16.66%) of teachers claimed that the TC itself forms a difficulty that students face whenever they read. This reveals that the difficulties encountered by students while reading are related in the first place to culture. More interestingly,

comprehending an English text is not easy to do for students because English is a foreign language. Many readers are not able to catch the target culture idea. Therefore, most of the difficulty is caused by limited background knowledge of English culture

**Figure 3.21: Teachers' Opinions about the Difficulties Encountered by their Students while Reading**



**Question 19.** What do your students do to overcome such difficulties?

**Table 3.34: Teachers' Explanations about the Techniques used by their Students for Overcoming Reading Difficulties**

Option	Number	Percentage
Use dictionaries	6	50%
Ask teachers or classmates	3	25%
Read again	1	8.33%
Guess from what has been read	2	16.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

In this question, half of the sample (50%) claimed that their students use dictionaries. (25%) affirmed that their students ask their teachers and classmates as an attempt to overcome some reading comprehension difficulties. Moreover, (16.67%) of them said that their students just guess from the context, and the last (8.33%) of the respondents argued that their students keep reading until they understand. Therefore, these answers confirm students' previously discussed results about how they overcome the different difficulties they encounter while reading.

**Question 20.** Do you agree that ignoring the aspects of culture affects your students' reading comprehension?

***Table 3.35: Teachers' Attitudes about the Effect of Ignoring the Aspects of Culture on Reading Comprehension***

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

The total number of respondents agreed on the fact that ignoring the aspects of culture affects their students' reading comprehension. Simply put, readers cannot understand the text they are reading even though they are aware of the meaning of the words and grammar structures in it because they do not master enough cultural background knowledge. They gave many justifications in the follow up question.



**Question 21.** If “Yes”, please justify

Teachers provided their explanations which are summarized as follows:

- Words do not always indicate the direct meaning. Some phrases, phrasal verbs, idioms, and proverbs need cultural competence
- If students are far from the Otherness, any pedagogical work such as reading and understanding will be difficult for them.
- Learners will not understand connotative meaning.
- Reading materials usually include some aspects of culture. If students are not aware of these aspects, the result will be either lack of understanding or misunderstanding the reading material.
- If the material is related to culture, it needs to be understood within its cultural context in order to be correctly and appropriately interpreted.

From these justifications, it is quite clear that teachers know the consequences of ignoring the aspects of culture on reading comprehension, and believe that one cannot understand and comprehend a text in the TC without being aware and competent in that culture. Accordingly, students may comprehend information better when they are culturally familiar with the text.

**Question 22.** What kind of cultural activities do you like to have during a reading class?

This question was asked to investigate the kind of cultural activities that teachers like to have during a reading course. Our informants suggested a number of cultural activities which we state as follows:

- Performing plays (Romeo and Juliet...etc.).
- Watching short/long documentaries about the target culture then debating.

- Making activities about cultural differences between NC and TC.
- Reading novels, critical articles.
- Providing them with passages to read then asking them to extract cultural elements and aspects then discussing them.
- Giving them idiomatic expressions and proverbs in the target culture and ask them to provide their interpretations.
- Listening scripts and visual aids to facilitate the understanding of a given text.

All of our informants provided a number of cultural activities they like to have and use during reading courses. They showed that they are extremely aware of the importance of introducing the TC due to its great significance and its effect on their students' reading comprehension.

**Question 23.** To what extent do the cultural tasks help you to improve your students' reading comprehension?

***Table 3.36: Teachers' Assessment of Reading Comprehension Improvement through Cultural Activities***

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Very much</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Do not know</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Not very much</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

Our whole sample appreciated the role of cultural activities in improving their students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, the total number of our respondents (100%) valued its importance and said that these cultural activities help very much in enhancing students' reading comprehension. Cultural activities play a significant role in comprehension because they affect how a student interprets the meaning of a text.

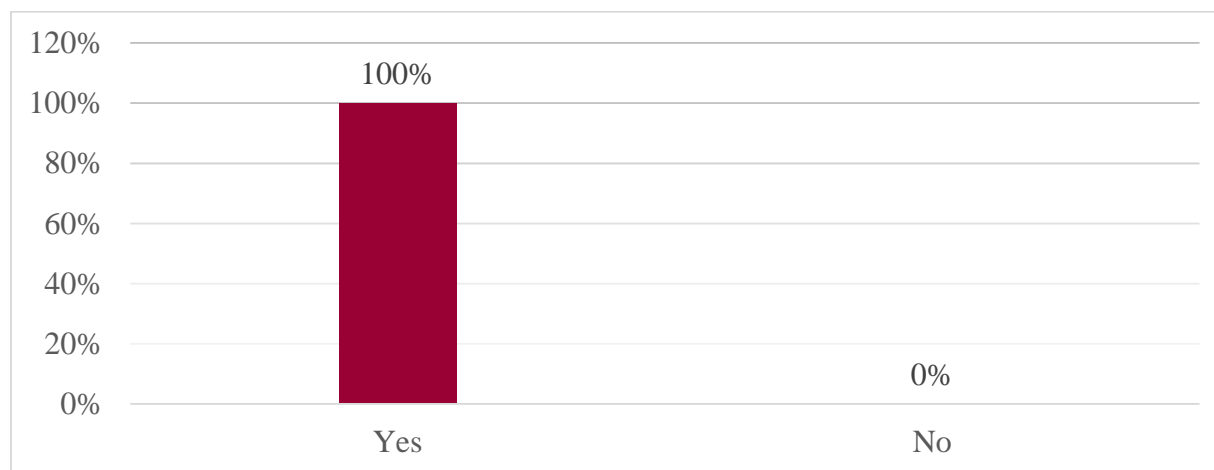
**Question 24.** Do you think that developing cultural competence would enhance your students' reading comprehension?

*Table 3.37: Teachers' Judgements about the Role of Developing Cultural Competence in enhancing Reading Comprehension*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>00</b>	<b>00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

Since our informants already agreed about the importance of knowing the target culture in enhancing student's reading comprehension, in addition to the consequences of ignoring its aspects on their students' comprehension of texts. Consequently, all the participants opted for the option that developing cultural competence would definitely enhance students' reading comprehension.

**Figure 3. 22: The Influence of Developing Cultural Competence on Enhancing Reading Comprehension**



**Question 25.** If “Yes”, please justify

Our informants provided many justifications for their agreement about the importance of developing cultural competence in enhancing their students’ reading comprehension, in which they argued that:

- Developing cultural competence reinforces students’ understanding as well as being appropriate to the context. In addition to correctness, they, also, gain the appropriateness which is the key element of communicative competence development.
- If students are aware of “Otherness” and differences between cultures, reading will be very easy in terms of understanding all what is strange.
- Once students possess enough knowledge about the vocabulary used, the cultural context, the differences between the two cultures, reading will be much easier.

According to these answers, we can say that First Year Master teachers are extremely aware of the great significance of developing cultural competence and its positive effect on EFL students’

reading comprehension; and more specifically understanding differences and domesticating strangeness found in the text.

#### 3.2.4.4. Section Four: Further Suggestions

**Question 26.** Do you have any suggestions and/or comments about what you have dealt with in the previous sections?

*Table 3.38: Teachers Comments on the Effect of Cultural Competence on Students' Reading Comprehension*

Option	Number	Percentage
No comment and/or suggestion	5	41.67%
Interesting topic, good luck	5	41.67%
Provide comments and/or suggestions	2	16.66%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

In response to this question, (41.67%) of our respondents did not add any suggestions or comments. While the other (41.67%) said that the topic was interesting and wished good luck. Unfortunately, only (16.66%) which means only two teachers added suggestions and comments about the topic under investigation. Their suggestions are presented as follows:

- Normally, in any curriculum of a foreign language learning a student must learn a lot about the foreign culture, and should understand the way others are living, thinking, and behaving. Besides, he needs to distinguish between his own culture and others' culture.

Furthermore, foreign language students should be allowed and given the opportunity to travel abroad and practice the language they learnt in real and native situations.

- Cultural competence does not only help students in comprehending what they read, but also help them in many aspects of learning a foreign language since it teaches them how to interact in real life situations, builds their vocabulary, enriches their cultural repertoire, and more specifically at a socio-psychological level, it helps them to be more tolerant, accepting and respectful towards “Otherness”.

Generally speaking, it is noticed from the above comments and suggestions that these informants (16.66%) appreciate the influence of cultural competence on EFL students’ reading comprehension. More importantly, they are aware of the drawbacks of ignoring cultural aspects on students’ language learning in general and on students’ reading comprehension in particular. Accordingly, they asked for the inclusion of culture courses from the beginning of university teaching, and asked for the need to shed the light on teaching the TC due to its great importance in enhancing students’ level in order to be more native-like in an academic sense, and to be more tolerant in a socio-psychological sense.

### **3.2.5. Summary of Results and Findings from Teachers’ Questionnaire**

This part of our study attempts to summarize the findings of the teachers’ questionnaire after analyzing them in the previous section.

The findings of teachers’ questionnaire demonstrate that the majority of teachers have Magister degree. Moreover, they have a great experience in teaching English. This reveals the adequateness of choosing this sample which provided reliable data to be used in this research.

Section two which is about teachers' attitudes towards culture and cultural competence indicates that all informants agreed on the fact that there is no specific and exact definition of culture, rather there are many definitions which go under big "C" culture and small "c" culture. Moreover, they highlighted the inseparability of language and culture, and how the former reflects and is reflected by the latter. They insisted on the incorporation of a culture based course, via demonstrating their interest in the target language they are teaching, and the extent to which they want their students to be culturally competent in the target culture too, by means of providing them with authentic and beneficial materials that would contribute in developing their cultural competence.

In section three, reading comprehension was discussed in relation to culture and cultural competence. The majority of teachers stressed the significant role that cultural competence possesses in enhancing reading comprehension. They confirmed that the comprehension of the target language texts particularly with cultural content will not take place unless students are culturally competent about the culture of that target language.

In sum, based on the data collected from analyzing teachers' questionnaire it can be assumed that the research hypothesis that supposes the positive impact of the target language cultural competence in enhancing students' reading comprehension is confirmed.

## **Conclusion**

The practical chapter of this research, which follows a quantitative descriptive method, is based on the analysis of both students and teachers' questionnaires. It indicates that students as well as their teachers perceive cultural competence as an important aspect of foreign language learning that needs to be included in EFL curriculum. The gathered data from students' questionnaires

demonstrate that they are interested in the TC, aware of its aspects, and their attention was attracted towards the differences between it and their native culture. Also, it shows that because of being culturally competent about the English culture, students could learn the language in a better way, and more importantly comprehend the English texts accompanied with cultural aspects easily. The teachers demonstrated their awareness towards the importance of teaching and learning the TC and how cultural competence improves their students' reading comprehension, through providing them with various cultural activities and attempting to integrate culture classes whenever they have the opportunity. They used materials and cultural activities which meet their students' level and interest in order to direct students' attention towards promoting cultural competence.

The results of both questionnaires reveal that our informants agree on the fact that possessing and developing cultural competence is a very effective way in enhancing students' reading comprehension skill. Furthermore, they shed the light on the significance of raising students' interest towards the target culture in developing their comprehension of that culture. Consequently, their reading comprehension skill would be improved.

Simply put, we can confirm the hypothesis of this research that assumes that cultural competence plays a major role in enhancing students' reading comprehension.



# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

1. Concluding Remarks.....	141
2. Pedagogical Implications.....	142
2.1. For Teachers .....	142
2.2. For Students.....	143
2.3. For University.....	144
3. A Proposed Model Lesson .....	145
4. Recommendations.....	149
5. Limitations of the Study.....	150

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

### Introduction

The present research work aims at examining students' and teachers' attitudes towards culture teaching and their awareness about the importance of developing cultural competence in EFL classes and its effect on students' reading comprehension. Additionally, it seeks to identify some pedagogical implications needed for both students and teachers. Finally, some limitations and shortcomings are highlighted.

### 1- Concluding Remarks:

The present study is based on exploring the issue of cultural competence, how cultural competence can be developed and how to enhance student's reading comprehension. It departs from the principle that cultural competence is very beneficial and innovative skill in foreign language learning with its various aspects, particularly reading comprehension.

At the beginning of this dissertation, we defined culture, explored the relationship between language and culture, investigated the importance of teaching culture in EFL classes accompanied with approaches, techniques, goals of culture teaching as well as the difficulties that challenge the smoothness of culture teaching in EFL classes. We, also, attempted to demonstrate the concept of cultural competence, its models, and the way of developing it. Since "Reading Comprehension" is also the cornerstone of the current study, we shed the light on the purpose of reading, its importance. Moreover, reading comprehension is followed by its elements, levels, models, in addition to the difficulties encountered by students during the reading process. Besides, we highlighted the difficult strategies of reading comprehension, and we concluded by the importance of cultural knowledge on reading comprehension.

The results obtained from analyses of students' and teachers' questionnaires enabled us to provide a number of conclusive interpretations in relation to our research hypothesis and

research questions. Both students and teachers show a great deal of awareness and positive attitudes towards the importance of cultural competence, and the incorporation of culture in EFL classes due to its great significance in the process of language and teaching English as a foreign language.

Our sample, including both teachers and students declare that they are interested in the target culture, and called for its incorporation in the EFL classes as a separate module. They also argued about the need of developing cultural competence to EFL students to promote their reading comprehension.

As a result, the main hypothesis of the research which assumes the positive impact of the English cultural competence of EFL students on enhancing their reading comprehension is directly confirmed.

## **2- Pedagogical Implication:**

The aim behind conducting this research is to explore students and teachers' perceptions towards developing students' cultural competence in enhancing their reading comprehension.

Based on the results obtained from the current study which indicated that teachers and learners have a positive reaction towards the importance of integrating culture in EFL classes, we can say that despite its importance cultural teaching is still somehow neglected in EFL classes in various contexts. In the light of this fact, some pedagogical recommendations and implications would be suggested, addressing students, teachers as well as university.

### **2.1. For Teachers:**

- Teachers should focus more on integrating cultural aspects in their classes.
- Teachers need to direct their students' interest towards the target culture and motivate them to learn about it.

- Teachers should encourage their students to acknowledge cultural differences, and to develop their cultural competence.
- Teachers should make attempts to implement the concept of culture inside the classroom and boost learners' motivation to interact and explore their ideas and making debates as far as the target culture is concerned.
- Teachers should boost their students to raise their knowledge and interests about the target culture both inside and outside the classroom.
- Teachers should devote a considerable time to discuss cultural differences between the native culture and the English culture.
- Teachers should vary in using the materials to introduce the concept of culture as a way for developing learners' cultural competence.
- Culture should be studied as separate module in EFL curriculum.

## **2.2. For Students:**

- Students should value the importance of knowing the culture of the target language they are learning.
- Students should be interested in reading about the foreign culture through the use of various sources and not just depend on those given or suggested by the teachers.
- Students should be aware of the cultural differences to facilitate the comprehension of the target culture in general and the target language in particular in order to understand others and avoid misunderstandings, and misconceptions as well as to be tolerant and acceptable towards people from different cultures.

- Students should spend more efforts to develop the cultural competence in order to facilitate the language learning process, and more importantly comprehend what they read in the target culture.

### **2.3. For the University:**

As a matter of fact, foreign culture teaching does not receive a considerable attention or at least enough time to be devoted as a special module at the department of English, University of Guelma. Only in Master 2 that students have the opportunity to study the target culture as a separate module, because from the first year till master 1 they just study culture extended in other modules such as literature and civilization. However, they study linguistics and other modules repeatedly, but the module that needs to receive more attention, is studied for just one semester. The university administration needs to take this into consideration and make attempts to devote a separate course for culture because of its great significance in every aspects of foreign language teaching either academically, professionally and even socially. Furthermore, in the academic sense, it helps students to develop cultural competence, and improve their skills in general and cultural competence in particular. In the professional sense, it facilitates cross cultural communication for students who travelled aboard and get a job in an English speaking country; so, they will be able to face difficulties in communicating with native people. While in the socio-psychological sense, it allows them to be tolerant, accepting, understanding and respectful to “otherness”.

As a consequence, due to cultural competence importance, culture should be devoted more time priority and taught from first years.

### **3. A Proposed Model Lesson**

Regarding the needs and interests of the sample under study, a proposed teaching strategy is proposed to enhance students' reading comprehension skill. This strategy is significant in terms of providing EFL students with sufficient opportunities to capture their attention and interest towards the target culture. Consequently, developing their competence vis-à-vis the TC would help them enrich their linguistic repertoire particularly their culture knowledge and vocabulary knowledge as well as strengthen their reading comprehension abilities.

Enhancing students' reading comprehension in the target culture texts requires developing their cultural competence. Thus, the most prominent action that should be taken into account for attaining this goal is the incorporation of the TC in a more sufficient manner in the EFL classes. This step is crucial in making students aware, familiar and, more importantly, competent in that culture.

In order to realize this, a set of techniques and activities is provided from which teachers may choose specific ones to be adopted during the lesson. Accordingly, bringing a culture-based text (adopted from a book, novel, short story...) in the course of reading comprehension and/or designing cultural activities may be good techniques for introducing the TC with its various aspects on the one hand, and helping students to comprehend that text and grasp the meaning of cultural markers, idiomatic expressions, and proverbs on the other hand.

By doing this, the instructor is providing students with different opportunities to discover the TC, enrich their vocabulary, and compare between their native culture and the target one. Therefore, they will develop their cultural competence, and consequently, improve their reading comprehension in terms of understanding and comprehending target texts more easily than they used to be before.

Before planning the lesson, the teacher should take into consideration the nature, needs, and interests of his/her students after investigating and searching about them. Then he/she should select a text or an activity that corresponds with their needs. For instance, if students face problems with cultural differences, then the teacher should bring a text where such differences appear either explicitly or implicitly or design an activity that highlights them. Also, if they face problems of understanding the hidden meaning of proverbs and/or idioms; he/she should bring a text or an activity that is rich with such cultural markers. Otherwise, the teacher can just ask students to choose a text or an activity that they like, to raise their interest and motivation. The most important thing is that all texts and activities should have a relation with the TC either directly or indirectly.

During the class, the teacher should raise his/her students' competence through standing as a mediator between their NC and TC. This can be done through giving them English proverbs and idioms with their equivalent in Arabic; so that they acquire to know more the differences and similarities between the different ways people express the same ideas.

Forbidden fruits are the sweetest.....كل ممنوع مرغوب

Do not spill the bins.....لا تفشي السر

Not my cup of tea.....ليس من شأني

Birds of a feather flock together.....الطيور على اشكالها تقع

Break a leg.....حظ موفق

Hang in there.....لا تستسلم

Go back to the drawing board.....ابدأ مجددا

Under the weather.....لست بخير (مريض)



A man is known by a company he keeps..... قل لي من تصاحب أقول لك من أنت

All is not gold that glitters..... ليس كل ما يلمع ذهباً

As you sow, so will you reap ..... كما تزرع تحصد

It is better to be safe than sorry..... الوقاية خير من العلاج

This can be also accomplished through providing students with a text that is rich with cultural aspects and markers such as:

The Feast of the New Yam was held every year before the harvest began, to honour the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan. New yams could not be eaten until some had first been offered to these powers. Men and women, young and old, looked forward to the New Yam Festival because it began the season of plenty--the new year. On the last night before the festival, yams of the old year were all disposed of by those who still had them. The new year must begin with tasty, fresh yams and not the shrivelled and fibrous crop of the previous year. All cooking pots, calabashes and wooden bowls were thoroughly washed, especially the wooden mortar in which yam was pounded. Yam foo-foo and vegetable soup was the chief food in the celebration. So much of it was cooked that, no matter how heavily the family ate or how many friends and relatives they invited from neighbouring villages, there was always a large quantity of food left over at the end of the day. The story was always told of a wealthy man who set before his guests a mound of foo-foo so high that those who sat on one side could not see what was happening on the other, and it was not until late in the evening that one of them saw for the first time his in-law who had arrived during the course of the meal and had fallen to on the opposite side. It was only then that they exchanged greetings and shook hands over what was left of the food.

(Taken from: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, 1959)

At the end of the lesson, the teacher should open the discussion in which he/she asks questions about:

- What is their opinion about the text (was it difficult, easy, average)?
- What are the difficulties they still encounter?
- Was it sufficient for them to discover the TC or not?
- Did they grasp the correct meaning of the idioms and cultural specific elements?
- Did they store some new vocabulary with their correct meaning?
- Did they detect any kind of differences between their NC and TC?

In addition, he/she may give them large space to express their ideas freely and ask questions about unclear information about the target culture.

Consequently, Students become motivated to be exposed to the target culture, and competent to act properly in cross-cultural situations, and most importantly develop their English language comprehension in general and reading comprehension in particular.

#### **4- Recommendation:**

The current research has offered insights about students and teachers' perceptions and attitudes concerning the impact of cultural competence in enhancing EFL students reading comprehension. On this basis, some recommendations are given aiming at improving EFL students' reading comprehension abilities through developing their cultural competence. As an attempt to know more about reading comprehension challenges and difficulties, it is recommended that other data gathering instruments should be included in such study. For instance, the research can utilize face to face interviews or observations during the reading course or even conducting a quasi-experimental study. Thus, this would help students positively in defining their weaknesses, because the more students are aware of the culture of the language they are learning, the more the learning process will be easier, and their skills will be improved, particularly their reading comprehension. Therefore, students need to highly engage and get integrated /involved in cultural activities, which will improve the target language learning abilities in general and reading comprehension in particular.

Another recommendation is the fact that other researchers need to scrutinize the effect of cultural competence on improving EFL students' cultural vocabulary comprehension. Equally important, more research is also needed to examine the effect of cultural competence on EFL students' linguistic skills (listening, speaking and writing). Moreover, further research need to be done to find out whether or not developing cultural competence will increase students' tolerance towards "otherness" and their motivation towards studying a foreign language.

A last recommendation is that teachers need to encourage the students to watch documentation about the target culture, and use data show and cinematic materials to make students enjoy discovering the target culture.

## **5- Limitations of the study:**

In fact, any research has many difficult limitations that encounter the researcher throughout the conducting of their research. These limitations act as barriers and obstacles against the accomplishment of the present research, limit research findings, and prevent having a deep investigation of the present study. We can sum up those limitations as follows:

- Time limitations made us rely only on questionnaires, as data collection tool.
- Time limitations did not allow us to attend and observe reading sessions, whereby we can notice how students deal with texts in the target culture.
- Lack of authentic sources affect us at the preliminary phases, since many master students do suffer in the process of collecting sources that matches their variables.
- In addition, we had some difficulties in administrating questionnaire especially for teachers, because of COVID 19 study system. Since teachers were not all present in the week of questionnaire administration. For this reason, we emailed them and most teachers do not respond.
- Considerable number of students gave incomplete answers, and in some cases they contradicted responses in many questions. Some of them did not take the process seriously.

Finally, since the sample was limited to only 1<sup>st</sup> year master students and their teachers, results cannot be generalized to all learners.

## **Conclusion**

Simply put, this research provides valuable insights to the target culture teaching and how it develops students' cultural competence. Moreover, it is related to both teachers and students'

perceptions of the importance of developing cultural competence and its effect on students reading comprehension. Thus, the findings of this study have implications for teachers, students and curriculum designers. EFL students frequently do not notice the precise way a meaning is interpreted in its cultural context, unless their attention is explicitly drawn to it. Also, a model lesson has been suggested.

# **REFERENCES**

## REFERENCES

- Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing reading*. Cambridge University Press.
- Alexander, J. E. (1988). *Teaching Reading* (3rd ed.). Scott Foresman and Company.
- Altarriba, J. & Forsythe, J. W. (1993). *The Role of cultural schemata in reading comprehension*.  
The State University of New York.
- Apuke, O. D. (2017). Quantitative research methods: A synopsis approach. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 6 (11).  
<http://doi:10.12816/0040336>
- Bada, E. (2000). Culture in ELT. *Cukurova University Journal of Social Sciences* (6).
- Beale, A. M. (2013). *Anne Arundal community college*. [www.aacc.edu/tutoring/file/skimming.pdf](http://www.aacc.edu/tutoring/file/skimming.pdf)
- Bierstadt, R. (1974). *The social order* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Bobrow, J., Andersen, B., Sekeres, K., Byer, R., Collins, C., & Gottlieb, D. (2006). *Cliffs test press RICA*. Wiley Publishing.
- Brassell, D., & Rasinski, T. (2008). *Comprehension that works: Taking students beyond ordinary understanding to deep comprehension*. Shell Education.
- Brière, J. (1984). *Incorporating culture into language classroom*. Multilingual Matters.
- Brown, H. D. (1986). *Learning a second culture*. Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. Pearson Education.

- Brown, H. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall Regents.
- Buttjes., D. & Byram, M. (1991). *Mediating languages and cultures*. Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. (1991). *Background studies in English foreign language teaching: Lost opportunities in the comprehensive school debate*. Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. (1994). *Cultural learning and mobility: The educational challenge for foreign language teaching*. Fremdsprachen und Hochschule 41.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Campbell, D. (2000). *Choosing democracy* (2nd ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M. (1989). *Toward a culturally competent system of care: A monograph on effective services for minority children who are severely emotionally disturbed*. Georgetown University. Child Development Center. Child and Adolescent Service System Program. Technical Assistance Center.
- Cunningham, P. M., Hall, D. P., & Cunningham, J. W. (2011). *Comprehension during guided, shared, and independent reading*. Carson-Dellosa Publishing Llc.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your course book*. Oxford University Press.
- Daniels, R. (2004). *Nursing fundamentals: Caring & clinical decision making*. Delmar Learning.
- Denboba, D. (1993). *MCHB/DSCSHCN Guidance for competitive applications, maternal and child health improvement projects for children with special health care needs*.



- Diller, J. V., & Moule, J. (2005). *Cultural competence: A primer for educators*. Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Donyei, Z. (2003). *Attitudes, orientations and motivations in language learning*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Eskey, D. E. (1988). *Holding in the bottom: An interactive approach to the language problems of second language readers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Flores, D., Moran, A., & Orzo, T. (2004). *Reading comprehension: Using graphic organizers to teach literal, inferential and critical comprehension*. Creative Teaching Press.
- Ford, D., & Whiting, G. (2007). Another perspective on cultural competence: Preparing students for an increasingly diverse society. *Gifted Child Today*, 30 (2).  
<https://doi.org/10.4219/gct-2007-31>
- Gear, A. (2008). *Nonfiction reading power*. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Gentry, J. (2008). *Reading models*.  
<http://www.learningwithjamesgentry.com/Reading/.20 Models.html>
- Gibson, J. (1999). *Developing strategies and practices for culturally diverse classrooms*. Christopher-Gordon.
- Gilakjani, A. P., & Sabouri, N. B. (2016). How can students improve their reading comprehension skill? *Journal of Studies in Education*, 6 (2).

- Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of Reading Specialists*, 16 (4). [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com)
- Grabe, W. (1988). *Reading in a second language moving from theory to practice*.
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2002). *Teaching and researching reading*. Pearson Education Longman.
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2011). *Teaching and researching reading* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Gray, W. S. & Rogers, B. (1956). *Maturity in reading: Its nature and appraisal*. University of Chicago Press.
- Grellet, F. (1981). *Developing reading skills: A practical guide to reading comprehension exercises*. Cambridge University Press.
- Grellet, F. (1999). *Developing reading skills*. Cambridge University Press.
- Grifee, T. (2012). *An introduction to second language research methods: Design and data*. TESL-EJ Publication.
- Hafner, L. (1974). *Improving reading in middle and secondary schools*. Macmillan Publishing.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching* (3rd ed.). Longman.
- Harris, T., & Hodges, R. (1995). *The literacy dictionary*. International Reading Association.
- Harris, L. A. & Sipay, E. R. (1980). *How to increase reading ability*. Longman.
- Hernandez, M., & Isaacs, M. R. (1998). *Promoting cultural competence in children's mental health services*. Paul Brookes Publishing.

- Hinkel, E. (1999). *Culture in second language teaching and learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hoover, W. A., & Gough, P. B. (1990). The simple view of reading. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2 (3).
- Hughes, R. (2002). *Teaching and researching speaking*. Longman.
- Jacobs, G. and Farrell, S. C. (2012). *Teachers source book for extensive reading*. Information Age Publishing.
- Kalyanpur, M., & Harry, B. (1999). *Culture in special education: Building reciprocal family-professional relationships*. P.H. Brookes Pub.
- Keefe, S. (2005). *Appalachian cultural competency: A guide for medical, mental health, and social service professionals*. The University of Tennessee Press.
- Kilickaya, F. (2004). Authentic materials and cultural content in EFL classrooms. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 5 (7). <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kilickaya-AuthenticMaterial.html>
- King, A. (2007). *Beyond literal comprehension: A strategy to promote deep understanding of text*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Koda, K. (2004). *Insights into second language reading: A cross-linguistic approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Krajewski-Jaime, E., Brown, K., & Ziefert, M. (1993). *Developing cultural competence in human service providers*. (ERIC Document, Reproduction Service No. ED 371 262).
- Kramersch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Kramersch, C. (1998). *Language and culture*. Oxford University Press.

Kramersch, C. (2006). *Culture in language teaching*. Aarhus University Press.

Krasner, I. (1999). The Role of culture in language teaching. *Dialogue on Language Instruction*, 13 (5).

Kvint, V. (2009). *The global emerging market: Strategic management and economics*. Routedledge.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. The Jossey-Bass Education Series. Jossey-Bass.

[Http://Www.Josseybass.com.-00-00](http://Www.Josseybass.com.-00-00)

Lafayette, R. C. (1988). *Integrating the teaching of culture into the foreign language classroom*. Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Lamont, H. (2006). *Teaching and learning with Torch*. ACER Press.

Lenz, K. (2005). *An introduction to reading comprehension*.

<http://www.Specialconnections.Ku.edu/>. Accessed on May, 29th 2021

Leu, D. J., Jr., & Kinzer, C. K. (1987). *Effective reading instruction in the elementary grades*. Merrill.

Lum, D. (2005). *Cultural competence, practice stages, and client systems: A case study approach*. Thomson/Brooks/Cole.

Lynch, E., & Hanson, M. (2004). *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with children and their families*. Paul H. Brookes.

Macceca, S. (2014). *Reading strategies for science* (2nd ed.). Shell Education.

- Magliano, J. P. (1993). The course of generating causal antecedent & causal consequence influences. *Processes, 16* (5).
- Manzo, A. V., & Manzo, U. C. (1993). *Literacy disorders: Holistic diagnosis and remediation*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Mason, J. L., Benjamin, M. P., & Lewis, S. A. (1996). *The cultural competence model: Implications for child and family mental health services*.
- McDonough, J., Shaw, C., & Masuhara, H. (2013). *Materials and methods in ELT: A teacher's guide* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- McNamara, D. S. (2007). *Reading comprehension strategies: Theories, interventions, and technologies*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mcnamara, D. S. (2010). *Reading comprehension strategies theories, interventions and technologies*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Meyer, J. and Gravani, E. H. (2012). *Using syntax to support reading comprehension*. Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences.
- Mikuleckey, B. S., & Jeffries, L. (1996). *More reading power: Reading faster, thinking skills, reading for pleasure, comprehension skills*. Addison-Wesley.
- Milton, J. & Alexiou, T. (2009). *Vocabulary size and the common European framework of reference for languages*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Moreillon, J. (2007). *Collaborative strategies for teaching reading comprehension: Maximizing your impact*. American Library Association.
- Myers, M. (2006). *Standards-based comprehension strategies and skills guide: Level 3*. Beach City Press.
- Neito, S. (1999). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities*. Teachers College Press.
- Ngabut, M. N. (2015). Reading theories and reading comprehension. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 5 (1). <http://doi:10.23971/jefl.v5i1.89>
- Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- O'hagan, K. (2001). *Cultural competence in the caring professions*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- O'sullivan, T., Hartley, J., Saunders, D., Montgomery, M., & Fiske, J. (1994). *Key concepts in communication and cultural studies*. Routledge.
- Oxford University Press. (2010). *Oxford dictionary of English* (3rd ed.).
- Paris, S. (2008). *Developing comprehension skills*.  
<http://treasures.macmillanmh.com/national/students>
- Pang, E. S., Muaka, A., Bernhardt, E. B., & Kamil, M. L. (2003). *Teaching reading*. International Bureau of Education.
- Pearson, P. D. (1978). *The nature of comprehension*. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

- Pedersen, P. (1994). *A handbook for developing multicultural awareness* (2nd ed.). American Counseling Association.
- Poskitt, D. S. and Skeels, C.L. (2012). *Inference in the presence of weak instruments: A selected survey*. Monash and Melbourne University Press.
- Purnell, L., & Paulanka, B. (2005). *Guide to culturally competent health care*. F. A. Davis.
- Risager, K. (1998). *Language teaching and the process of European integration*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1977). *Toward an interactive model of reading*. Lawrence Erlbaum associates.
- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., & McDaniel, E. R. (2009). *Communication between cultures* (7th ed.). Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Sapir, E. (1956). *Selected writings in language, culture and personality*. University of California Press.
- Scanlon, D. M., Anderson, K. L., & Sweeney, J. M. (2010). *Early intervention for reading difficulties: The interactive strategies approach*. The Guilford Press.
- Seelye, H. N. (1993). *Teaching culture: Strategies for intercultural communication* (3rd ed.). National Textbook Company.
- Snow, C. E. (2002). *Reading for understanding toward an R&D program in reading comprehension*. RAND.
- Stern, H. (1992). *Issues and options in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

- Sun, L. (2013). *Culture teaching in foreign language teaching: Theory and practice in language studies*.
- Sweet, P. A. & Snow, C.E. (2003). *Rethinking reading comprehension*. The Guilford Press
- Taibi, A. (2002). *The cultural component within the reading comprehension texts: The case of the third year secondary school textbook "Comet"*.
- Tarigan, H.G. (2008). *Membaca*. Angkasa.
- Thomas, M. (2009). *Handbook of research on web 2.0 and second language learning*. Information Science Preference.
- Tomalin, B., & Stempleski, S. (1993). *Cultural awareness*. Oxford University Press.
- Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom*. John Murray.
- Verma, S. (2015). *Technical communication for engineers*. Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd.
- Wei, X. (2009). On negative cultural transfer in communication between Chinese and Americans. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*. 21 (6).  
<http://www.immi.se/jicc/index.php/jicc/article/view/48/23>
- Westwood, P. (2001). *Reading and learning difficulties: Approaches to teaching and assessment*. Acer Press.
- Westwood, P. (2008). *What teachers need to know about reading and writing difficulties*. Acer Press.



Wiggin, B. M. (1977). Syntax and discourse analysis: An approach to scientific English discourse

*RELC Journal*, 5 (6).

Williams, E. (1996). *Reading in the language classroom*. Modern English Publications.

Wood, O. L. (2008). *An evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy sketch to stretch on the 9th grade. Texas assessment of knowledge and skills test*. The University of Texas at El Paso.

Reading education.

Yang, X., & Chen, D. (2016). Two barriers to teaching culture in foreign language classroom.

*Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6 (5).

Yule, G. (2006). *The study of language* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Zimmermann, S. (2009). *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*.

# **APPENDICES**

# **Appendix I**

## **Students' Questionnaire**

Dear students,

This questionnaire is a part of research work on EFL learners' reading comprehension, it attempts to collect information about the impact of cultural competence on EFL learners' reading comprehension. Thus, you are kindly requested to read carefully all the statements in each section and give your response either by putting a tick (✓) in the box that suits most your opinion, or answering freely in open ended questions. Your responses will be dealt with confidentially and used only for research purposes. (It will not take more than 15 minutes).

Thank you in advance

**Ms. Boudebbouze Nouhed.**

**Ms. Derghoum Hayette.**

**Department of English.**

**University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma.**

**Section One: General Information**

**Q1:** How long have you been studying English?

- .....years

**Q2:** Why did you choose to study English? Because

- a) It is the global language (international language)
- b) It is compulsory
- c) You need it for a job
- d) You want to travel abroad
- e) You love it

**Section Two: Students' Attitudes towards Culture and Cultural Competence**

**Q3:** What comes to your mind when you hear the word "Culture"?

- a) It is the language of a given group
- b) It is the history of a given group
- c) It is the set of the shared believes and customs that distinguishes  
a given group from the other

**Q4:** Do you agree that language reflects culture?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If “Yes”, why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Q5:** From your point of view, to what extent teaching culture in EFL classes is important?

- a) Extremely important
- b) Important
- c) Normal
- d) Unimportant
- e) Extremely unimportant

Whatever your answer, please justify

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Q6:** Are you exposed to the culture of the English language inside the classroom?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Please explain

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Q7:** Learning a foreign language without being exposed to its culture results in:

- a) Misunderstanding the foreign language meaning
- b) Negative /wrong interpretation when misunderstanding
- c) Interference of the mother culture
- d) Acquiring only the needed vocabulary
- e) Others like

.....

.....

.....

**Q8:** Are you aware of the differences between your culture and the culture of English language?

- a) Extremely aware
- b) Aware
- c) Neutral
- d) Unaware
- e) Extremely Unaware

**Q9:** Are you familiar with the term “Cultural competence”?

a) Yes

b) No

**Q10:** Do you think cultural competence means?

a) The knowledge about the mother culture

b) The knowledge about the target culture

c) The ability to understand and effectively interact with people from other cultures

d) The interference of one's own culture on his judgements

**Q11:** Do you think developing cultural competence is necessary in an EFL class?

a) Yes

b) No

If “Yes”, explain

.....

.....

.....

**Q12:** How do you develop your cultural competence?

a) By being open on different cultures and knowledge about them

b) By communicating and interacting with native people

c) By watching movies and TV shows about the target culture

d) By reading about the target culture

e) By getting in touch with the target culture all day

### Section Three: Reading Comprehension and Cultural Competence

**Q13:** Do you read in English?

a) Yes

b) No

**Q14:** How often do you read?

a) Always

b) Sometimes

c) Rarely

d) Never

**Q15:** If “you read”, what kind of material do you read?

a) Articles related to your field of study

b) Handouts given by teachers

c) Novels

d) Others



**Q16:** If “you do not read”, what are the factors that prevent you from reading?

a) Inability to understand vocabulary

b) Time constraints

**Q17:** How do you assess your level of comprehension in English?

a) Very good

b) Good

c) Bad

d) Very bad

**Q18:** After four years of studying at university, are you able to understand English texts easily?

a) Yes

b) No

**Q19:** What are the frequent difficulties that stand in front of your understanding when you read?

a) Vocabulary

b) Grammar

c) Arabic culture

d) Target culture

e) Cultural differences between Arabic and English culture

**Q20:** What do you do to overcome these difficulties?

- a) Use dictionaries
- b) Ask teachers/classmates
- c) Read again
- d) Guess for what has been read

**Q21:** Do you agree that ignoring the aspects of culture affects your reading comprehension?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If “Yes”, explain

.....

.....

.....

**Q22:** Do you think that developing students’ cultural competence will enhance their reading comprehension?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If “Yes”, justify?

.....

.....

.....

**Section Four: Further suggestions:**

Do you have any suggestions and/or comments about what you have dealt with in the previous sections?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you for your collaboration**

## **Appendix II**

### **Teachers' Questionnaire**

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is a part of research work on EFL learners' reading comprehension, it attempts to collect information about the impact of cultural competence on EFL learners' reading comprehension. Thus, you are kindly requested to read carefully all the statements in each section and give your response either by putting a tick (✓) in the box that suits most your opinion, or answering freely in open ended questions. Your responses will be dealt with confidentially and used only for research purposes. (It will not take more than 15 minutes).

Thank you in advance

**Ms. Boudebbouze Nouhed.**

**Ms. Derghoum Hayette.**

**Department of English.**

**University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma.**

**Section One: Teacher Profile:**

**Q1:** What academic qualification do you hold?

- a) Licence
- b) Master
- c) Magister
- d) PhD

**Q2:** How long have you been teaching English at university?

- ..... years

**Section two: Teachers' Attitudes Towards Culture and Cultural Competence:**

**Q3:** What is your definition of the term "Culture"?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Q4:** Can you explain the relation that exists between language and culture?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Q5:** Do you think learning a particular language requires learning about its culture?

a) Yes

b) No

Whatever your answer is, please say justify?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Q6:** What do you think about incorporating a devoted course to “the target culture” in the curriculum?

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Q7:** Do you find yourself interested in knowing the culture of the target language you are teaching?

a) Always

b) Often

c) Sometimes

d) Seldom

e) Never

**Q8:** In your opinion, acquiring a foreign language without learning its culture results in:

a) Misunderstanding the foreign language meaning

b) Negative /wrong interpretation when misunderstanding

c) Interference of the mother culture

d) Acquiring only the needed vocabulary and grammar

e) Student's inability to understand what they read

f) All of them

**Q9:** How much do you think your students are aware of differences between their own culture and the target one?

a) Not at all aware

b) Slightly aware

c) Moderately aware

d) Extremely aware

**Q10:** What do you know about “Cultural Competence”?

.....

.....

.....

**Q11:** Do you think that developing cultural competence is necessary in an EFL class?

c) Yes

d) No

If “Yes”, please justify

.....

.....

.....

**Q12:** How do you develop your students’ cultural competence?

a) Through reading about the target culture

b) Through watching videos/movies/TV shows

c) Through getting in touch with the target culture

d) Other ways like

.....

.....

.....

**Section three: Reading Comprehension and Cultural Competence:**

**Q13:** What kind of material do you provide your students?



a) Articles

b) Novels

c) Books

**Q14:** How do you assess your students' level of comprehension in English?

a) Very good

b) Good

c) Medium

d) Bad

e) Very bad

**Q15:** What are the frequent difficulties do your students encounter when reading?

a) Vocabulary

b) Grammar

c) Arabic culture

d) Target culture

e) Cultural differences between Arabic and English culture

**Q16:** What do your students do to overcome these difficulties?

a) Use dictionaries

b) Ask teachers/classmates

c) Read again

d) Guess for what has been read

**Q17:** Do you agree that ignoring the aspects of culture affects your students' reading comprehension?

c) Yes

d) No

If "Yes", please explain

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Q18:** What kind of cultural activities do you like to have during a reading course?

.....

.....

.....

**Q19:** To what extent do the cultural tasks help you improve your students reading comprehension?

a) Very much

b) Somewhat

c) Do not know

d) Not very much

**Q20:** Do you think that developing students' cultural competence would enhance your students' reading comprehension?

c) Yes

d) No

If "Yes", please justify?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Section Four: Further suggestions:**

Do you have any suggestions and/or comments about what you have dealt with in the previous sections?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you for your collaboration**

## **RÉSUMÉ**

La présente étude a pour objet d'explorer les points de vue des étudiants et des enseignants concernant l'effet de la compétence culturelle sur l'amélioration de la compréhension en lecture pour les étudiants de l'Anglais en tant que langue étrangère. L'essentiel dans l'enseignement et dans l'apprentissage de la langue étrangère est de permettre aux étudiants de comprendre la langue cible ainsi que connaître sa culture. Néanmoins, plusieurs étudiants de l'Anglais en tant qu'apprenants d'une langue étrangère confrontent des difficultés dans la compréhension en lecture tant que les aspects culturels doivent être pris en considération. Par conséquent, nous avons proposé comme hypothèse que le développement de la compétence culturelle chez les étudiants de Première Année Master améliorerait leur compréhension en lecture. Afin de tester cette hypothèse, nous avons adopté la méthode descriptive quantitative dans laquelle nous avons adressé et distribué deux questionnaires sur quatre-vingt douze étudiants de Première Année Master et sur douze enseignants au département d'Anglais, Université 08 Mai 1945-Guelma. L'analyse des résultats a révélé que les étudiants ainsi que les enseignants sont conscients de l'importance du développement de la compétence culturelle chez les étudiants et sa signification dans l'amélioration de leur compréhension en lecture. De plus, la plupart des participants aux questionnaires insiste sur la nécessité d'introduire la culture dans le programme scolaire en tant qu'un module séparé et non pas intégré dans les autres modules, tel qu'il est le cas dans les premiers quatre ans. Ce là suppose que la majorité des étudiants de Première Année Master et leur enseignants estiment que l'enrichissement des connaissances des étudiants et le développement de leur compétence dans la culture cible est un moyen important pour améliorer leur compréhension en lecture. Ainsi, l'hypothèse de notre recherche a été confirmée. A la lumière de ces résultats, il est fortement recommandé que les enseignants doivent accroître la sensibilisation des étudiants à l'importance d'être culturellement compétents pour améliorer leur compréhension en lecture notamment des textes fondés sur la culture.

**Mots-clés :** Compétence Culturelle, Compréhension écrite, ALE, Culture Cible.

## ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن وجهة نظر كل من الطلبة و الأساتذة فيما يخص تأثير الكفاءة الثقافية على تحسين الفهم أثناء القراءة لدى دارسي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، حيث أنّ الأساس في تدريس و تعلّم اللغة الأجنبية هو تمكين الطلبة من فهم اللغة الهدف و كذا الاطلاع على ثقافتها، إلا أنّ العديد من دارسي اللغة الانجليزية كمتعلمين للغة أجنبية يواجهون صعوبات في الفهم أثناء القراءة خاصة فيما يتعلق بالجوانب الثقافية المستهدفة ، و لذلك افترضنا أنّ تطوير الكفاءة الثقافية لدى طلاب السنة أولى ماستر من شأنه أن يحسّن من فهمهم أثناء القراءة. ولإثبات صحة هذه الفرضية، اعتمدنا منهاجاً وصفيًا كميًا تناولنا فيه استبيانين ووزعناهما على اثنين وتسعين طالباً من طلبة السنة أولى ماستر، وعلى اثني عشر أستاذاً بقسم اللغة الانجليزية، بجامعة 08 ماي 1945 - قالمة. وقد اتضح من تحليل النتائج أنّ لكل من الطلبة و الأساتذة و عي بأهميّة تطوير الكفاءة الثقافية لدى الطالب و بأهميّة ذلك في تحسين فهمه أثناء القراءة، كما أكدّ أغلبية المشاركين في الاستبيانين على ضرورة تقرير مقياس الثقافة كمقياس قائم بذاته وليس بإدراجه في المقاييس الأخرى كما هو الحال في السنوات الأربع الأولى. ويفترض من ذلك أنّ أغلبية طلبة السنة أولى ماستر و أساتذتهم يعتقدون أنّ إثراء معارف الطلاب و تطوير كفاءتهم في الثقافة الهدف لهو وسيلة هامة في تحسين فهمهم أثناء القراءة، وهكذا تمّ إثبات فرضية بحثنا. وبناء على هذه النتائج، نوصي كثيراً الأساتذة بضرورة رفع مستوى الوعي لدى الطلاب بأهمية كفاءتهم ثقافياً من أجل تحسين فهمهم أثناء القراءة لاسيما قراءة النصوص المتمحورة حول الثقافة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الكفاءة الثقافية، الفهم الكتابي، الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الثقافة الهدف.