

Research Article

# Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Intercultural Aspects of ELT in Moroccan EFL Discourse

Rania Boustar\* 

English Department, Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco

## Abstract

The teaching of intercultural aspects of English Language Education (ELT) has gained a scholarly attention in intercultural language education studies. This study seeks to explore Moroccan teachers and students' perceptions towards the teaching of the target culture(s) in Moroccan EFL classrooms, which are essentially marked by diversity in terms of cultures, languages and identities. The study starts from the hypothesis that there is an under-representation of the target language culture and its deep features in Moroccan EFL curricular and the focus is likely to be on the incorporation of surface elements of other foreign cultures. It also assumes that both students and teachers encounter many challenges in target culture teaching and learning due to students' low linguistic level in English and due to the types of cultural contents included in textbooks. Based on data collected through quantitative and qualitative research, the findings reveal that there is a common preference among teachers and students toward the Anglophone cultures; however, given the outdated contents of textbooks and the ministry's official guidelines emphasis on students' language proficiency, there is a need for the integration of recent cultural capitals of the target culture in textbooks and teaching practices. The research recommends equal consideration of world cultures and realities in Moroccan EFL textbooks and discourses as well as further critical research engagement with EFL discourse that holds accountable for social justice and equity in language education.

## Keywords

Moroccan Teachers and Students, The Target Culture, EFL Discourse, Intercultural Dimensions

## 1. Introduction

Many sociolinguists, anthropologists and applied linguists have concentrated on the relationship between language and culture. Many people believe that language is a container of culture and that it reflects the cultural aspects and lifestyles of the native speakers of that culture. The cultural and the linguistic aspects of languages are strongly interconnected. Any language can be regarded as a mirror of its speakers' culture. Different meanings of words can be interpreted in terms of their cultural perspectives. In language teaching and learning

process, it is important to adopt an eclectic approach while teaching the appropriate and the relevant cultural norms of the target language in a bid to boost students' communicative competence. One cannot deny the importance of promoting the cultural knowledge through being exposed to the target language. Wardaugh points out that language represents the speakers' knowledge of rules and principles [1]. This knowledge forms the language competence of its speakers such as the ways of saying and the ways of doing things with

\*Corresponding author: Boustar\_rania@hotmail.com (Rania Boustar)

Received: 28 March 2025; Accepted: 7 April 2025; Published: 22 May 2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

sounds, words and sentences. In this sense, it is of paramount importance for language instructors and language learners to understand the relationship between language and culture and the crucial role of the cultural dimension in EFL classroom context.

One must point out that an effective and an accurate foreign language teaching is that which is based on the incorporation of the cultural properties and societal characteristics of the target language. Yang and Chen point out that “if we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning [2]. In this sense, cultural awareness plays, indeed, a role of paramount importance in making the learners knowledgeable of the appropriate use and usage of the utterances relevant to a particular language of a certain social group.

This, in turns, can be conceived pedagogically and sociolinguistically purposeful in the sense that it raises learners’ intercultural consciousness for the sake of avoiding communication breakdown. According to Boniall 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 [3].

Brdaric tackled further the importance of culture in EFL context [4]. He mentioned that the term culture is broad in itself and its perception differs from a field of study to another. In EFL setting, he distinguishes between the visible culture which is related to geography, history, holidays and great people’s achievement and the invisible culture that is linked to deep, hidden and intricate forms and meanings associated to manners, costumes, behaviors, social norms and values. In here, many scholars highlight that the visible culture is known as the formal culture with capitalized “C” whereas the invisible culture represents the deep culture with a small “c”. The latter form is deeply related to the social communicative patterns and the social know how.

Consequently, this present research paper aims at identifying students and teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of culture instruction. It also investigates the major challenges that high school teachers face in teaching English culture to their students and also the main reasons behind these challenges. It also attempts to bring about relevant solutions to help students manage their difficulties in promoting their cultural knowledge of the English language.

This research paper attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent is cultural instruction important in English language learning process?
- 2) What are teachers and students’ attitudes towards the target language culture?
- 3) What are the main challenges that students face while learning culture?
- 4) What are the main challenges that teachers face while teaching culture?

- 5) What types of culture is being included in Moroccan EFL textbooks?
- 6) How can target culture and its deep features be incorporated in Moroccan EFL textbooks?

## 2. The Integration of Culture in EFL Classrooms

For too long, Byram has considered cultural instruction in foreign language teaching context was and is still considered to be a challenging and a difficult task for foreign language teachers [5]. Owing to the crucial role of integrating culture in foreign language classes and textbooks, it has become inevitable compulsory for teachers to be aware of selecting what to teach, to be knowledgeable of how to teach and to be thoughtful of why it is important to teach culture.

Before embarking on discussing the relationship between language and culture, I will first shed light on the various theoretical conceptions that underline the term culture. Not surprisingly, what makes human beings different from each other is the distinction in their ideologies, costumes, beliefs, manners, traditions, conventions and the difference in the way they talk and the way they behave. In here, culture in its broad sense can be perceived as that distinctive aspect that features a group from another whether being it a social group, an ethnic group or a speech community. Yet, there is not a particular definition of the term culture. Many disciplines deal with the latter notion accordingly based on various and different theoretical frameworks and perceptions.

According to Choudhury culture refers to a shared system of values, ethics, symbols and attitudes which are particular to a specific category of people [6]. Within the same community, culture can include within it a number of sub-cultures which result in the plurality and the complexity of the term. Crawford and Lange highlight that “the research on culture as it applies to social norms, beliefs, assumptions, and value systems that affect many (if not most) human activities is carried out in the domains of ethnography, anthropology, sociology, and intercultural communication” [7]. This means that there are many diverse definitions of culture and different disciplines tackle it from various angles. Despite the various attempts to define culture, it remains difficult to come up with a fixed definition and to agree upon a single conceptual viewpoint of the term culture due to its complex and vague dimension.

Corbett argues that culture is not only concerned with national features of a specific society but it is also linked to individual sub-variables related to the factor of age, gender, class, ethnicity and even such things as leisure pursuit [8]. That is why it is naturally found that women and men’s mindset are not similar since they think and act differently based on their biological and cultural differences. The culture of youth is not the same as the culture of elderly people. Furthermore, Hinkel adds that if culture is indeed ‘the whole

way of life', or 'the dynamic belief-system of a community', then it is certainly difficult to know how these vast concepts can be approached, particularly in language classrooms where communication is already constrained" [9]. Hence, each community maintains a pattern of a lifestyle that is dynamic as well as changing and, henceforth, its people are presumed to act and converse depending on the societal implicit norms. In this respect, Spencer-Oatey and Franklin mention that culture is considered as the relationship between its core beliefs and values, and the patterns of behaviour, art and communication that the group produces, bearing in mind that these beliefs and values are constantly being negotiated within the group [10].

It is of paramount importance for people in general and for language instructors and language learners in particular to understand the nature of the relationship between language and culture. Some emerging questions of whether language carries culture or not, whether language precedes culture or if it is culture that shapes language sparked many debates, investigations and discussions on the way language and culture are connected to each other.

The link between language and culture is substantial. Our daily life activities are featured by our social interactions. Such interactions, basically, involves the expressions of feelings, ideas, experiences and values through the use of language. This social practice of conversing pushed linguists to come up with evidence on the extent to which language and culture are related to each other.

Language for Romaine [11] is believed to be the focal agent for the transmission of culture. It goes without saying that language and culture are intertwined in the same sense that they have a kind of a deep and symbolic relationship; they are inseparable because any language is embedded in a particular culture and therefore, one affects the other. According to Fairclough [12], "Language is not an autonomous construct but a social practice both created the structures and forces of the social institutions within which people live and function". In here, language is socially constructed referring to the social know-how patterns of a certain society.

Culture instruction in FLT setting is helpful in the sense that it enhances learners' communicative competence. In this context, it is argued that whereas linguistic competence covers the speaker's ability to produce grammatically correct sentences, communicative competence describes his ability to select, from the totality of grammatically correct expressions available to him, forms which appropriately reflect the social norms governing behavior in specific encounters. Foreign language teachers should direct their students towards learning the language in order to know how to be effective and competent communicators when using the target language. Additionally, they should not only teach them how to speak but also how to talk. Therefore, communicative competence as a substantial part of the social know-how is essential for students to perform appropriately in various situations.

Knowing what to say, when to say and how to say something is so crucial in FLT. For instance, Zhou and Griffiths

maintain that the two pronouns of 'Tu' and 'Vous' in French language are employed differently. 'tu' is used in the singular form and 'vous' is employed in the plural form. However, there are cases when people should use the pronoun 'vous' particularly when it comes to addressing a person of a high value as a form of projecting politeness such as the case of an employee with his/her employer or a student talking to his/her teacher [13]. In this regard, Richards and Schmidt conclude that "language learning is culture learning and consequently that language teaching is culture teaching [14].

In the context of TEFL, Kramsch illustrates that the English language received noticeable considerations concerning its cultural incorporation in EFL classes and curricula as being it a lingua-franca and the language of globalization. [15] emphasizes the importance of the role of an intercultural communicative approach in TEFL classroom and in English syllabus in particular. This approach gives emphasis to the social functions of English language. He claims that Intercultural communicative competence includes the ability to understand the language and behaviour of the target community, and explain it to members of the 'home' community – and vice versa.

## 2.1. Approaches to Teaching Culture

Adopting the appropriate and the most suitable approach is the key to achieving an effective teaching of culture. Wilberschied [16] defines the approach as "the theory, philosophy, and principles underlying a particular set of teaching practices". When it comes to teaching culture, Mishan and Kiss [17] describe four different approaches to foreign language teaching which are as follows:

- 1) *The foreign-cultural approach*: It has been losing ground since the 1980s since it does not put a link between the learners' culture and the target language culture. It focuses on the target culture and it neglects the native culture of the learner. The purpose behind the use of this approach is to enhance the communicative and the cultural competences of the learner.
- 2) *The intercultural approach*: It has replaced the foreign-cultural approach and it is the dominant one today. Unlike the foreign-cultural approach, the intercultural approach emphasizes on the link between the target culture and the culture of the learner. It fosters students understanding of the two cultures as it draws comparison between the two. The aim behind adopting this approach is to develop the "intercultural communicative competence" of the learner through mediating the two cultures.
- 3) *The multicultural approach*: It has made its appearance since the 1980s, but is still in a marginal position. This approach revolves around the idea that all cultures co-exist together and they exist within one culture. It focuses on both the ethnic and the linguistic diversity of both the target country and the learners' own country. It puts emphasis on the principle that cultures are not

monolithic. It also emphasizes the importance of the intercultural approach through comparing cultures. A balanced and anti-racist view of cultures should be involved.

- 4) *The transcultural approach*: It emerged as a result of internationalization. It considers cultures of the present modern world to be interconnected due to several factors such as tourism, migration, globalization, communication systems and economic interdependence. This approach looks at the target language as an international language and that learners should learn the foreign language for international communication. It is reflected in people's use of languages as Lingua Franca. It also excludes the link between language and culture.

In this vein, Stern [18] contends that although it is possible to introduce topics which are of universal significance in all cultures, such an approach leaves learners without topics which are characteristic of a particular country that is the ones which "characterize its uniqueness for the language learner.

In addition to the four approaches introduced by Byram and Fleming, other approaches were also tackled by Tomalin and Stempleski [19]: *the monocultural approach* and *the comparative approach*. "In very broad terms, they can be divided into two: those which focus only (or mostly) on the culture of the country whose language is studied (the monocultural approach) and those which are based on comparing learners' own and the other culture (the comparative approach). Furthermore, other approaches of culture teaching in FLT classroom are:

- 1) *The theme-based or thematic approach*: It is based around certain themes, for example, symbolism, value, ceremony, love, honour, humour, beauty, intellectuality, the art of living, realism, common sense, family, liberty, patriotism, religion, and education, which are seen as typical of a culture. Though mono-cultural by nature, it tries to show the relationships and values in a given culture and, therefore, helps learners to understand it better. This approach, however, may not be so effective as it prevents learners to see the way individuals and understand their socialization processes and values.
- 2) *The skill-centred approach*: It differs from the above-given approaches in a sense that it is more practical and might be useful for those who need to live within the targetlanguage community. It aims at developing learners' skills, which they may need to manage the issues involved in (mis)communication between cultures/societies. It does not primarily mean knowledge of the other culture.
- 3) *The task-oriented approach*: It encourages students to do their own research and it promotes collaborative work. Students work in groups on different aspects of the target culture. They share and present their research and their findings with their classmates to form a complete image about the target culture. Learners reflect on their finding within the context of the other culture and

compare them to their own culture.

## 2.2. Techniques for Teaching Culture

The literature on culture teaching methodology is vast and there is a wide variety of techniques through which cultural content may be present. Teachers should establish a relaxing environment to make the teaching of culture an enjoyable experience. In teaching a foreign language we need to be sensitive to the fragility of students by using techniques that promote cultural understanding.

Ouakrime presents the following techniques to teaching culture [20]:

- a) Creating an authentic classroom environment through displays and exhibitions of realia.
- b) Providing cultural information via culture aside, culture capsule and culture cluster.
- c) Solving cultural problems through culture assimilation.
- d) Behavioural and affective aspects (for example, drama and mini-drama).
- e) Cognitive approaches through students' research.
- f) The role of literature and humanities such as literary readings and watching movies.
- g) Real-life exposure to the target culture (for instance, visits to the class by native speakers, pen-pals and visits to other countries).
- h) Making use of cultural community resources (for example, when a foreign language learning takes place in the target language community, the everyday environment can be used as a resource).

Kourova and Modianos further indicated that role play activities can examine cultural behaviour and patterns of communication [21]. For example, in one of these role plays, students can dramatize an incident that happened to them and caused cross-cultural misunderstanding. In this way, role play will enable them to develop communicative strategies to overcome similar problems in real second language communication.

- 1) Comparison is a technique which is used by teachers to draw students' attention to and develop awareness of differences between their culture and the target culture through comparison. HARRAT claims that students observe and discuss in groups items of the target culture which may occasion learning difficulties for them [22].
- 2) Authentic Environment: Because language and culture are taught far away from the target country, it is the role of teachers and faculty members to make of the classroom a "cultural island". That is displaying posters, bulletin boards, maps, and realia which can create a visual and tangible presence of the other culture.
- 3) The Cultural Aside: It refers to cultural information offered by the teacher when it occurs in the text. It is usually a brief culture comment. Its advantage is that it plays an important role in helping learners make mental associations similar to those that native speakers make.
- 4) The Cultural Assimilator: It is consisted of three parts.



First, the exercise starts with introducing a short passage displaying a misunderstanding or unfamiliar behaviours by native speakers which might seem odd. Second, students are presented with four possible explanations and interpretations of the behaviour of misunderstanding from which they are asked to choose the correct one. Then, a feedback is given to the learner in order to show why one is right and the others are wrong in certain cultural context. Thus, the culture assimilator is used to develop cognizance of the potential discrepancies between cultures which may cause misunderstanding in cross-cultural encounters.

### 3. Research Method

Both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches will be used in this study. Creswell et al., maintain that quantitative approach will be helpful in determining the frequency of the importance of cultural instruction for students, their attitudes towards the target language culture learning and the challenges they face while learning the target culture [23]. On the other hand, the qualitative approach will be useful in eliciting more in depth explanations about teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of the target culture, the reasons behind their challenges of teaching the target language culture, and the ways deep culture can be incorporated in EFL textbooks.

#### 3.1. Research Sample

In this study, the population sample chosen is first and second baccalaureate students and EFL teachers at the high school institution of Mohamed Ben Abdelkarim Elkhatabi and '11 Yanayr' in Nador city. This sample population was chosen because of its convenience which is manifested at the level of ease of access and also due to the fact that students are more concerned with learning the target culture and EFL teachers are the ones who are responsible of teaching the target culture that is included in the curricular.

#### 3.2. Research Procedures

Random sampling is the technique used in order to choose a

representative sample of students. This technique of sampling was chosen because it is more objective, and it gives the chance to everyone to participate in the study.

The total number of first and second baccalaureate students in Mohamed Ben Abdelkarim Elkhatabi high school is 340 and 327 in '11 Yanayr' institution. The representative sample which is equivalent to 15% of that total number is 101 participants.

Random sampling is the technique used to conduct interviews with EFL teachers of Mohamed Ben Abdelkarim Elkhatabi and '11 Yanayr' high schools. This technique is used because of its objectivity and credibility. EFL teachers in the targeted institution of Mohamed Ben Abdelkarim Elkhatabi and 5 EFL teachers in '11 Yanayr' high school. The total number of teachers who are being interviewed in this study is 8 EFL teachers and they do all teach and use the textbooks of first and second baccalaureate levels. The period of the teaching experience of the interviewed teachers is ranging between 2 years to 17 years.

### 4. Results

Culture instruction in foreign language teaching was given much importance and much attention owing to the strong relationship between language and culture. Whether culture should be taught or not in the context of language learning process has been the center of interest for many scholars. This section introduces students and teachers' perceptions towards the importance of cultural instruction in the process of learning English and the frequency of having cultural lessons in classes.

#### 4.1. The Salience of the Target Culture in EFL Classrooms

Culture instruction in foreign language teaching was given much importance and much attention owing to the strong relationship between language and culture. Whether culture should be taught or not in the context of language learning process has been the center of interest for many scholars. This section introduces students and teachers' perceptions towards the importance of cultural instruction in the process of learning English.

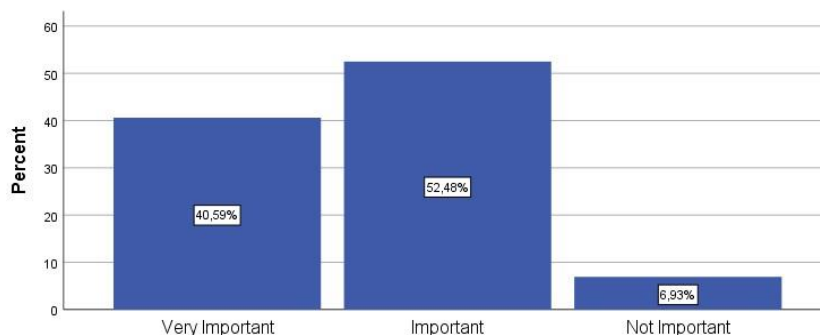


Figure 1. The Extent of the Importance of Learning Culture in EFL Class.

A close analysis of the figure above reveals that the majority of first and second baccalaureate students perceive the learning of culture in their English language classes to be generally important. Students were asked about the extent to which they think culture learning in their EFL class is important. As can be seen in the graph above, 52.48% perceive the learning of culture to be important, 40.59% conceive culture learning to be very important while only 6.93% of the total number of participants said that it is not important to learn culture in their English language class. The first conclusion that is derived from this finding is that students valorize the learning of culture inside the classroom context as being an important aspect of English language learning.

#### 4.2. The Attitudes of Teachers and Students Towards the Target Language Culture

Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of respondents which represents 62.38% of the total number of students are indeed interested in learning about the target culture. However, 20.79% of the respondents said that they are not interested in learning the target culture while only 16.83% could not decide if they are interested in learning about the target culture or not. These statistics demonstrate that students generate a positive attitude towards target culture learning.

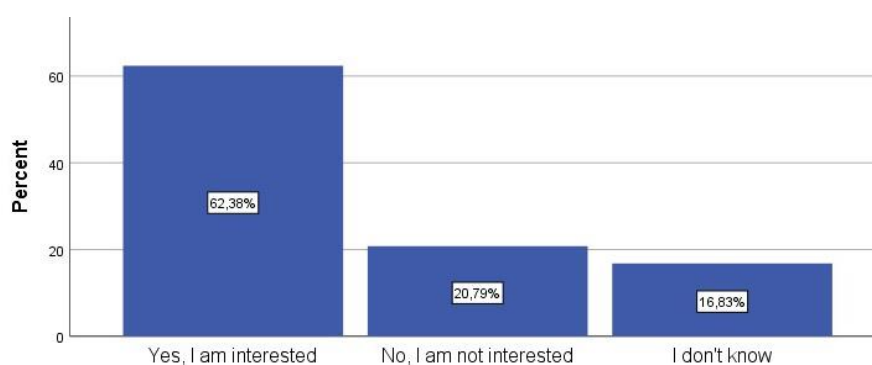


Figure 2. Students' Interest in Learning the Target Language Culture.

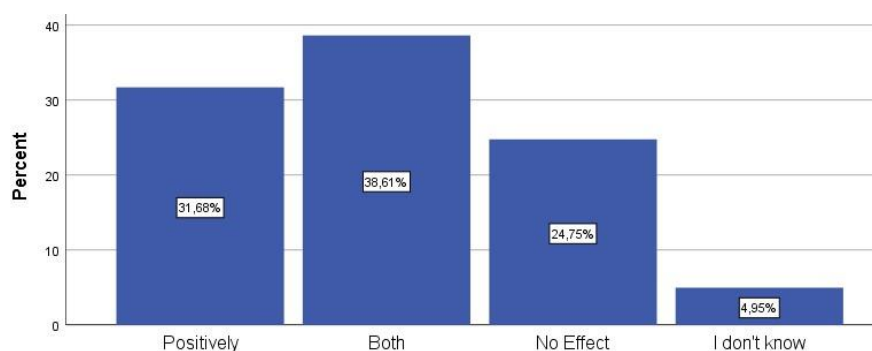


Figure 3. The Impact of Target Culture Learning on Students' Native Culture.

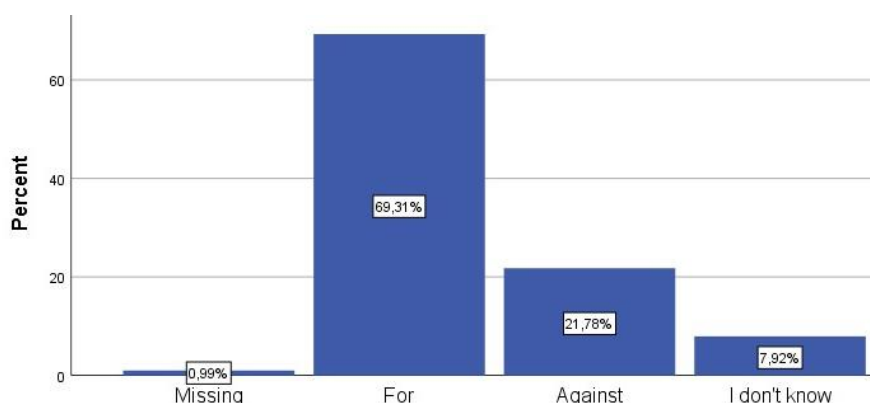
Students' positive perception and interest in learning the target culture can be explained by the fact that learning about the target culture doesn't have a negative impact on students' own culture since none of the participants opted for the answer that target culture learning has a negative impact. However, 38.61% said that it has both a positive and a negative impact. 31.68% perceive that target language learning positively impacts students own native culture. 24.75% of other students believe that learning about the target culture doesn't affect their Moroccan culture. Only 4.95% don't know the effect of learning target culture on their own culture.

To elicit more in depth information about the reasons be-

hind students' attitudes towards the target culture, teachers were asked whether they think their students hold positive or negative attitudes. In this vein, multiculturalism and globalization are the main motives behind students' positive perception towards the target culture as one teacher claimed that *"I think our students hold positive attitudes (.) they are living in a globalized world and they are aware that those people exist and those cultures exist (.) so whenever they have the chance to learn about them (.) so they become motivated and like to know"*. In addition to this, students' exposure to audio-visual aids is another motive behind the positive attitudes that students hold towards the target culture as another teacher

explained that *“to my experience I think that they hold positive attitudes towards this culture mainly because they have it in their everyday life (.) it's their in their maybe in videos*

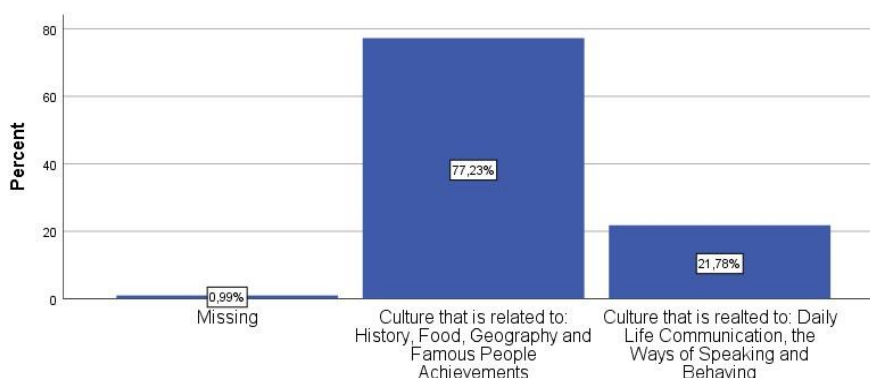
*games (.) they see it in video clips they listen to and so it's they like it by nature.”*



**Figure 4.** Students' perception of the integration of Moroccan Culture in EFL Textbooks.

The findings displayed in the graph above are strikingly correspondent to the previous Figure 3 which shows that students think that the target culture does not have at all any negative influence on their own culture since it does both positively and negatively impact their native culture. That's

another reason behind students' positive attitude towards target culture learning. Therefore, most students are for the integration of Moroccan culture in their EFL textbooks. Few students are against Moroccan culture to be included in their syllabus while only 7.92% who did not decide their answer.



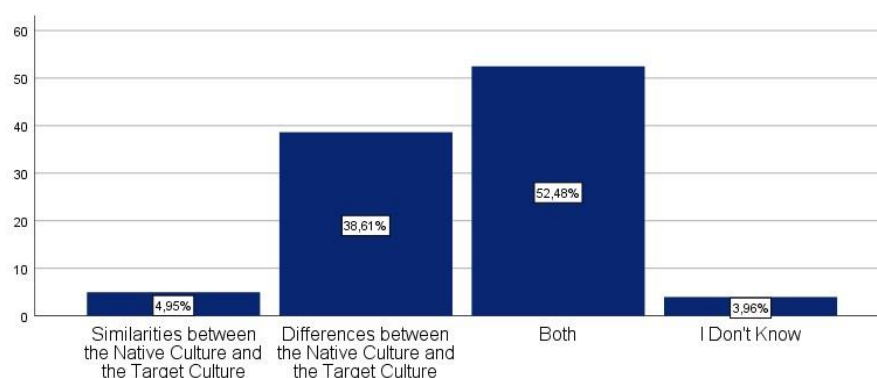
**Figure 5.** The Types of Cultural inputs incorporated in EFL Classes.

Figure 5 shows that the formal culture is the main aspect that dominates students EFL classrooms. 77.23% revealed that their teachers focus on teaching them cultural topics related to history, geography, food and famous people's achievement which are dominant in their EFL textbooks. 21.78% of the students pointed out that their teachers are more into teaching the culture that is linked to daily life communication and the ways of speaking and behaving. An overall conclusion that can be drawn is that there is almost a lack of deep cultural instruction in students' EFL classes since teachers' focus is more directed to culture that is known as

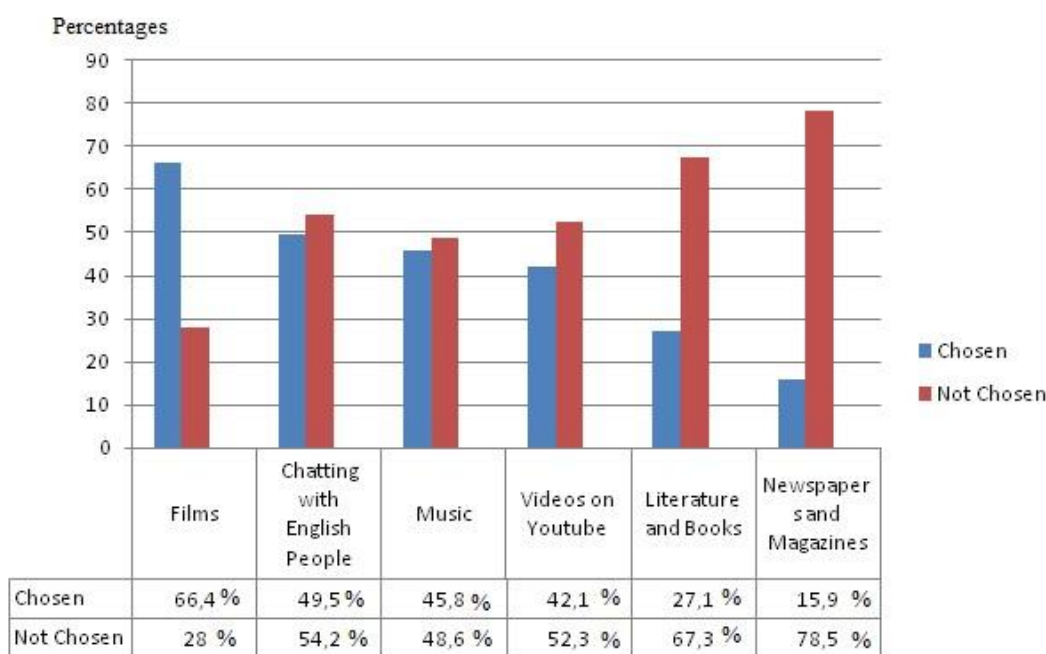
formal culture.

The interviewed teachers were also asked to identify the types of the cultural contents that are being incorporated in the two textbooks of first and second baccalaureate students. Cultural topics are related to the formal aspects of culture as one teacher claimed that *“Generally they are kind of cultural clusters (.) most of the time they are about family values (.) They are about the educational systems (.) the way family are organized so they are kind of observable aspects of culture kind of you can relate it to formal culture.”*

### 4.3. Techniques of Incorporating Target Culture and Its Deep Aspects in Moroccan EFL Textbooks



**Figure 6.** The Most Effective Way of Boosting Students' Intercultural Communicative Competence.



**Figure 7.** Techniques of Incorporating Target culture in EFL Classrooms.

As shown in Figure 6, students were asked to provide their own perceptions of the way they think they can develop their intercultural communicative competence. 52.48% said that there should be emphasis on both the differences and the similarities between Moroccan culture and the target culture. 38.61% see that the focus should be on solely the differences between the native culture and the target culture. Only 4.95% who think that their intercultural communicative competence can be enhanced by looking at the similarities between the native culture and the target culture and only 3.96% who could not decide their answer. Hence, it's very crucial for teachers to take into account their students' needs and to bring about both the different and the similar cultural aspects which exist between the native culture and the target culture.

Students were asked to choose some of the most effective techniques they think necessary to incorporate target culture in their EFL classes. The graph above demonstrates that the means students perceive to be the most effective is the use of films which is chosen by 66.4% of students. 49.5% of students also think that chatting with people is effective for including target culture inside their classroom. Students' exposure to Music and Youtube videos is another effective technique opted by 45.8% and 42.1% of the total number of students. However, 27.1% of students believe that target culture should be incorporated through literary works and books and only 15.9% of students prefer the use of magazines and newspapers. In this vein, these statistics in Figure 7 indicate that students are more into the integration of ICTs in their classes as effec-



tive materials to expose students to the target culture. The reason behind why literature and books as well as magazines and newspapers were not chosen by the majority is due to the fact that students in the twentieth first century era are considered to be digital natives and they prefer to learn through audio-visual aids and they are likely to dislike the traditional methods and techniques of teaching.

## 5. Discussion

In this section, authors are advised to provide a thorough analysis of the results and make comparisons with relevant literature, not a short summary or conclusion. Any future research directions could also be stated in the discussion.

A thorough interpretation of the findings reveals that culture instruction is, indeed, crucial and beneficial in Moroccan EFL classes as acknowledged by both teachers and students. This is one of the main reasons why instructors hold positive attitudes towards target language culture because it does motivate and raises students' interest in learning the target culture as well as it does both positively and negatively affect their own native culture. Additionally, audio-visual aids, globalization and multiculturalism are the main motives behind students' positive perception of target culture learning. This generally resonates with Al-Husseini [26]'s study.

Despite the paramount importance of cultural instruction in EFL classes and students' interest in learning the target culture, there are a number of challenges faced by students. It is demonstrated that students find the learning of target culture as, generally, difficult. The main reasons behind their difficulties are various such as: The low linguistic competence of students, the lack of time devoted to cultural classes, teachers' emphasis on students' proficiency and lack of promoting students' intercultural communicative competence, the mismatch between what the syllabus contains and what students needs, teachers' ineffective methodology and the outmoded and dull nature of students' textbooks as indicated by Berns's study [24].

There are also a number of obstacles that hinder the teaching of culture by high school teachers such as the inadequate and the inappropriate cultural contents of textbooks, the lack of assessing tools of culture teaching, the unavailability of technological and ICT materials in the classroom, the ministry of education focus on language proficiency in terms of the four skills. These challenges are not motivating that's why most of teachers do rarely teacher culture to students. Interestingly, teachers do not test students on target culture because baccalaureate students are national exam oriented on the mastery of the four skills. Therefore, teachers intentionally use culture to assess students on their language proficiency.

One of the important scopes of the study is to investigate the types of cultural contents incorporated in EFL textbooks of first and second baccalaureate level. The results are interesting because they generate an idea about which elements of formal and deep culture are predominant in the two syllabi.

The analysis highlight that the surface culture is the dominant aspect that cover the cultural contents. The target culture is absent and cultural topics are more related to general knowledge about other cultures in terms of shedding light on their surface features such as talking about famous people, celebrations and other congratulatory topics. Therefore, Ereksen argues that most teachers pointed out that their students are not culturally and communicatively competent of target culture usage [25].

## 6. Conclusions

The conclusion section should precisely articulate the main findings of the article, emphasizing its significance and relevance. In the conclusion, it is highly recommended that authors avoid referencing figures or tables. Instead, these should be appropriately referenced within the body of the paper.

The analysis of first and second baccalaureate textbooks of "Gateway to English" and "Gateway to English 2" shows that cultural contents presented in each unit are related to surface cultural aspects. More surprisingly, there is more emphasis on the inclusion of Moroccan culture and other cultures of different countries in the textbooks rather than putting the focus on the English culture per se. The target language culture is almost excluded and missing. It is clearly noticed that the type of culture that is incorporated in the two textbooks are concerned with formal culture with the capitalized "C" that is related to history, geography, socio-political issues and great peoples' achievements of different parts of the world.

There is a reinforcement of the multicultural approach of cultural teaching in both textbooks where the focus is on "the idea that all cultures co-exist together and they exist within one culture. It focuses on both the ethnic and the linguistic diversity of both the target country and the learners' own country. It puts emphasis on the principle that cultures are not monolithic. It also emphasizes the importance of the intercultural approach through comparing cultures. In this conjuncture, Saidi's research calls for a balanced and anti-racist view of cultures in intercultural language education [27]. In this respect, what can be deduced from the assessment is the fact that popular cultures of different parts of the globe are interfered and integrated all together in the two textbooks, for example, through the integration of the Japanese, African, Moroccan, western and eastern cultures. The cultural dimension in both textbooks is being implicitly put as an input that serves the primary purpose which is developing students' four language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. In addition to this, it is true that students would gain an understanding of other cultures and make comparisons and connections between themselves and the others. Yet, as Saidi and Boustar contend, since students are learning the English language in an EFL context, they should be aware of the deep cultural elements of the invisible facets of the target language related to the English community [28]. Interestingly, the types of the cultural inputs somehow correspond to the general

official guideline concerning the teaching of culture in term of products while the practices and the perspective are almost overlooked. Hence, what is being presented may not cater for students' needs as English language learners and may not boost students' intercultural communicative competence since the cultural content is not related to deep culture of the target language.

As a matter of fact, the two textbooks are characterized by a set of cultural features such as the integration of a wider range of cultural representations, an amalgam of different popular cultures of other countries, the inclusion of authentic pictures and texts reflecting cultural events of the world. In this vein, taken into account the excerpts which are being analyzed in this chapter, there is only one instance, that is of the appendix 6 above, in which there is the integration of deep culture of the target language which discusses the Americans' perceptions of eating habits while the other examples noticeably display visible elements of Moroccan culture and other cultures. Another example that presents deep aspects of the language is seen in appendix 5 since it sheds light on some of the cultural aspects related to the ways of behaving in terms of level of appropriateness; yet, the latter input raises students' awareness of their own native culture and not of the target culture. As far as the method of culture incorporation in the two syllabi is concerned, culture is implicitly included to promote students' language proficiency which manifests at the level of enhancing the four language skills. This means that culture inclusion in textbooks is not necessarily meant to culturally boost students' awareness but rather to linguistically develop students in their use of the English language. Moreover, despite the fact that culture is being targeted as the second main area of the standards-based approach, there is an under-representation of the target culture which manifests at the level of the lack of the reflection on the social know-how and socio-cultural norms of the target community. However, the type and the method through which culture is being included in the two textbooks, in one way or another, meets the official guidelines of culture instruction which emphasize on comparing and contrasting our own language and culture(s) with other languages and culture(s) for a better understanding of ours.

## Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
IC	Intercultural Competence

## Author Contributions

Rania Boustar is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## References

- [1] Wardaugh, R. (2006). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- [2] Yang, X., & Chen, D. (2016). Two barriers to teaching culture in foreign language classroom. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(5), 1128.
- [3] Bonilla, M. X. (2008). Evaluating English Textbooks: A Cultural Matter. *A Colombian Journal for Teachers of English*, ISSN 0120-5927 (15), 167-191.
- [4] Brdaric, H. (2016). *The Importance of Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom*. Osijeku: Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera.
- [5] Byram, M. (1988) Foreign language education and cultural studies, *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 1: 1, 15-31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318809525025>
- [6] Choudhury, H. M. (2013). Teaching Culture in EFL: Implications, Challenges and Strategies. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 13(1), 20-24.
- [7] Crawford and Lange. (1984). L. M., Lange, D. (1987). *Integrating Language and Culture: How to do it. Theory into Practice*.
- [8] Corbett, J. (2003). *An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching* LANGUAGES FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION. M. Byram & A.
- [9] Hinkel, E. (1999). *CULTURE AND PRAGMATICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING, Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [10] Spencer-Oatey, H., & Franklin, P. (2012). What is culture. *A compilation of quotations. GlobalPAD Core Concepts*, 1(22), 1-21.
- [11] Romaine, S. (1994). *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [12] Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- [13] Zhou, C., & Griffiths, C. (2011). Intercultural communicative competence. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 1(2), 113.
- [14] Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. W. (2013). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Routledge.
- [15] Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford university press.
- [16] Wilberschied Ph D, L. F. (2015). Intercultural communicative competence: Literature review. *Cultural Encounters, Conflicts, and Resolutions*, 2(1), 4.
- [17] Mishan, F., & Kiss, T. (2024). *Developing intercultural language materials*. Taylor & Francis.
- [18] Stern, H. H. (1992). *Issues and Options in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- [19] Tomalin, B., & Stempleski, S. (1993). *Cultural Awareness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [20] Ouakrime, M. (1992). Formal and Deep Culture for EFL Students: a course proposal. Faculty of Letters, Sidi Mohamed BEN ABDALLAH University, Fes.
- [21] Kourova, A., & Modianos, D. (2013). Inter-cultural awareness and its role in enriching students' communicative competence. *The International HETL Review*, 2013, 60-70.
- [22] HARRAT Ala, N. R. (2024). Investigating the Relationship between Audiovisual-based Media and EFL Learners' Inter-cultural Knowledge.
- [23] Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *The counseling psychologist*, 35(2), 236-264.
- [24] Berns, M. (2013). *Contexts of competence: Social and cultural considerations in communicative language teaching*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- [25] Eriksen, T. H. (2006). Diversity versus difference: Neo-liberalism in the minority debate. *The making and un-making of difference*, 13-36.
- [26] Al-Husseini, S. (2006). The visible and invisible role of English foundation programmes: A search for communication opportunities within EFL contexts. *Asian EFL Journal*, 8(4), 35-51.
- [27] Saidi, B. (2024). Intercultural education in the Global South: decolonising canonical intercultural models in Moroccan University MA program courses. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 25(1), 170–184.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2024.2341772>
- [28] Saidi, B., & Boustar, R. (2024). Critical Intercultural Education in Moroccan Teacher Education: Practical Insights for Teacher Candidates. *International Perspectives on Critical English Language Teacher Education: Theory and Practice*, 223.